

**URBAN DESIGN TASK FORCE
MINUTES**

May 12, 2010

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

STAFF: Mr. Andy Fillmore, Urban Design Project Manager
Mr. Richard Harvey, Senior Planner
Mr. Luc Ouellet, Planner
Ms. Shawnee Gregory, Legislative Assistant

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	CALL TO ORDER	3
2.	APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES	3
3.	APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS	3
4.	BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES	4
5.	CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS	4
6.	CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATIONS	4
6.1	Correspondence	4
6.2	Petitions	4
6.3	Presentations	4
6.3.1	Introductory Chapter for the Neighbourhood Greenprint	4
6.3.2	Issues and Opportunities to Be Addressed in the Neighbourhood Greenprint	6
7.	REPORTS	7
7.1	Staff Update re: Circulator Shuttle	3
8.	ADDED ITEMS	7
9.	NEXT MEETING DATE	8
10.	ADJOURNMENT	8

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 12:02 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - April 7, 2010

Amendment:

Item 6.3.1 - The first bullet should read *decreases* rather than *raises*

MOVED BY Mr. MacKinnon, seconded by Mr. Hyde, that the minutes of April 7, 2010 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

It was requested that item 7.1 Staff Update re: Circulator Shuttle be moved to the top of the agenda. The Task Force agreed.

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

7.1 Staff Update re: Circulator Shuttle

Mr. Eddie Robar, Manager of Planning and Product Development, Metro Transit, and Mr. Dave Reage, Planning and Project Delivery Coordinator, Metro Transit, provided staff's rationale for not recommending the downtown circulator shuttle, based on their January 26, 2010 report to Council.

Mr. Robar advised that the shuttle would only serve to move passengers around the downtown core and, therefore, did not solve the problem of getting passengers in and out of the downtown area in a more convenient and effective manner which was part of the Five Year Transit Plan. Mr. Robar also indicated that Metro Transit required six hybrid buses to provide the shuttle service which would cost \$7,800,000 in Capital Funds, however, staff would only be able to purchase two which would not be sufficient. He noted that funds had never been set aside for this initiative. In closing, Mr. Robar advised that as of January 1, 2010 Metro Transit had taken on all transit related files including those previously held by Regional Transportation Planning staff.

A discussion ensued with Metro Transit staff responding to questions.

Mr. Terauds and Mr. Shakotko entered the meeting at 12:16 p.m.

Mr. Robar noted that the proposed frequency increases to existing routes would provide more service in the downtown core as well.

Councillor Sloane entered the meeting at 12:20

Members of the Task Force provided comments on the importance of a downtown shuttle as a way of discouraging vehicle traffic and encouraging the kind of central area that the residents of HRM wanted.

The Chair advised that action should be put back on the table which would require further discussion.

This item will be added to the next agenda.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES - NONE

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS - NONE

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

6.1 Correspondence - None

6.2 Petitions - None

6.3 Presentations

6.3.1 Introductory Chapter for the Neighbourhood Greenprint

- A document titled "Regional Centre Urban Design Study: Introduction & Background to the Neighbourhood Greenprint" was before the Task Force.

Mr. Andy Fillmore, Urban Design Project Manager, stated that the Task Force was slowly building their Greenprint document and presented chapter 1; noting that they had already been provided with chapters 2 and 3. He stated that this was a recapitulation on the Urban Design Plan and indicated that he had included an appendix with the outcomes of forms 1, 2 and 3. Mr. Fillmore stated that the document was a draft and welcomed comments from the Task Force. In closing, he stated that item 1.4, page 18, was a snap shot of the way he and staff imagined the document being pulled together.

The Chair asked staff if any item in particular stood out to them in thinking about the Greenprint.

Mr. Fillmore stated that he often reflects on the manner in which communities think about sustainability; noting that even in the timespan since the Urban Design Vision was written his sense was that the community appetite for sustainability as well as the environmental imperative had increased. He advised that the Task Force could chose to go back to these imperatives or to attempt to do better with regards to sustainability in the final outcome.

Mr. Luc Ouellet, Planner, stated that there was a fair amount of awkward zoning in the Urban Deisgn which the Greenprint could address.

In order to provide policy context, Mr. Fillmore noted that there was a memorandum of understanding between the provincial government and the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities which forces municipalities to take action on climate change.

Mr. LeRoy noted that such policies become quite complicated and unforgiving. He suggested that a liaison office be formed between HRM and the province for intra and inter departmental guidelines.

