

**URBAN DESIGN TASK FORCE
MINUTES**

July 7, 2010

PRESENT:

Ms. Dale Godsoe, Chair
Mr. Paul MacKinnon, Vice Chair
Councillor Dawn Sloane
Mr. Jim Lamplugh
Mr. Lorne Perry
Mr. David Garrett
Ms. Sally Camus
Mr. Bernie Smith
Mr. Patrick LeRoy
Mr. Paul Shakotko

REGRETS:

Councillor Mary Wile
Mr. Stephen Terauds
Mr. William Hyde
Ms. Mary Jane Adams
Ms. Louisa Horne
Mr. Frank Palermo

STAFF:

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

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 12:07 p.m. in the Media Room, City Hall.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - January 21 & June 2, 2010

Amendment:

January 21, 2010, Page 6 - After Mr. Shakotko's comments, the line *Mr. MacKinnon indicated that he was in total agreement with Mr. Shakotko* will be added.

MOVED BY Ms. Camus, seconded by Mr. Garrett, that the minutes of January 21, 2010 be approved as amended and the minutes of June 2, 2010 be approved as presented. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Addition:

4.2 Regional Plan Advisory Committee Update

MOVED BY Mr. Garrett, seconded by Mr. MacKinnon, that the agenda be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Downtown Circulator Shuttle

C Correspondence dated July 7, 2010 was submitted.

Mr. MacKinnon advised that his correspondence dated July 7, 2010 was an amended draft of the Task Force's correspondence regarding the downtown circulator shuttle as a result of their discussion with Metro Transit staff at the May 12, 2010 meeting. He stated that Metro Transit's mandate did not encompass the greater need for accessibility and highlighted an attached Memorandum of Understanding between local universities and HRM drafted in 2005 regarding transit. Mr. MacKinnon indicated that an attached policy also stated that HRM shall implement a downtown shuttle program and he suggested that Metro Transit was not following that order; noting that this was not a permissive policy and that he was unsure as to what the legal implications would be if the policy was not followed. He stated that the correspondence from the Task Force would simply remind Council of this fact.

The Chair suggested that the letter note that transportation was a key component of HRMbyDesign and effected matters such as density and quality of life. She also suggested that a timeline be provided.

Councillor Sloane stated that on July 6, 2010 Council had approved early arrival of approximately 20 buses for the upcoming Canada Games. She indicated that the buses would not be in use until the winter of 2011 and suggested that the Task Force request consideration that they be used for a pilot test of a downtown shuttle.

Mr. Fillmore advised that he would investigate the mechanics of getting the idea of a pilot project in front of Council either in letter or report form.

It was noted that it would be helpful to attach all letters of support for the downtown circulator shuttle to the report or letter going to Council.

Mr. Fillmore suggested that the Task Force may wish to add the sentiment that environmental imperatives were more urgent now than they were five years ago.

The Chair advised that staff and the Task Force would work on having this issue included on an upcoming Council agenda.

4.2 Regional Plan Advisory Committee Update

The Chair indicated that Mr. MacKinnon, Mr. Smith and Mr. Fillmore had attended the Regional Plan Advisory Committee meeting on June 23, 2010.

Mr. MacKinnon provided an update for the Task Force; noting that HRM staff had amended their position slightly and were now advising that there was no need to change secondary planning strategies, however, their recommendation remained the same. He stated that the Task Force was endorsing the staff recommendation that there was no need to begin these projects at this time as there was currently no demand and that people were realizing how important these developments could be if they moved forward; noting that the public in attendance wanted the developments to proceed. Mr. MacKinnon advised that the developments would take focus from the Regional Centre and indicated that no resolution came out of the meeting and the Committee would be meeting again in late July. In closing, Mr. MacKinnon stated that this was not a violation of the Regional Plan, however, it was a violation of the intention.

As a next step, Councillor Sloane suggested that the Task Force obtain information regarding capital cost contributions. She stated that if they could prove that it costs

more for HRM to sustain development away from the Regional Centre it may help the cause to keep on the mandate of money.

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS - NONE

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

6.1 Correspondence

6.1.1 Letter from the Regional Plan Advisory Committee re: Cost of Servicing Study and Requests to Initiate Secondary Planning Strategies

- Correspondence dated May 26, 2010 from Mr. Fred Morley, Chair, HRM Regional Plan Advisory Committee was before the Task Force.

This item was dealt with under item 4.2. Please see page 4.

6.2 Petitions - None

6.3 Presentations

6.3.1 “Capital Ideas - Leveraging Urban Investment for Regional Prosperity”

- A report dated June 10, 2010 was submitted.

