



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

PRESENT:

Mayor Mike Savage
Deputy Mayor Lorelei Nicoll
Councillors: David Hendsbee
Gloria McCluskey
Darren Fisher
Waye Mason
Jennifer Watts
Linda Mosher
Russell Walker
Stephen Adams
Matt Whitman
Steve Craig
Tim Outhit

REGRETS:

Barry Dalrymple
Bill Karsten
Reg Rankin
Brad Johns

STAFF:

Mr. Greg Keefe, Director of Finance & ICT/Chief Financial Officer
Mr. John Traves, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Cathy Mellett, Municipal Clerk
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_2015-03-04_live.mp4.html

The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to Council are available online: <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/150304cow-agenda.php>

The meeting was called to order at 10:06 a.m., and recessed at 11:43 a.m. The Committee reconvened at 11:53 a.m. The Committee adjourned at 1:15 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Savage called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – January 14, January 21, January 28, and February 4, 2015

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Nicoll, seconded by Councillor McCluskey that the minutes be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. Operations Support

The Committee had before them the following documents:

- A staff recommendation report dated March 4, 2015

Ms. Jane Fraser, Director Operations Support, presented the Operations Support Draft Budget and Business Plan as described in the staff recommendation report dated March 4, 2015.

Councillor Adams joined the meeting at 10:14 a.m.

Mayor Savage thanked Ms. Fraser for her presentation and offered the opportunity for any members of the public to speak. There being no public speakers, the Committee entered into discussion.

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Nicoll, seconded by Councillor Watts that the Committee of the Whole direct staff to proceed to prepare the 2015/2016 Operations Support Business Unit Budget and Business Plan as proposed in the presentation dated March 4, 2015, incorporating additional direction provided by motion of Committee of the Whole for inclusion in the proposed HRM 15/16 Budget and Business Plan documents.

Deputy Mayor Nicoll inquired regarding a quality improvement analyst for 311. She also inquired regarding the two million dollar transfer from the capital to operating budget. Deputy Mayor Nicoll commented on the reorganization, and questioned how project planning and design would be integrated with plans for future design.

Ms. Fraser responded that the quality improvement analyst was hired in November. She stated that current challenges were technology-related. She also indicated that 31% of calls are transit-related and improvement of transit technologies may help with capacity. Regarding transfer of costs from capital to operating, Ms. Fraser explained that transfers were required for smaller items to move them under operations and maintenance from capital. Regarding project planning, Ms. Fraser stated that it was the purview of Planning & Development and Transportation & Public Works.

Councillor McCluskey voiced dissatisfaction with the format of the budget report in terms of the lack of detail. She indicated that more information should be included regarding buildings, their state of repair, external services, transfer of funds from departments, and compensation and benefits. Councillor McCluskey questioned what buildings municipal taxes pay taxes, the identity of the consultant hired, and inquired about fleet fuel costs.

Ms. Fraser responded that taxes are paid on leased facilities. She stated that the consultant was Knightsbridge Robertson Surette and a Request for Proposal (RFP) had been issued to hire the Cogswell Street Interchange project manager. In regards to fleet vehicles, Ms. Fraser stated that improvements would be made in terms of security in response to the findings of the Auditor General.

Councillor Mason voiced concern regarding 311 capacities. He questioned what could be done to put systems in place to increase service capacity. Councillor Mason requested what the timeline was on Enterprise Asset Management (EAM) and where the pavement management system fit within the program. He also inquired regarding the status of the accessibility plan.

Ms. Fraser responded that measures were being taken with 311 to notify the public regarding delays. She outlined challenges due to recent weather events, volume of calls, and the system's technology. Regarding EAM, Ms. Fraser said a Request for Information (RFI) was being submitted for a software solution and is expected to be in place in 24 months. She described the solution for pavement management as one component of EAM and a critical area. Regarding the accessibility plan, she stated that it was part of the capital program and a list would be made available.

Councillor Mosher echoed Councillor McCluskey's request for detail in the budget. Councillor Mosher commented on 311, stating that routing parking enforcement to 311 has added to the challenges. She questioned if there was photo capability for service requests in the Hansen system and if changing the system was being considered. She also asked if augmenting or hiring part time staff was a possibility during busy months. Councillor Mosher commented on 311 being wiped clean after new weather events. She commented on the lack of garbage pick-up at parks due to staff being diverted. Councillor Mosher commented on real estate and if HRM could divest surplus land that abutting residents would like to purchase. She also commented on Customer Service Centres and stated she would like to see a leasing versus purchasing analysis.