A discussion on the Introductory Chapter for the Neighbourhood Greenprint ensued.

Mr. Palermo suggested that a piece dealing with street scapes and public infrastructure be added to page 18.

Mr. LeRoy noted that density and the treatment of density as it relates to height may need to be revisited. He stated that higher buildings could actually mitigate wind and shadow effects as well allow for more green space.

Mr. Fillmore indicated that the Downtown Plan had established how tall each building and block should be in the downtown and then kicked off 30% . He stated that in order to get that percentage back, developers must provide public benefit.

Mr. Ouellet stated that staff had not seen a push from developers to build higher as most applications fell under the maximum height restrictions.

The Chair requested that members email any additional thoughts on the Introductory Chapter for the Neighbourhood Greenprint to Mr. Fillmore and Mr. Ouellet.

Mr. Fillmore advised that after the June meeting, he planned to take an interim approval document to Regional Council which would include the structure of the

Greenprint and the transect approach. He stated that after Council approves this document in principle the Task Force could make the document much more public. He indicated that staff were looking to adopt something at the Municipal Planning Strategy level to help control some of the bad development in the Regional Centre.

6.3.2 Issues and Opportunities to Be Addressed in the Neighbourhood Greenprint

- A document titled “Issues and Opportunities Within the Regional Centre” was before the Task Force.

Mr. Fillmore noted that Mr. Ouellet had written the Issues and Opportunities to Be Addressed in the Neighbourhood Greenprint document; noting that it referenced the experiences of HRM Applications Planners in the Regional Centre over the past 5 to 10 years and included attempts to solve known problems. He requested that the Task Force think about this document over the next meeting or two.

The Chair asked the Task Force and staff if there were any issues missing from this document.

Regarding appropriate building height, Mr. Fillmore noted that the downtown core differed from the remainder of the Regional Centre as the land values were high and there would always be a demand for tall buildings. He stated that in neighbourhoods and corridors there was logic for appropriate height transitions and scale. He indicated that the way the document was currently written allowed for some slight opportunities for tall buildings outside of the downtown corridor.

The Task Force reviewed and discussed the Issues and Opportunities to be addressed in the Neighbourhood Greenprint document beginning with the Sustainable section.

Regarding the harbour, Mr. Ouellet noted that the importance of the harbour and port must be recognized. He advised that the overall provincial waterfront development lands were already being tackled on the Halifax side via the new downtown plan, however, it still had to be done for Dartmouth.

Councillor Sloane requested that buffering be included.

Regarding wind, Mr. Fillmore stated that it was his understanding that the only standard regarding development and wind was to not worsen the situation.

Councillor Sloane suggested that HRM consider hiring an impartial consultant to conduct wind studies rather than the proponent as was the current system.

Mr. LeRoy advised that modelling information was already available within the architecture community and could be obtained by HRM.

Mr. Ouellet noted that it was a tradition that municipalities get information such as wind studies from developers as it would take up a great deal of staff time otherwise.

Mr. Shakotko noted that a more general issue was how to make it more attractive for developers to build in the Regional Centre.

The Chair stated that this was a good discussion point to carry forward at a future meeting.

Mr. Smith indicated that HRM had two tax assessment levels, a higher level in the older, established areas like the downtown and a subsidized rate in outside areas. He noted that if Council chose a uniform tax increase it would negatively impact the middle as it already had historically high assessment levels and levels of taxation and the outside businesses were assessed at subsidized rates. He stated that the Task Force may have to fight for two tax rates; noting that he had written a paper regarding this issue which he had brought to the Capital District Steering Committee.

Mr. LeRoy expressed concern regarding absorption rates; noting that the current culture and infrastructure supports urban sprawl.

The Chair requested that staff give some thought to this thinking and come back with advice on what was possible and how the Task Force could be most effective.

Mr. Garrett stated that there was a need for a neighbourhoods document.

Councillor Wile left the meeting at 2:34 p.m.

Mr. Fillmore requested that members send him any more issues they may have regarding this document prior to the next meeting.

Mr. Fillmore advised that this document would probably be used as an appendix to the Greenprint, however, some ideas may migrate into the main document.

Due to time constraints, the Task Force agreed to finish dealing with this item at the June 2, 2010 meeting.

7. REPORTS

7.1 Staff Update re: Circulator Shuttle

This item was dealt with earlier in the meeting. Please see page 3.

8. ADDED ITEMS - NONE

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting was scheduled for June 2, 2010 from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:39 p.m.

Shawnee Gregory
Legislative Assistant