

**URBAN DESIGN TASK FORCE
MINUTES**

March 3, 2010

PRESENT:

Ms. Dale Godsoe, Chair
Mr. Paul McKinnon, Vice Chair
Mr. Paul Shakatko
Ms. Louisa Horne
Mr. Frank Palermo
Ms. Sally Camus
Mr. Lorne Perry
Mr. David Garrett
Mr. William Hyde
Mr. Stephen Terauds
Mr. Bernie Smith
Mr. Patrick LeRoy
Ms. Mary Jane Adams
Councillor Mary Wile
Councillor Jim Smith
Councillor Dawn Sloane

STAFF:

Mr. Andy Fillmore, Project Manager, Urban Design
Ms. Barbara Coleman, Legislative Assistant
Mr. Luc Ouellett, Planner, Community Development
Mr. Richard Harvey, Senior Planner, Community
Development
Ms. Kelly Denty, Supervisor, Planning Applications
Ms. Shannon Pictou, Urban Design Technician

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

The Legislative Assistant called for nominations for Chair.

MOVED BY Mr. Shakatko, seconded by Mr. Smith, that Ms. Godsoe be nominated as Chair of the Urban Design Task Force. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

The Legislative Assistant called three times for any further nominations. Hearing none, she called for a motion to cease the nominations.

MOVED BY Mr. Garrett, seconded by Ms. Horne, that the nominations be ceased. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Ms. Godsoe was declared Chair of the Urban Design Task Force.

Ms. Godsoe assumed the Chair and called for nominations for Vice Chair.

MOVED BY Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Terauds, that Mr. MacKinnon be nominated as Vice Chair of the Urban Design Task Force. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Ms. Godsoe called three times for any further nominations. Hearing none, she called for a motion to cease the nominations.

MOVED BY Councillor Smith, seconded by Ms. Horne, that the nominations be ceased. MOTION PUT AND PASSED

Ms. Godsoe announced that Mr. MacKinnon would remain as Vice Chair of the Urban Design Task Force.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - NONE

4. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

Addition:

7.4 Functional Plan Update - Mr. Andy Fillmore

MOVED BY Ms. Adams, seconded by Ms. Horne, that the agenda be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

5. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

5.1 UDTF Feedback on Transit Plan and Regional Plan Advisory Committee/Council Deliberations re: Sprawl

Mr. MacKinnon provided background information as well as presentation prepared by HRM Planning staff regarding UDTF Feedback on Transit Plan and Regional Plan Advisory Committee/Council Deliberations re: Sprawl. He stated that the presentation had been brought forward at a Regional Plan Advisory Committee meeting. Highlights were as follows:

- The HRMbyDesign process falls under the authority of the Regional Plan
- The 20 year Regional Plan is the overall growth and development plan for HRM that establishes a responsible growth program which notes where and when HRM should develop
- The Regional Plan is reviewed every five years and is currently coming up for review after its first five years since implementation
- The Regional Plan has identified six areas able to be developed for potential future growth
- Three of these areas have received approval from Regional Council via a secondary planning strategy in Bedford South, Bedford West and the Morris/Russell Lake area
- The remaining three requests are now coming forward from three different developers who want to create residential subdivisions in Sandy Lake, Port Wallace and the Highway 102 West Corridor area
- Council must also approve secondary planning strategies for these three areas in order for development to proceed
- Council uses criteria contained in Policy S3 to make this decision
- The projected population growth for HRM over the next 20 years is 25% in the Regional Centre, 50% suburban and 25% rural
- Municipal costs must be addressed to see if such developments are cost effective and efficient for HRM
- These new developments can accommodate almost 31,000 people
- The projected population growth for HRM between now and 2026 is estimated between 36,000 and 94,000
- Approximately 77,000 people can be accommodated even without the three proposed developments
- For the next 20 years, Council has already approved three times enough development to accommodate the projected population growth
- A concern is if more suburban housing would hurt the Regional Centre
- Staff's recommendation is that these three requests be considered in the next five year review in 2016
- Local infrastructure costs are paid for by the developer, however, HRM would be responsible for additional costs as outlined in the Capital Cost Contribution policy
- HRM would have to spend approximately \$18,000,000 to \$25,000,000 on these three developments

Mr. MacKinnon concluded that there is no fiscal benefit to HRM in meeting the three development requests at this time.

A discussion on the presentation ensued.

Mr. Smith expressed concern that continued focus on lot approvals may detract from orderly development of the area.

Mr. Garrett noted that the applications appeared to be contrary to the Regional Plan.