Ms. Fraser responded regarding Hansen that the software was at end of life and photo capability could be inquired into. She stated that assignment of staff would be reviewed by the 311 quality analyst, in addition to other mitigation tools for service improvements but reiterated the limitations in the current telephony system. She confirmed that Transportation and Public Works (TPW) does reset service requests following new storm events, creating a challenge for filling older requests. Regarding real estate surplus she stated that they were actively engaged in a number of files for disposal. She also responded that Customer Service Centres would be considered in terms of location and service delivery.

Councillor Mosher commented on after- hours access issues at the Bayers Road Service Centre.

Mr. Keefe, Director, Finance & ICT, stated that the current budget format has been used for 3 years. He stated that a higher level of information could be provided. He also noted that the budget book would contain more detail for Council's consideration.

Councillor Watts commented on 311 resets because of new weather events and questioned if it was possible to triage requests. Councillor Watts also voiced concern for the website's search efficiency. Regarding EAM changes, she also commented on energy efficiency and sustainability. She highlighted the potential of the Cogswell project for district energy management and encouraged action in the beginning stages.

Ms. Fraser responded that staff would look at how calls could be triaged to ensure emergencies are addressed. She noted that the website project was an ICT project included in the Capital Budget and noted that the Chief Information Officer may be able to provide more details in regard to the project. Regarding infrastructure and energy efficiency, Ms. Fraser stated that a benefit of integrating the buildings and operations departments has been the opportunity to ensure efficiencies are leveraged.

Councillor Craig commented on the importance of capital versus maintenance and determining minor and major assets. He questioned if certain assets were over-stated for a period of time. Councillor Craig stated that he was satisfied with the detail provided in the budget book. He commented on 311, indicating that the improved technology was critical. He commented that the organization needs to possess an enterprise system that allows the transference of information.

Ms. Fraser responded that assets were not over-valued and reflected the actual value. She echoed Councillor Craig's statements on 311 and commented that service excellence was her Business Unit's focus for 2015/16.

Councillor Hendsbee commented on the restructuring of the Business Units and requested organization charts for the new business structures. Councilor Hendsbee also questioned fleet management and if there was a strategy in place for just-in-time supply of parts. He also asked if any discussions have been held with the province regarding taking over their industrial parks.

Regarding inventory, Ms. Fraser stated that fleet focus currently sources inventories and that frequently used parts are kept on hand while special parts are made via order. Regarding industrial parks, she stated that there had been no recent contact with the province and that there were some challenges, including environmental liability.

Councillor Whitman echoed that he would like more detail in the budget. He commented on 311 and stated concern for resetting requests after new weather events. Regarding the hiring consultant, he voiced concern for outsourcing work. He inquired how many consultants were hired in Ms. Fraser's department versus full time employees.

Ms. Fraser responded that no consultants worked for Operations Support on a regular basis, but were hired per project, whereas new staff required a 25 year commitment. Regarding hiring consultants, she indicated consultant agencies had the advantage of a national reach if and when required.

Councillor Watts questioned how information regarding progress of EAM could be obtained. Councillor Watts also requested that it be noted in the minutes that the discussion around vacancy management has been ongoing over the course of the budget sessions. Councillor Watts requested clarity on understanding the impact of the vacancy management program and any effect it might have on employees' abilities to provide service.

Mr. Keefe responded regarding EAM that more follow up would occur at the capital projects presentation. In terms of staffing, he responded that the FTE number is not as important as having the right staff to address workload. He highlighted how workload is driven by service standards and requirements.

Mayor Savage inquired if improvements to the 311 call centre would enhance service for groups such as francophones and people who are hard of hearing. Mayor Savage also voiced approval for using external consultants when appropriate as there is a high level of expertise available in Halifax that provides an advantage to the municipality.

Ms. Fraser responded in the affirmative that multi-language translation services is available as required at 311 and enhanced technologies were being considered for servicing people with accessibility issues.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

The Committee recessed at 11:43 a.m.

The Committee reconvened at 11:53 a.m.

4. Parks and Recreation

The Committee had before them the following documents:

- A staff recommendation report dated February 23, 2015

Mr. Brad Anguish, Director Parks & Recreation, presented the 2015/16 Parks and Recreation Unit Budget and Business Plan as detailed in the report dated February 23, 2015. He noted an error on pg. 3 of the presentation, stating that assets included 7 indoor pools and 20 arenas.

Mayor Savage thanked Mr. Anguish for his presentation and opened the floor for the public to provide input. There being no input, the Committee entered into discussion.

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Deputy Mayor Nicoll that the Committee of the Whole direct staff to proceed to prepare the 2015/2016 Parks and Recreation Business Unit Budget and Business Plan as proposed in the presentation dated February 23, 2015, 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 Mason voiced approval for the parks patrol program. He inquired if the technology roadmap could be expanded upon and questioned if partners such as YMCA were being considered. In regards to multidistrict facilities, he commented on budget savings for 2016/17, 2017/18. He also inquired as to whether the position of head horticulturalist had been filled, the new Scotiabank Centre seats, and playground construction.

