



**HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES
November 18, 2014**

PRESENT: Mayor Mike Savage
Deputy Mayor Darren Fisher
Councillors: Barry Dalrymple
David Hendsbee
Bill Karsten
Lorelei Nicoll
Gloria McCluskey
Waye Mason
Jennifer Watts
Linda Mosher
Russell Walker
Stephen Adams
Reg Rankin
Matt Whitman
Brad Johns
Steve Craig
Tim Outhit

STAFF: Mr. Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer
Ms. Karen Brown, Acting Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Sherryl Murphy, Acting Municipal Clerk
Ms. Jennifer Weagle, Legislative Assistant

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

A video recording of this meeting is available:
http://archive.isiglobal.ca/vod/halifax/archive_2014-11-18_live.mp4.html

The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to Council are available online:
<http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/141118cow-agenda.php>

*The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m., and recessed at 11:52 a.m.
Committee of the Whole reconvened in at 1:00 p.m. and adjourned at 2:50 p.m.*

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Savage called the meeting to order. He welcomed Mr. Gordon Wilson, Member of the Legislative Assembly for Clare-Digby, in attendance in the gallery.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – October 21, 2014

MOVED by Councillor McCluskey, seconded by Councilor Mason, that the Committee of the Whole minutes of October 21, 2014 be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. 2015/16 Recommended Priority Outcomes

The following was before Council:

- A staff report dated November 4, 2014
- A copy of the staff presentation.

Mr. Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer, introduced the presentation of the 2015/16 Recommended Priority Outcomes.

Councillor Mosher arrived at 10:05 a.m. and Councillor Outhit arrived at 10:07 a.m.

Mr. Mike Labrecque, Deputy CAO, presented the Governance and Communication Priority Outcomes area.

Mr. Dave Reage, Manager, Planning and Scheduling, Halifax Transit, presented the Transportation Priority Outcome area.

Mr. Brad Anguish, Director, Parks and Recreation, presented the Healthy Communities Priority Outcome area.

Ms. Jane Fraser, Director, Operations Support, presented the Economic Development Priority Outcome area.

The presentation provided by Mr. Butts and the above noted staff is available on file and online.

Councillor Hendsbee commented on the importance of rural economic development, noting that there are organizations, such as Destination Eastern and Northumberland Shores Nova Scotia (DEANS) which are not part of the Greater Halifax Partnership or Destination Halifax that are in need of funding for projects related to rural economic development. He suggested these organizations should have their own budget allocation and service agreements with the Municipality.

Councillor Rankin noted concern with the quality of communication with citizens and stakeholders, noting that the delivery of community engagement must be meaningful consultation whereby the Municipality is prepared to listen to citizens. In response to an inquiry from Councillor Rankin, Mr. Anguish indicated that there would be public consultation relating to the Community Facility Master Plan, although he was not yet in a position to speak of dates.

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Fisher, seconded by Councillor Nicoll, that Halifax Regional Council approve the 2015/16 Priority Outcomes as described in Attachment A of the November 4, 2014 report and direct staff to develop the 2015/16 Budget and Business Plans in support of these priorities.

Councillor Watts suggested that under the Governance and Communication section, Communities of Interest priority, the priority outcome be changed from “Halifax balances competing communities of interest” to “Halifax engages communities of interest.” She noted that this would reflect a more positive viewpoint.

The Mayor indicated that all proposed amendments would be collected and be brought forward for consideration later in the meeting.

Councillor Watts requested an update on a request for a staff report made in July regarding the status of the African Nova Scotian Affairs Office. She noted that there is concern within the community about the reporting and direction of that office, in relation to the Africville agreement. Ms. Maggie MacDonald, Acting Managing Director, Government Relations and External Affairs, indicated that the staff report will give consideration to this, and there will be further opportunity to look at this when the CAO Business Unit budget is brought forward.

Councillor Watts commented, in relation to the Communications priority, that while online engagement resources are useful, they should not be the only method to engage citizens, noting the value in having people engage with one another through community meetings.

Councillor Outhit indicated that the Commuter Rail Feasibility Study is currently underway and suggested that this should be included in the priority outcomes. Mr. Reage indicated that while the study is underway, commuter rail is not an actionable priority item at this time.