The Chair congratulated staff on the awards which they recently received.

Mr. Fillmore thanked the Task Force. He stated that at the June 2, 2010 meeting he had provided a short explanation on the above noted program under a different name, the Strategic Urban Partnership. He advised that the program had been unanimously approved by Council at their July 6, 2010 meeting and provided the Task Force with the presentation he had given Council; stating that he wished to bring it to their attention as a result of the time they had been spending on the Functional Plans as well as his desire to illustrate that their issues were not being lost. Highlights were as follows:

- HRM needed to better invest in developing the downtown
- The most effective way to serve outside communities is through the urban core
- Cultural aspects must be included as well
- Governance is the key to making the partnership work and the coordinating group is required to keep all three tiers of government working together

- There is currently 31 acres of publically owned vacant land in downtown Halifax and 41% of vacant lands in Dartmouth were in public ownerships
- Density bonusing allowance throughout the Regional Centre would be a powerful tool as it was currently only permitted in the downtown core
- Staff are proposing that HRMbyDesign goals apply to the entire Regional Centre, not just the downtown

The Chair encouraged the Task Force to watch the video from the Centre for Disease Control which Mr. Fillmore had provided at the last meeting as it was a good video from the point of view of health.

A discussion ensued with Mr. Fillmore responding to questions. The following points were noted:

- The program will be funded via staff's current funding for the year and further funding will be explored via the Opportunities Task Force
- The Opportunities Task Force will be put together over the next six months and there was the opportunity and desire for the Urban Design Task Force to be involved as well
- The Greenprint and Downtown Plan are critical parts of this program

Councillor Sloane announced that the vacant Queen Elizabeth High School property was going to be turned into an urban farm rather than a parking lot until construction was complete.

7. REPORTS

7.1 Responses to UDTF Questions, and Modifications to Workplan - HRM Planning Services

- A briefing note dated June 28, 2010 was before the Task Force.

Mr. Fillmore indicated that the draft from the Task Force to Council would be put off until the fall and advised that the briefing note highlighted some issues raised by members such as wind studies and a summary of all development activity.

It was noted that all developments in the downtown were following Urban Design criteria with the exception of those that were labelled as 'grandfathered'.

The Chair indicated that the Task Force would continue their discussion on the Issues and Opportunities within the Regional Centre piece; advising that members could highlight issues they wished to discuss further.

Mr. Luc Ouellet, Planner, stated that he had included a column noting if issues were discussed and resolved by the Task Force to help guide their discussion.

The Task Force discussed item 1.1

The Chair noted this item dealt with gateway strategies for the Port of Halifax.

Mr. Fillmore indicated that this issue was within the mandate of the Harbour Plan which had been adopted.

Mr. Richard Harvey, Senior Planner, advised that some parts were an ongoing process.

Mr. Garrett suggested that the movement of trucks through downtown and the impact that has on neighbourhoods be included as an item to address.

The Chair stated that how window views are impacted could be addressed as well.

No further discussion on this item is required.

The Task Force discussed item 1.5

The Chair noted that there was a legislative tie to this item and that staff were compiling a legislative requirement list.

Mr. Fillmore suggested that an action column be included in the document as well. He noted that this was an issue which required action.

It was noted that the column would be titled action/responsibility.

The Task Force discussed item 1.8

Regarding solar access, an issue raised by Mr. Garrett, Mr. Ouellet indicated that discussion on appropriate levels would come at a later stage.

The Task Force discussed item 2.2

The Chair suggested that this item be flagged for further discussion.

Councillor Sloane suggested that an additional look into variances could also prove useful.

Mr. Harvey stated that, based on case studies, in many places allowable height was beyond the existing zoning regulations; noting that staff would be ensuring they had the right fit of all development components.

Mr. LeRoy stated that while he could appreciate creating predictability and standards, as a Developer he also thought staff should consider designing concepts on an exception basis in terms of how the development fits in with an area. He suggested providing incentives for urban gardens and green spaces as height alone was not the only issue and staff should be looking at merits on a per project basis.

Mr. Fillmore advised that, no matter what plan was adopted, Council could always entertain amendments. He stated that it must be very clear that they were protecting the scale of neighbourhoods and that growth should go where it could be accommodated and where it was needed; noting that height would then be in the right locations.

The Task Force discussed item 2.5

Regarding the burying of poles in subdivisions, it was noted that Nova Scotia Power would not pay for this service, therefore, it only occurred if funded by the developer of a project.

The Chair suggested that the document reflect that there were sometimes difficulties in getting partners to pay for undergrounding. She indicated that the Task Force would flag the financial aspect and do best practice research on other cities.

