

URBAN DESIGN TASK FORCE
MINUTES
March 30, 2007

PRESENT: Ms. Dale Godsoe, Chair
Mr. William Hyde
Ms. Cathy Carmody
Mr. Paul MacKinnon
Mr. Bernie Smith
Mr. Stephen Terauds
Ms. Linda Garber
Ms. Margot Young
Mr. Frank Palermo
Councillor Dawn Sloane
Councillor Mary Wile

REGRETS: Mr. Kevin Riles
Mr. Paul Shakotko
Mr. David Garrett
Mr. Kendall Taylor
Ms. Adriane Abbott
Councillor Jim Smith

STAFF: Mr. Andy Fillmore, Project Manager, Capital District
Ms. Julia Horncastle, Legislative Assistant

CONSULTANTS: Mr. Harold Madi, Partner, Office for Urbanism
Ms. Jennifer Keesmaat, Partner, Office for Urbanism

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 12:08 p.m.

The consultants were in attendance.

2. **INTRODUCTIONS**

Ms. Godsoe introduced Mr. Dave McCusker, Manager, Regional Transportation.

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES - March 14, 2007**

MOVED by Stephen Terauds, seconded by Councillor Wile, that the minutes of March 14, 2007 be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. **APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS**

Additions

Ms. Godsoe requested an item entitled "Administration" be added to the agenda.

MOVED by Paul MacKinnon, seconded by Frank Garber, that the Order of Business, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. **BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES**

6. **CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS**

6.1 **Land Use Transportation Connection- David McCusker**

Mr. Dave McCusker, Manager, Regional Transportation, with the aid of a Powerpoint presentation noted the following:

- Growth in the Regional Core is fundamental and everything else is based on this assumption,
- Transit delivery, bicycle connections and pedestrian walkability can be focussed downtown as that is where most people work,
- One of the steps was to identify where the best transit opportunities were,
- Staff is currently working on the rural express transit service which is projected to be in service by the spring of 2008 noting, these will follow the 100 Series highways and stop only at the interchange locations where there will be a terminal and a park and ride lot,
- High Speed Ferry is another component of the transportation connection.

Mr. McCusker advised staff has done the projected ridership for the centres but they did not test the sensitivity of whether the transit service was being optimized.

In response to Mr. Palermo as to the implications of a broad policy direction for the core area, Mr. McCusker advised the Regional Plan states that within the regional centre the need is not there for substantial roadway capacity or parking supply. More of the trips are going to come through other means noting there is still room to build on what is currently in place in terms of handling traffic. He advised there is no expectation of having to do any major infrastructure upgrades to the roadway network other than on the transit side.

Mr. Harold Madi, Office for Urbanism, stated that as this unfolds you will see pedestrians becoming a priority. He noted the development of high occupancy vehicle lanes may become a part of the roadway system .

Mr. McCusker noted HRM is currently looking at getting across peninsular Halifax with the transit corridor and there is expectation of a major infrastructure investment that will create bus only lanes.

Mr. McCusker stated that in the past the end point has been downtown and the reason why the ridership is so high is because that is where the service is. He stated the regional centre is still expected to be the key for future employment and commercial growth because it is easier to service one end point rather than multiple end points. He stated HRM will try to expand its ability to connect end points together and provide services to all.

Ms. Jennifer Keesmaat, Office for Urbanism, stated transit oriented development is essential and questioned the implications of having transit oriented growth happening outside the regional centre when the regional centre actually needs to intensify significantly. She questioned whether there has been some prioritizing to ensure that the investment in public transportation actually prioritizes the regional centre as opposed to investing in long extensive lines that on a certain level accommodate a certain form of sprawl. She stated the core has to be a priority for the investment of public transportation so that, from the perspective of someone who is a land use developer, it is not easy to develop outside the core.

It was noted for this to work the buses have to be full both ways which may see a rebalancing with more residential in the peninsular area.

Councillor Sloane joined the meeting at 12:53 p.m.

6.2 Communications

Mr. Godsoe advised she had met with Deborah Story, Manager of Marketing and Design and Patricia Pegley, Marketing and Communications Assistant noting there is a need to lobby for more communications and for staff to support the communication aspect of the project.

6.3 Update on Forum #2 Outcomes

- A report entitled "Neighbourhood & District Case Studies - Potential Urban Design Strategies" was circulated to the Committee.
- A report entitled "Draft - Urban Design Forum 3 - opportunity sites" was circulated

- to the Committee.
- A schematic drawing entitled “Visualizing Density” was circulated to the Committee.

Ms. Jennifer Keesmaat and Mr. Harold Madi, Office for Urbanism, presented the report to the Committee noting the forum will begin on April 16th.

Following the presentation, members of the Task Force noted the following;

- There is a need to be careful when discussing height and stories, should talk about number of stories but not height,
- There is a need to discuss the fine tuning of neighbourhoods. Halifax is not a city of neighbourhoods,
- Defining neighbourhoods would not have to be specific,
- The intent is for a walkable scale environment where public services and amenities were available,
- Anywhere there is a house is a neighbourhood,
- Would want there to be room to ask the question “what else is possible” within the guidelines,
- Are the drawings tested with regards to an urban corridor,
- There needs to be another layer of checking of the work,
- The question needs to be asked whether it is achieving what it needs to achieve.

The committee was advised heritage guidelines are in the process of being defined at the present time. There will be buildings that can be demolished as well as those that can't be due to a heritage aspect.

6.4 Final Report Format

The committee was advised this is part of the ongoing process.

6.5 Implementation

The committee was advised this is part of the ongoing process.

6.6 Residential Densities, density/height relationship (residential and commercial)

Ms. Carmody stated everything being discussed is great but there has been no discussion on the underlying beliefs, what do we want the city to look like and who else do we want to live in the downtown core. How do we make decisions on who we want to attract.

Councillor Sloane stated there is a need to try to offset high end development with affordable, how do we repopulate.

Ms. Carmody was tasked with developing a work plan to bring back to the table.

6.7 Next Steps After Report Completion/ Time Line

The committee was advised this is part of the ongoing process.

7. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND DELEGATIONS - NONE

8. REPORTS - NONE

9. ADDED ITEMS

9.1 Administration

Ms. Godsoe noted this is a critical undertaking and suggested more staff were needed to assist with the project.

MOVED by Councillor Sloane, seconded by Paul MacKinnon that discussion be held with appropriate staff regarding the reallocation of staff resources to enable Mr. Fillmore and the Task Force to fulfill the mandate of the committee. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

10. NEXT REGULAR MEETING DATE

The next meeting is scheduled for May 2, 2007.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Julia Horncastle
Legislative Assistant