Councillor Whitman indicated concern with the adequacy of fire services in Black Point and Seabright, noting that these two fire stations recently moved to the volunteer firefighter model and do not have enough volunteers.

Councillor Whitman noted concern that not enough priority is being given to pedestrian safety. He suggested that under the Healthy Communities section, Pedestrian Safety priority, the priority outcome should read “Reverse the recent deteriorating experience of increasing vehicle-pedestrian collisions in HRM through improved infrastructure, further education and the formation of a crosswalk Enforcement Unit dedicated to the enforcement of crosswalk legislation in order to provide pedestrians a safe environment in which to walk.”

The Mayor indicated that all proposed amendments would be collected and be brought forward for consideration later in the meeting.

Councillor McCluskey noted concern with changing the wording of the inclusive and accessible community priority outcome, under Healthy Communities, to remove the words “including persons with disabilities and seniors.” She noted that she is particularly concerned with building an inclusive and accessible community for those with disabilities and would like to see that specifically noted in the outcome.

Mayor Savage concurred with Councillor McCluskey’s concern with removing “persons with disabilities and seniors” from the inclusive and accessible community priority, noting that the Municipality has been making great strides in that area and they should remain the focus to continue momentum.

Councillor Dalrymple raised a concern with street lights on private roads, indicating that residents on private roads previously paid Nova Scotia Power for street light maintenance were now being told that the municipality could not assist them now that ownership of street lights has been transferred to the Municipality. .

Councillor Dalrymple asked for clarification on the Rural Economic Development priority item. Ms. Fraser discussed the Rural Economic Benchmark Study which is underway to help define obstacles for rural economic development solutions to move forward. Ms. MacDonald noted that the study is in response to a motion by Regional Council.

Deputy Mayor Fisher took the Chair and Mayor Savage left the meeting at this time.

Councillor Craig noted concern with internal and external communications, in particular with regard to the lack of information on the follow up actions being taken provided through the Hansen customer service system used by staff. He indicated that he receives many complaints from residents about not getting a call back from the citizen contact centre, or not understanding the resolution of their issue. Ms. Fraser responded that this is a new area of responsibility for her business unit and that she has approval to hire a quality assurance officer to ensure that when calls come into the citizen contact centre the tracking of requests is being handled effectively across business units.

Councillor Nicoll inquired whether there is a network of not-for-profit organizations and community groups working for the benefit of HRM. She also asked for clarification on earlier direction from Council to have a centralized, easy to access location for all HRM policies. Ms. MacDonald advised that there is a project ongoing to inventory the policies of Council, to make them available on the Halifax website.

Councillor Mason suggested an amendment under the Healthy Communities section, Inclusive and Accessible Community priority that the priority outcome read: "Halifax is a leader in building an inclusive and accessible community where everyone can participate fully in life, ***including persons with disabilities and seniors.***"

Councillor Hendsbee asked whether there will be a score card or status sheet of 2014/15 deliverables. He asked whether long term projects that are still under development such as the lot grading by-law and updated animal control regulations would be delivered in the upcoming budget year and if they should be included in this budget. Councillor Hendsbee suggested that active transportation initiatives should be paid for from the regional transportation tax structure. He noted that broadband expansion to rural areas should be a priority.

Councillor Watts, referencing the Energy and Environment priority, encouraged Council and staff to not miss out on the potential to integrate district energy with the redevelopment of the Cogswell Interchange site. Ms. Fraser advised that the municipality is in the process of hiring a project director and establishing a project office for the Cogswell Interchange redevelopment project, and experience with district energy is included in the qualifications.

Councillor Watts commented on the necessity of having a specific staff person with experience in the disability community coordinating all aspects of accessibility within the Municipal structure, since accessibility touches so many areas.

Councillor Nicoll suggested an amendment under the Healthy Communities section, Pedestrian Safety priority, to include "lighting" in the listing of safe and accessible pedestrian network of infrastructure.

Deputy Mayor Fisher suggested Councillors Nicoll and Whitman discuss combining their proposed amendments to the Pedestrian Safety priority during the lunch break, for consideration by Council this afternoon.

Recessed at 11:52 a.m. and reconvened at 1:00 p.m. with Mayor Savage resuming the Chair.

