



**REGIONAL WATERSHEDS ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES
December 9, 2015**

PRESENT: Mr. Walter Regan, Vice Chair
Mr. Pierre Clement
Ms. Darlene Fenton
Ms. Kelly Schnare

REGRETS: Dr. Iain Taylor
Ms. Meredith Clayden

STAFF: Mr. Paul Morgan, Planner
Mr. Andrew Reid, Legislative Assistant
Ms. Cailin MacDonald, Legislative Support

The following does not represent a verbatim record of the proceedings of this meeting.

The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to the Regional Watersheds Advisory Board are available online: <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/rwab/151209rwab-agenda.php>

The meeting was called to order at 5:03 p.m. and adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Regan called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. in the Helen Creighton Room, 2nd floor, Alderney Public Library, 60 Alderney Drive, Dartmouth.

Mr. Regan shared with the Board that the election for Chairperson and Vice-chairperson has been postponed until the Board's January meeting. The Board proceeded to conduct roundtable introductions.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED by Mr. Clement seconded by Ms. Fenton

THAT the minutes of August 12, 2015 be approved as circulated.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

Ms. Schnare commented that she would like to provide a brief update to the Board on Halifax Water Caucus.

The following was added to the Agenda:

8.1 Informal update on the Halifax Water Caucus

The Agenda was accepted as amended.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES – NONE

Mr. Clement noted that the Board had not yet received a copy of the report, referenced on page 4, paragraph 3, of the minutes of August 12, 2015. Mr. Reid responded that he will follow up on acquiring the report and circulate it to the Board electronically.

5. CALL FOR DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

6. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – NONE

7. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS

7.1 Correspondence – None

7.2 Petitions – None

7.3 Presentations

7.3.1 Paul Morgan – Regional Plan Overview

The following was before the Board:

- A document re: Municipal Tools for Implementing a Green Network Strategy

Mr. Regan invited Mr. Paul Morgan to present to the Board.

Mr. Morgan indicated that he has been involved with preparing the municipality's revised Regional Plan and described the Green Network Strategy component. He shared that the Green Network Strategy better identifies the municipality's green networks including parks, playgrounds, bike paths and trails, working landscapes as well as cultural heritage lands and watersheds.

Mr. Morgan introduced the document to the Board, describing how a green network strategy is enabled through the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter. He continued that the Heritage Property Act contains provisions pertaining to protection of cultural landscapes.

Mr. Clement asked whether the term green networks implied that there will be a plan to interconnect green spaces and water courses or whether it is a general organizational term. Mr. Morgan responded that interconnectedness is an important theme evident in the plan.

Ms. Schnare asked whether watershed lands can be considered cultural heritage. Mr. Morgan shared that in this context cultural landscapes refers to geographic areas uniquely representing the combined work of nature and of people, and noted the Shubenacadie Canal and Birch Cove Lake systems as examples.

Mr. Morgan shared that in reference to the plan, staff will begin meeting with interest groups in January and plan to engage with the public towards March. He also noted that the timeframe is limited and that staff hopes to have it completed by mid-2016. He went on to share that the recommendations will then be incorporated into regional policies, regulations and procedures.

Ms. Fenton commented on the Birch Cove area and noted that it was an area that the province was interested in working with HRM to protect since it is currently privately held. She continued by asking whether lands of high value from an ecological perspective and with great connectivity were being looked at in the strategy.

Mr. Morgan shared that there has been a lot of interest from the public in preserving the Birch Cove Lake lands and commented that the plan will look at protecting areas of ecological and recreational importance and improving connectivity. Mr. Clement asked about the role of the province. Mr. Morgan responded that the province is being consulted as well as universities to provide information.

Mr. Morgan remarked that it was a conscious decision to name the plan the Green Network to help ease concerns of some stakeholders with the term greenbelt. The Board continued to discuss greenbelting with Mr. Morgan. Mr. Clement inquired whether maps would be developed to support the plan. Mr. Regan commented that there is a greenbelt report available online which includes maps and asked that Mr. Reid send the link to the Board.

Ms. Fenton commented that current policy requires developers to designate a percentage of their land to open space and asked how the green network strategy fits in with this policy. Mr. Morgan responded that staff are uncertain how this policy would be interpreted under the green network strategy and shared that a greenbelt policy is included in the regional plan. He went on to note that there are regulations in place around the province to prevent lands suited for agricultural development from being developed. He also commented that there are fiscal benefits to greenbelting for the municipality since it prevents urban sprawl.

Ms. Fenton inquired when the consultant's report is expected. Mr. Morgan responded that a draft report outlining three scenarios should be ready to be shared with stakeholder groups in January and with the public in March. Ms. Fenton inquired whether the Board would receive the report to review. Mr. Regan commented that presently the Board is not included on the list and recommended that this be discussed by the Board at January's meeting. He continued that staff may recommend that the Board review the report particularly as it relates to watercourse protection.

Mr. Clement commented that from Mr. Morgan's interpretation, the municipality has the legal abilities required to implement the green network strategy without requiring the support of the provincial

government. Mr. Morgan agreed and shared that in some instances the municipality can look to amend the Charter if more authority is required.

Mr. Clement inquired whether Mr. Morgan identified any deficiencies. Mr. Morgan suggested that the Board may wish to review and arrive at their own conclusions. He noted under tree preservation, an existing By-law can be enacted to require that trees be retained or only removed with a municipal permit within serviced areas and he commented on the complexities and resources around enforcing this legislation.