The Chair indicated that Mr. Smith and Mr. MacKinnon would draft a letter to the Regional Plan Advisory Committee on behalf of the Task Force. She noted that the letter should state that the Task Force supports the Regional Plan and staff report as written.

MOVED BY Mr. MacKinnon, seconded by Ms. Horne, that the Urban Design Task Force send a letter to the Regional Plan Advisory Comm in support of the staff recommendation.

The Chair stated that 25% of population growth was supposed to be in the Regional Centre and approving these developments would detract from the goal of HRMbyDeisgn by undermining the Regional Centre Plan with suburban development.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

It was noted that it was unknown when this issue would be going back to the Regional Plan Advisory Committee and that the letter would be shared with the Task Force prior to being sent.

The Task Force now discussed the transit issue regarding the downtown circulator shuttle.

Mr. MacKinnon stated that the idea of a downtown circulator shuttle is endorsed by HRMbyDesign; however, this section was not included when the plan was approved by Council. He asked if this was something the Task Force wished to address as a citizens advisory group. He indicated that the idea for the shuttle came from HRM Transportation and Public Works staff who advised that the existing transit system would be augmented by a downtown shuttle plan which would operate much in the same way as FRED; making stops at major employment sites, hospitals, schools and connecting to existing transit.

Mr. Smith noted that there are a number of downtown concentrations of people who need such a bus. He stated that ferry volumes are decreasing which may suggest that the transit connection needs of people on the ferry were not being met; noting that the shuttle would help. He advised that they were trying to attract more population downtown and such a shuttle would be of service.

Mr. MacKinnon suggested that the Task Force write a letter to Council. He stated that HRM Transit staff has said they do not have the ability to create the shuttle, however, this was in conflict with the HRMbyDesign plan. He advised that staff would have to be instructed to put the shuttle in place by Council.

MOVED BY Mr. Terauds, seconded by Ms. Camus, that the Urban Design Task Force write a letter to Regional Council suggesting that the intent and principles that HRMbyDesign put forward are not being fulfilled as there is not a downtown shuttle. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

It was noted that Mr. MacKinnon and Mr. Smith would also draft this letter.

Mr. Smith submitted an article from the Victoria Transport Policy Institute and requested that it be circulated.

5.2 Adopt the Work Plan and Meeting Schedule as Presented at the Last Meeting, February 17, 2010

- The 2010 Urban Design Task Force Work Plan was before the Task Force.
- A briefing note dated February 17, 2010 was before the Task Force.

Mr. Andy Fillmore, Project Manager, Urban Design, noted that staff had drafted a work plan and meeting schedule for the year to add some formality to the process. He also included a briefing note dated February 17, 2010 with suggested motions.

The Chair advised that the work plan was a general guide which would only be changed with due notice. She indicated that she would still like a brief document outlining the three goals for the completion of the Task Force's mandate.

Mr. Fillmore noted that the first motion contained in the briefing note could be brought forward.

MOVED BY Mr. Shakotko, seconded by Ms. Camus, that the Urban Design Task Force adopt the following goals for the completion of its mandate:

- 1. Recommend to Council a framework for future detailed neighbourhood and district planning, focused upon where growth should occur and what form it should take;**
- 2. Identify important issues and opportunities that should be addressed through future detailed neighbourhood and district planning; and**
- 3. Recommend to Regional Council decision-making criteria to be used for prioritizing neighbourhoods and districts for future detailed planning; and**

4. Except the 2010 Urban Design Task Force Work Plan.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND DELEGATIONS

6.1 Correspondence - None

6.2 Petitions - None

6.3 Presentations - None

7. REPORTS

7.1 Forms of Density

Mr. Fillmore indicated that this item referred to page 4 of the Regional Centre Reurbanization Strategy and Urban Design Guidelines document regarding appropriate sites for reurbanization, appropriate forms for density and obstacles. He outlined the five general types of appropriate sites for reurbanization and forms of density as contained in the document.

Mr. Fillmore stated that there were obstacles to achieving neighbourhood goals. He indicated that the Dalhousie School of Planning competes an exercise on this matter each year and that HRM was usually a client; noting that the students "Filling in the Middle" presentation this year would identify some of these obstacles. Mr. Fillmore advised that some obstacles included uncertainty over land values, amenities such as parks, schools and transit as well as demographic trends; noting that the downtown core currently had many students and empty nesters, however, not many families. In closing, Mr. Fillmore outlined policy barriers as contained in the document.