Councillor McCluskey inquired as to the composition of the Domestic Violence Committee referenced in the Healthy Communities 2014-15 Priority Outcome Update. Mr. Anguish indicated he would get back to the Councillor with that information. Also in response to a question from Councillor McCluskey, Mr. Anguish confirmed that the targeted approach to juvenile prostitution is being led by the Halifax Regional Police.

There being no further speakers at this time, Mayor Savage suggested that the proposed amendments discussed this morning be brought forward for consideration.

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Watts, that the priority Healthy Communities, Inclusive and Accessible Community, be amended to insert “including persons with disabilities and seniors” following “can participate fully in life”. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Councillor Nicoll, seconded by Councillor Craig, that the priority Healthy Communities, Pedestrian Safety, be amended to include “and related lighting” following “sidewalks, trails, walkways and roadways”. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Councillor Whitman, seconded by Councillor Adams, that the priority Healthy Communities Pedestrian Safety be replaced with: “Reverse the recent deteriorating experience of increasing vehicle-pedestrian collisions in HRM through improved infrastructure, further education and the formation of a crosswalk Enforcement Unit dedicated to the enforcement of crosswalk legislation in order to provide pedestrians a safe environment in which to walk.”

Members discussed this amendment. Mr. Butts clarified that Council cannot direct the police, although they could ask them to review enforcement.

Deputy Mayor Fisher reminded Council that the meeting today is to set priority outcomes, not specific actions. He suggested that the amendment should go to the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee for recommendation.

Councillor Mosher suggested that it should also go to the Board of Police Commissioners for discussion.

Councillor Whitman, with the agreement of the seconder, agreed to amend the motion to remove “the formation of a crosswalk Enforcement Unit dedicated to the enforcement of crosswalk legislation” and replace it with “enhanced enforcement of crosswalk legislation”

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

In addition, a correction to Appendix A as provided by staff was noted by the Acting Municipal Clerk as follows: to replace the existing statement under the priority - Economic Development, Welcoming Community, with the following: “Halifax will create and maintain a welcoming community for new and existing residents.”

The motion, as amended, was voted on at this time.

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Fisher, seconded by Councillor Nicoll, that Halifax Regional Council approve the 2015/2016 Priority Outcomes as described in Attachment A of the November 4, 2014 staff report, as amended in Committee of the Whole as follows:

For the Priority Healthy Communities, Inclusive and Accessible Community:

Insert “including persons with disabilities and seniors” following “can participate fully in life”.

For the Priority Governance and Communication, Communities of Interest:

Replace the word “competing” with the word “engaged”, to read as follows: “HRM engages communities of interest”.

For the Priority Healthy Communities, Pedestrian Safety:

Replace the existing statement with:

“Reverse the recent deteriorating experience of increasing vehicle-pedestrian collisions in HRM through improved infrastructure, further education and requesting enhanced enforcement of crosswalk legislation in order to provide pedestrians a safe environment in which to walk”.

And, direct staff to develop the 2015/2016 Budget and Business Plans in support of these priorities.

In addition, a correction to Appendix A as provided by staff was noted by the Clerk as follows: to replace the existing statement under priority - Economic Development, Welcoming Community with the following: "Halifax will create and maintain a welcoming community for new and existing residents."

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. Recreation Area Rates and Tax Boundaries

The following was before Council:

- A staff report dated October 29, 2014
- A copy of the staff presentation.

Mr. Greg Keefe, Director of Finance & ICT/CFO, presented on recreation area rates and tax boundaries. The presentation is available on file and online.

Mr. Bruce Fisher, Manager, of Financial Policy and Planning, clarified at the request of Deputy Mayor Fisher that "crosswalk" in the presentation refers to crosswalk guards, which were funded by an area rate until a few years ago when they were moved to the general tax rate at the direction of Council.