Ms. Fenton asked Mr. Morgan whether he knew of any other municipalities of similar size to HRM that has implemented a green network strategy and what legislative tools are being used to support these efforts. Mr. Morgan responded that staff compared the Ontario greenbelt legislation when developing the municipal green network strategy and determined that HRM has considerable legislative powers.

Mr. Clement inquired why the municipality decided to create a green network strategy and what purpose it serves in planning. Mr. Morgan responded that it was created to protect the municipality's resources as well as to encourage development in areas with existing services. He continued by noting that strategy will help refine the municipality's central plan and its designated growth centres. He continued by sharing that this plan may provide information that identifies areas where the municipality should be less permissive.

Mr. Clement commented that the strategy appears to be primarily an investigative exercise for the municipality to understand its inventory in terms of preservation of lands and corridors. Mr. Morgan agreed and noted that the regional plan identifies the strategy as the greenbelting and public open space plan. He commented that the plan will also review lands that the municipality should be acquiring in the future. Mr. Morgan continued by discussing the implications of park land zoning with the Board.

Ms. Fenton inquired when it was expected that the final version of the green network strategy would go to council. Mr. Morgan responded that he believed it would be July or August. He continued by noting that some of the regulations and policies may take years to work through.

Mr. Morgan shared that throughout the document he has identified various topics and further outlined the Charter provisions and the steps HRM has taken for the Board to review. Mr. Clement commented that it would be interesting to know whether any deficiencies had been identified in the abilities of the municipality to affect the proposed ideas in terms of acquiring land, restricting access and so forth, and whether there are any legislative concerns encumbering the implementation of the strategy. Mr. Morgan acknowledged that the municipality has the authority to expropriate land and shared significant concerns with this practice. The Board continued to discuss these concerns with Mr. Morgan.

Mr. Regan commented that he would like to see the municipality develop a master storm water management plan based on watersheds so that when developers create an application it can be measured against a master plan. Mr. Morgan shared that the Regional Plan requires watershed studies to be conducted. The Board continued to discuss opportunity to develop a comprehensive storm water management plan for designated growth areas.

Mr. Morgan shared that since Halifax Water acquired storm water management from municipality, they are now regulated by Nova Scotia Environment and the Utility and Review Board. Ms. Fenton commented that presently the storm water management policy emphasizes quantity over quality and shared that there are various techniques that can be implemented to help improve the quality. She continued by noting that there are ways that developers can help manage storm water and also treat the quality of the storm water at the planning stage through design and materials. Mr. Morgan shared that an idea being considered is incentivizing development which implements proactive techniques to storm water management.

Mr. Regan commented on the importance of floodplain and stream mapping. Mr. Morgan shared that there is a provincial statement of interest included in the report. He noted that HRM will be conducting new studies on the Sackville River and surrounding area which will be considering the impacts of global

warming on the flow through the river. Mr. Regan agreed that this study was a considerable step forward and shared that he would like this implemented for all watersheds. The Board continued to discuss the importance and costs associated with floodplain and stream mapping throughout the municipality.

Mr. Morgan referred the Board to the Shaping Communities section of the report. He continued by sharing some of the objectives related to growth management outlined in the report:

- *Foster a land management and community design approach which integrates preservation of lands of ecological, cultural and environmental significance; lands suited for renewable resource extraction; and lands suited for parks, trails and corridors which provide recreational and educational opportunities;*
- *Direct growth so as to balance property rights and lifestyle opportunities with responsible fiscal and environmental management.*

Mr. Morgan commented that once the report is tabled by Council, then it will be a matter of implementing the Green Network Strategy into municipal regulations, policies and investment decisions. Mr. Morgan continued by discussing with the Board the advantages of urban development and implications of urban sprawl and clustered rural developments, as related to environmental pressures and municipal servicing.

Mr. Clement shared his concerns with allowing septic systems on private lots that are unable to be monitored by officials and noted that the effects of a badly kept sewage systems can negatively impact neighbours and public lands. He continued by stating that the lack of regulatory supports in place is concerning. Ms. Fenton shared that the main challenge in compliance issues with onsite sewage systems is identifying the source of the problem.

Mr. Morgan encouraged the Board to reach out to be considered one of the stakeholder groups. Mr. Reid shared that he would contact staff to see whether the Board could be included in consultations and reminded the Board that they have the option to meet in-between scheduled meetings as well.

Mr. Regan thanked Mr. Morgan for his presentation and asked whether the Board had any final questions or comments. Mr. Regan shared a final comment stating that Halifax Water to include fish passage and cultures in their standards.

Mr. Morgan encouraged the Board to email him any questions or comments on the report once they have an opportunity to review it.

7. REPORTS/DISCUSSION

8. ADDED ITEMS

8.1 Informal update on the Halifax Water Caucus

Mr. Regan invited Ms. Schnare to share an informal update on the Halifax Water Caucus. Ms. Schnare shared that after a two year hiatus the Halifax Water Caucus, part of the Nova Scotia Environmental Network, has been reinvigorated. She continued by stating that it is a member-based discussion group that is made up of representatives from various NGOs, government and academia who meet once per month by phone to discuss relevant topics and that going forward action-oriented working groups will be created.

The Board discussed how the Halifax Water Caucus can share information with the Regional Watershed Advisory Board.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – January 13, 2016

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

**RWAB Minutes
December 9, 2015**

Cailin MacDonald
Legislative Support