7.2 General Neighbourhood Case Study

Mr. Richard Harvey, Senior Planner, provided the presentation on the General Neighbourhood Case Study; noting that, by way of this case study, staff were looking to gain some understanding by looking at things on the ground as well as the existing requirements within the current land use provisions. He indicated that for this case study, staff had focussed on the western side of the Halifax Peninsula from the West End Mall to the Gottingen/Hydrostone area.

Mr. Luc Ouellet, Planner, indicated that staff had stuck with Halifax due to lack of time and a need to get Dartmouth Planning staff on board. Regarding the General Neighbourhood category, he advised that the areas with the lowest density on the Peninsula were the Westmount subdivision and the lands around Connaught Avenue; both of which were typical urban suburbs. He stated that the R1 and R2 zones were

generally the two zones in the area and outlined the zone requirements and minimum setback requirements for the case study area.

Mr. Ouellet indicated that the current By-laws did not address the character of the neighbourhood; noting that this would need to be addressed in the future.

Mr. Ouellet referred to the corridor of the area which was located on Bayers Road between Oxford Street and Connaught Avenue; noting that this was an area which appeared to be in transition. He stated that the zoning in the area was a mixture of R2 and C2A which is a minor commercial zone and allows for a variety of commercial uses. He indicated that the maximum height for the area was 34 feet and that the setbacks and lot coverages do not need to conform as long as they meet the By-law.

Mr. Harvey indicated that mixed use developments could sometimes be problematic and this corridor was somewhat of an under used site. He noted that it may be a disincentive that only up to four units are permitted in the R2 zone.

The Chair asked what obstacles were present in creating density and what recommendations could be made to change those obstacles.

Mr. Harvey stated that the next step would be to show the Task Force the transect approach for the area.

Mr. Ouellet stated that the transect envisioned for this street was low form houses up to six storey stack houses. He referred to the neighbourhood centre located on Oxford Street close to Bayers Road; noting that it was a hot spot of uses with many businesses and some residential in zone R2. Regarding the Urban Centre, Mr. Ouellet stated that the transect shows that this area does promote a higher density between house form and low rise development.

A discussion ensued with staff responding to questions.

Mr. Harvey noted that the definition of actual boundaries was flexible and that while staff may suggest corridors to the Task Force, the nature of the document was to be a resource and launching point.

Mr. Harvey indicated that there would be a parking strategy to ensure that such lots are not a dominant form in buildings; noting that some areas may have more parking than they need.

In closing, Mr. Harvey advised that staff was trying to illustrate some of the issues that exist today to help the Task Force focus on solutions.

7.3 Urban Neighbourhood Case Study

Mr. Harvey stated that staff would now focus on some of the issues within the confines of the Urban Neighbourhood and Urban Centre; noting that the focus of the case study was the Gottingen Street area just south of the Hydrostone. He advised that there was

quite a mixture of land uses in the area including industrial, commercial, low density, high density, town houses with commercial uses, low rise residential and mid rise apartments. Mr. Harvey indicated that the existing land use by-law for the area included the C2 and R2 zones; R2 being a purely residential zone and C2 a general business zone which allows for both commercial and residential uses. He noted that for the case study staff would be focusing on the C2 zone; stating that there were few land use restrictions under this zone, very limited built form regulations and no architectural or site plan requirements. He indicated that this was a hold over from older land use by-law controls; noting that a building could go up to 80 feet if it was commercial. Mr. Harvey advised that this was not the case throughout the entire Peninsula. He indicated that the C2 zone allows for all residential uses including apartment buildings and that there were no architectural requirements, however, there were built form requirements including angle controls, open space requirements depending on density as well as a maximum number of 125 people per acre permitted. Mr. Harvey stated that, therefore, it was not the form and use of the building; the building was a result of land use by-law controls and regulations for density and open space. In closing, he advised that HRM should start to look at development that is more appropriate for the street itself.

Mr. Harvey presented the case study on the Neighbourhood Centre; noting that the Hydrostone had been chosen as a focus area. He stated that the character of the area was very historic and that the existing land use by-law included the C2A, C2, R2 and C3 Industrial zone. He advised that some care was required in the redevelopment of the Olands Brewery site as it was within the C3 zone. He stated that the conclusions for this area included highlighting that current regulations focus on land use over form; noting that form must be emphasized. Mr. Harvey suggested that the Task Force improve this relationship.

The Chair thanked staff for their presentations and requested their suggestions regarding zoning.

7.4 Functional Plan Update - Mr. Andy Fillmore

Mr. Fillmore indicated that staff were still working on concise summaries of each Functional Plan for the Task Force and that this item was forthcoming.

8. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting was scheduled for April 7, 2010

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:08 p.m.