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Johns, that Halifax Regional Council:

- 1. Approve the definitions for "Municipal Recreational Facilities", "Community Facilities and Services" and "Private Infrastructure" as listed in the "Recreation and Community Facilities Taxation Classification" (Attachment 1 of the October 29, 2014 report);**
- 2. Approve the "Tax Status" and "Facilities Included" for "Municipal Recreational Facilities", "Community Facilities and Services" and "Private Infrastructure" as listed in the "Recreation and Community Facilities Taxation Classification" (Attachment 1 of the October 29, 2014 report); and**
- 3. Direct staff to develop the 2015-16 proposed Operating Budget based upon the "Tax Status" and "Facilities Included" as listed in the "Recreation and Community Facilities Taxation Classification" (Attachment 1 of the October 29, 2014 report) and return, during approval of the 2015-16 Operating Budget, with final recommendations on:**
 - a. revised tax rates,**
 - b. the implications for area rated debt, loans and surplus accounts; and,**
 - c. merging the Residential Suburban and Rural Tax Boundaries into a single tax classification.**

Councillor Mason spoke in support of the motion while noting concern for rural residents who will lose the ability to acquire assets for their community through the loss of area rates.

Councillor Hendsbee spoke in support of the motion, noting that this is not just for area rates currently in place, but also to assist with the operational costs of all municipal facilities. He spoke of the financial hardships of the 23 municipally owned but community operated facilities operating under Facility Lease Agreements. He suggested that all community facilities should be listed in Attachment 3 of the October 29, 2014 staff report "Governance Models for Area Rated Facilities (and community programs)", so that Council knows the status of each facility.

Councillor Dalrymple asked for a larger map than provided in Attachment 7 "Tax Structure Map with Core Expansion Area" included in the October 29, 2014 staff report. Mr. Keefe invited him to view a larger

version of the map in the finance offices as the scale required is difficult to reproduce in a meaningful way.

Councillor Dalrymple inquired how to ensure that urban, suburban, and rural residents have equal access to recreation facilities. Mr. Keefe indicated that staff will use current service standards in place to determine areas that are underserved. As an alternative, he noted that members of Council could bring forward a motion at any time.

Councillor Adams noted concern for rural residents without transit services being charged taxes for transit. Mr. Keefe clarified that the regional transit tax rate applies to residents within 1 km of a bus stop. Mr. Fisher added that the regional transit tax rate is designed for regional services, including the ferry and metro link service, and includes the commuter shed area.

Councillor Rankin thanked staff for bringing this forward, and commented on the difficult discussions that have taken place since amalgamation with regard to the need balance when it comes to who pays for what services in the municipality.

At the request of Councillor Watts, Mr. Fisher clarified that, for a project in a rural area, staff would have informed residents of Council's policy that an area rate would be required for a project such as a recreational facility. In an urban area, staff would have informed residents that an area rate would not be required, although there was an expectation that with an area rate in place the facility would be built faster and that many exceptions were made over the years.

Councillor Nicoll noted concern with convincing the residents of District 4 Cole Harbour–Westphal that this model will benefit them, noting that Cole Harbour Place has a user pay model, and is leased from a private developer.

Councillor Johns spoke in support of the motion, noting that recreation facilities do not need to be equally distributed throughout the municipality, but they do need to be fairly distributed.

Responding to an inquiry from Councillor Outhit, Mr. Keefe clarified that if an opportunity to cost share a project arose, such as a high school/recreation centre, the project could be considered under the capital budget plan.

At the request of Councillor McCluskey, Mr. Fisher clarified that this will not have any effect on the commercial tax rate.

Noting that the municipality strategically plans for facilities, Deputy Mayor Fisher inquired whether area rating allows for the prioritization of a project based on a community's want, rather than need. Mr. Keefe clarified that, as per the area rate framework adopted by Council, any project that fits within the service standard should not use an area rate to accelerate a project.

Deputy Mayor Fisher noted concern with regard to whether this is the right model for rural areas. Mr. Fisher, referencing Attachment 1 of the staff report, under Community Facilities and Services, pointed out that a number of smaller projects are still on the list for area rates. He indicated that general tax rated funding has grown less slowly than area rated funding, because residents have resorted to area rates to get something faster. Mr. Fisher noted that some rural parts of the municipality have had difficulty affording the area rates.

Councillor Johns suggested that there is still a use for area rates, such as topping up a project budget with an area rate to enhance a project. He commented on commitments to communities that have not been met, noting that area rates could be used to meet those commitments.

MOTION WITHOUT AMENDMENTS WAS PUT AND PASSED.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

Cathy J. Mellett
Municipal Clerk