Mr. Ouellet stated that the undergrounding of utilities could get complicated; noting that there almost needed to be a partnership between the property owner and HRM as the service would not necessarily end at the owner's property.

The Task Force advised that it would be a start to state that, whenever possible, they would like to see utilities buried.

Mr. Fillmore advised that the opening statement for item 2.5 would be included in the Greenprint document as a statement of principle, however, it would also link to existing pole free zones and the creation of an underground reserve.

The Task Force discussed item 3: Heritage.

Mr. Shakotko left the meeting at 1:57 p.m.

Mr. Fillmore advised that consultants had provided staff with a map of Potential Heritage Conservation Districts within the Regional Centre. He indicated that Mr. Terauds had suggested that the Heritage Advisory Committee aid in this endeavour; noting that he attended their last meeting and that members planned to do their homework on the map prior to their next meeting in July. Mr. Fillmore stated that this would become an input to the Greenprint.

The Chair noted that items 3.1 and 3.2 could be discussed further after the Heritage Conservation District information was received from the Heritage Advisory Committee.

The Task Force discussed item 4.1.

Mr. Fillmore stated that this item required a statement of principle and timing.

The Task Force discussed item 4.2.

The Chair noted that prioritization was required as they explored the detailed plan.

The Task Force discussed items 4.3 and 4.4.

The Chair requested staff's input on how to deal with the issue of road design concerns, including roundabouts and road widening.

Mr. Fillmore indicated that a technical staff steering committee was investigating this issue and were working on a review prior to this item going to Council.

The Chair stated that this issue could not be addressed at one meeting.

Councillor Sloane stated that one problem was that HRM was not looking at how roundabouts function in Europe where there were traffic lights for roundabouts with more than two lanes.

The Task Force discussed item 5.2.

Mr. Fillmore referred the Task Force to the last sentence under item 5.2 and indicated that the existing controls referred to old laws.

Mr. Harvey noted that many of the current regulations were based on land use.

Mr. Lamplugh suggested that the Greenprint verbiage be more user friendly in the end.

The Task Force discussed item 5.3.

Mr. Fillmore stated that a major mission was to create mixed use neighbourhoods as current By-laws often created impediments; noting that a new exercise would be to draft new Land Use By-laws for neighbourhoods.

It was agreed that a clear statement of principle was required for each Issue and Opportunity.

The Task Force discussed item 5.4.

Councillor Sloane advised that a clear definition of affordable housing was key as it did not simply mean low income housing.

The Task Force discussed item 5.9.

The Chair stated that this principle was surely that one of the most fundamental building blocks to a community was the draw of a school. She advised that a strong policy statement was required here as well as increased cooperation.

The Task Force discussed item 5.10.

Mr. Lamplugh advised that he did not know if offering tax incentives was the way to approach retail businesses.

Mr. Smith stated that he would like to produce some additional information on this item as unless there was the appropriate combination of taxation and incentives to locate in the downtown core it did not matter.

At this time, the Chair suggested that some items under 8 and 6 could be left until the September 8, 2010 meeting.

The Task Force discussed item 7.1.

The Chair advised that she wished to flag this item for further discussion.

The Chair left the meeting at 2:38 p.m. Mr. MacKinnon, the Vice Chair, assumed the Chair.

Councillor Sloane left the meeting at 2:39 p.m.

The Task Force discussed item 7.2.

Mr. Fillmore stated that this issue had been dealt with already with the help of consultants, however, would be brought back in the fall; noting that they had a good starting point via a map which was created several years ago.

To end the discussion, the Vice Chair requested any other matters members wished to discuss.

Mr. Garret indicated that he found the term Greenprint difficult to get used to as he felt there was no connection between the title and its function.

Mr. Lamplugh agreed with Mr. Garrett's statement.

Mr. Fillmore stated that the greenest thing HRM could do was provide density in neighbourhoods; noting that Greenprint was also a take on the term 'blueprint'. He indicated that the title was already in the media, Council and community as Greenprint and that they should not change their brand in the middle. Mr. Fillmore noted, however, that the Task Force could discuss this further at the September 8, 2010 meeting.

8. ADDED ITEMS

This item was dealt with earlier in the meeting. Please see item 4.2 on page 4.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting was scheduled for September 8, 2010 from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Mr. Fillmore stated that staff would be providing a proposal for additional meetings at the next meeting.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:47 p.m.

Shawnee Gregory
Legislative Assistant

The following item was added as information:

1. Planning Our Municipality - the Following Observations Could Be of Some Value When Planning Our Community - Mr. Lorne Perry