



**HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES
February 4, 2015**

PRESENT: Deputy Mayor Lorelei Nicoll
Councillors: Barry Dalrymple
David Hendsbee
Bill Karsten
Darren Fisher
Waye Mason
Jennifer Watts
Russell Walker
Stephen Adams
Reg Rankin
Brad Johns
Steve Craig

REGRETS: Mayor Mike Savage
Councillors: Tim Outhit
Linda Mosher
Matt Whitman
Gloria McCluskey

STAFF: Mr. Greg Keefe, Director of Finance and ICT
Mr. John Traves, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Sherryl Murphy, Deputy Clerk
Mr. Andrew Reid, 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_2015-02-04_live.mp4.html*

*The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to Council are available online:
<http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/150204cow-agenda.php>*

The meeting was called to order at 10:58 a.m., and adjourned at 12:31 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Councillor Karsten called the meeting to order at 10:58 a.m.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – December 3, 2014

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Nicoll, seconded by Councillor Walker that the minutes of December 3, 2014 be approved as circulated.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. Halifax Transit

The Committee had before them the following documents:

- *A staff recommendation report dated February 4, 2015 with an attached staff presentation entitled 2015/16 Halifax – Transit Draft Budget and Business Plan*

Mr. Eddie Robar, Director, Halifax Transit presented the 2015/16 Halifax Transit Unit Budget and Business Plan.

Councillor Karsten thanked Mr. Robar for his presentation and called for public participation in regard to the 2015-2016 budget. Councillor Karsten called three times for speakers and there being none closed public participation and called for discussion on the presentation from the Committee of the Whole.

MOVED by Councillor Rankin, seconded by Councillor Mason that the Committee of the Whole direct staff to proceed to prepare the 2015/2016 Halifax Transit Business Unit Budget and Business Plan as proposed in the accompanying presentation, incorporating additional direction provided by motion of Committee of the Whole for inclusion in the proposed HRM 15/16 Budget and Business Plan documents.

Councillor Rankin commented on the progress of transit over the past years in terms of budget and increased service. He stated he was pleased with the commitment to transit made by successive Councils. Councillor Rankin requested an effort be made to distinguish and better describe the differences between the conventional regional transit rate and the transportation infrastructure rate. He indicated that the aim and scope of the Moving Forward Together plan would need to be communicated clearly.

Regarding the Moving Forward Together plan, Mr. Robar responded that it will be strategic in describing the high points of the plan and communicate why changes are occurring.

Councillor Johns indicated concern regarding potential reductions in service to the community of Beaver Bank and requested verification on this. He commented on the over capacity of Sackville and Cobequid terminal park and rider usages. He questioned whether supplementary information on investments and reductions on transit services since 2014 directly related to Districts 14 & 15 would be available in advance of budgeting decisions. He also questioned if it would be possible within the budget to test pilot a number of buses with winter tires.

The Chair stated that the contents of the draft plan was not yet public and should not be discussed. Mr. Robar added that the draft Moving Forward Together plan would be released on the 17th of February after which point the public would have an opportunity for input. Mr. Robar indicated no reductions in services were being proposed for this year and that service would be in a holding pattern until the appropriate direction is determined. Regarding snow tires, Mr. Robar stated that there were no plans to implement snow tires and that the current all season tire was sufficient. He stated current tests were being

performed on an extra wide winter tire called a "re-cap tire" for articulated buses that would function year round.

Councillor Walker inquired as to the cost of replacing snow tires and if it would be possible to pilot a select number of routes with snow tires to test performance. He also inquired what the new rate would be resulting from local rate reduction of \$0.003.

Mr. Robar stated that he did not have information pertaining to snow tire cost; however, indicated he would provide it to Council. He stated that it would not be possible to pilot tires as it would not be logistically feasible.

Mr. Kenzie McNeil, Senior Financial Consultant, commented that the transit tax rate was reduced by 3.2%, whereas the old rate was 0.156 per \$100 assessed value, the new rate would be 0.151 per \$100 assessed value.

Councillor Watts voiced support for the increased ridership on the Woodside ferry and maintained ridership on the Alderney Ferry. She questioned if there would be testing involved with the transit fleet on voice announcement. She noted transit's rescheduling plan for the bridge re-decking and questioned if transit would be linking with the bridge in terms of the shuttle service. She commended transit for the customer experience and enhancement at terminals, but stated concern for experience at bus shelters and stops. She drew attention to a bus stop at Barrington and Young Street. She also requested that a response to Halifax Transit's plans regarding snow tires be posted to the website.

Mr. Robar responded that challenges to transit vehicles are dependent on conditions and that visibility was the cause of service reduction in the winter, not the type of tire. Regarding bus stop infrastructure, Mr. Robar stated that a certain amount of money was allocated each year to expand concrete pad and bus shelter infrastructure for accessibility. He summarized that 57% of stops are currently accessible. Mr. Robar highlighted that next year the bulk of service changes to accessibility will be on the 80 and 81 routes. Regarding the Barrington and Young Street concrete pad request, Mr. Robar indicated he did not know its status but could provide further information. Regarding connections to the bridge commission's service during re-decking of the bridge, Mr. Robar stated that transit would have their own shuttle service and anticipated that they would work in concert with the bridge commission. He also clarified that voice stop announcement and passenger counters would likely be tested on the Metro Link fleet in the Fall.

Councillor Adams stated concern over the transit tax for a resident outside the core. He stated concern for how value could be explained to residents in those areas. Mr. Robar responded that the regional transit rate included all regional services, Metro X, Metro Link, and the network would be designed to take in many people and take people off the road on a daily basis to improve traffic so that everyone would benefit. Mr. Robar further explained how the transit tax reform occurred in 2009 by direction of Council.

Deputy Mayor Nicoll encouraged increased strategic connections, and gave the example of the Shearwater connector. She also questioned if there would be any integration of the Parking Roadmap with transit or fleet services.

Mr. Robar responded that the technology that will be procured is a flexible system and could eventually have many implications on parking.

Deputy Mayor Nicoll left the meeting at 12:07 p.m.

Councillor Craig referenced slide 37 of the presentation and questioned if the initiatives of Healthy Workplaces was related to absenteeism and whether driver productivity was tracked. He also inquired about the access-a-bus expansion, and what the increased accessibility on routes 80 and 81 would mean.

Mr. Robar stated that infrastructure on routes 80 and 81 would be upgraded and low floor accessible buses introduced on the routes. Access-a-bus expansion would mean adding two new buses to provide more capacity. He clarified that the productive wheel time of drivers is tracked.

Councillor Mason commented regarding synchronizing snow clearing operations with transit as a priority to enhance service, especially in front of manors where vulnerable population may live. He also requested Mr. Robar address fare management and the parameters of the Request for Proposal (RFP). Councillor Mason also inquired regarding the increase in external services and building costs.

In response to increase in costs, Mr. Robar stated that increasingly the budget has been built into one larger budget to show all costs of running transit and to be transparent. He stated that building costs are now being listed, as well as commissioning costs and security contracts, although these are provided for by other parts of the organization. Regarding fare management, Mr. Robar stated that the process began with prequalifying Request for Proposal by sending out a Request for Quote to different vendors and holding vendor demonstrations that narrowed the field to the desired requirements.

Councillor Hendsbee requested clarification on tax reduction and if it was on both regional transportation and local rates. Councillor Hendsbee also voiced concern for the number of park and rides and stated that increasing park and rides should be a focus of the forthcoming Moving Forward Together plan. Councillor Hendsbee also stated concern for the length of time required to implement plans.

Mr. Robar responded that reduction would lower both rates. He clarified that the regional transit tax accounts for regional services, not buildings. The Chair indicated the future opportunity for Councillors to review the Moving Forward Together plan, where the other concerns could be addressed.

Councillor Dalrymple questioned rumours regarding Metro X service in the airport area. He also asked for the average homeowner's savings with the transit rate tax reduction. Mr. Robar responded that anything in the Moving Forward plan would be discussed with Councillors prior to its release. Mr. Robar indicated that staff could forward what the average savings would be for homeowners.

Councillor Karsten inquired regarding the Ragged Lake business case and cost-savings from deadheading and whether this was being monitored. He also inquired if the healthy workplace strategy for employee training included working with the union.

Mr. Robar responded that tracking deadheading occurred in the first year of service and demonstrated saving but noted tracking has not occurred every year. He also responded that the healthy workplace strategy was in place to address some of the union concerns.

Councillor Rankin called for the question.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

4. Public Participation

This item was dealt with under section 3. See page 2.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:31 p.m.

Cathy J. Mellett
Municipal Clerk