Regarding the technology roadmap, Mr. Anguish stated that joint service levels could be a future consideration. He noted; however, that no budget has yet been set aside and direction from Council would be required before action is taken. Mr. Anguish emphasized there would be savings in future years from the multidistrict facilities. Regarding the horticulturalist position, he stated that it was approved and would be filled. Ms. Denise Schofield indicated the Scotiabank seats would be a dark navy blue. Mr. Anguish stated that information on the playgrounds would be in the capital budget.

Councillor McCluskey voiced approval for the youth at risk program, freezing of program fees and Dartmouth beautification and plantings. She questioned whether the Dartmouth Commons would receive a washroom facility in fiscal 2015-2016. She also requested an update on the Dartmouth skate park. Councillor McCluskey questioned the application process to community gardens.

Mr. Anguish responded that the goal was to have the Dartmouth skate park open in spring 2015. He indicated a washrooms strategy was being developed. Mr. Anguish stated that all community gardens applications were made online and there were a number currently being considered.

Councillor Outhit stated that while he supported all of recreation's programs, he was aware of problems in keeping up with park maintenance, including mowing, garbage keeping, potholes, and lighting. He inquired if there would be enough allocation for maintenance workers to perform these tasks.

Mr. Anguish responded by stating that snow removal, potholes, and tree trimmings were the responsibility of Transportation & Public Works (TPW). He stated that those operations would be centralized within TPW, which Parks & Recreation would utilize, in addition to contractors as needed to focus on the quality of parks. He stated that there were 532 hectares of grass to maintain, that this work is contracted and he had confidence in financial planning for the service. Regarding garbage collection, he indicated that container bins have been overflowing due to services directed to snow removal recently. Regarding lighting on playgrounds and replacing lights, he indicated he was not previously aware of this issue and could provide a follow up on it.

Councillor Hendsbee voiced anticipation for the Sheet Harbour school project.

Councillor Fisher inquired regarding Beazley bleachers. He asked for a timeline on the Dartmouth 4-pad. Councillor Fisher indicated that the speed skating sport was growing and currently skaters had to go to St. Margaret's Bay Road. He also asked if the proposed parks patrol would have bylaw enforcement powers.

Mr. Anguish indicated that a report would be coming March 11th that would address the Beazley project. He stated that the 4-pad would be ready for spring 2016, that the Request for Proposal (RFP) would be for a design- build- operate facility and that speed skating would be considered. He noted there would be a variety of options for the parks patrol.

Councillor Walker congratulated staff on the opening of a dog park at Westridge Drive and requested that the parking lot be paved and marked given the volume and frequency of use.

MOVED by Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Whitman to request a staff report regarding the cost feasibility of paving and marking the parking lot for the dog park top of Westridge.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Councillor Watts voiced approval for the recreation department in building youth leadership. She also voiced support for the move to more accessibility and ensuring intergenerational opportunities existed. She inquired regarding the strategy for washrooms and whether there would be access to public water in the parks strategy. Councillor Watts also supported hiring a horticulturalist. Councillor Watts inquired about the process of Council receiving updates for the 4-pad and whether there would be further steps.

Mr. Anguish responded that Parks & Recreation were developing a washrooms strategy and would look to include access to drinking water. Regarding the Dartmouth 4-pad, he restated that it was a design-build-operate proposal and an RFP would be issued in April. Mr. Anguish stated that currently his unit has clearance for the design build operate but would take further direction from Council if provided.

Councillor Whitman inquired as to the disposal of the Scotiabank Centre seats. He also inquired regarding the mobile van, and the rationale for the March closure of the Oval.

Mr. Anguish stated that the seats would be going to salvage. He indicated that the proposal in question was for a van to engage citizens in recreation. Mr. Anguish also responded that the Oval closure date is set at the end of March break and explained that radiant heat from the sun affects ice quality in late winter.

Councillor Craig questioned the area rate vs general rate with respect to Sackville Heights Community Centre. He voiced support for the youth at risk program. He commented regarding the urban orchard and accessibility, stating that Acadia Recreation Club has plans for an accessible playground and opportunities to partner with such organizations.

Regarding Sackville Heights, Mr. Anguish responded that there is a framework of different types of facilities recently approved by Council. He explained that type one facilities are those currently on area rates and for which the municipality would otherwise directly fund or provide service. Sackville Heights falls under a type two category, where services do not directly fall within the municipal mandate and for this reason it was not recognized in the operating budget and remains an area rated service. Regarding Acadia Recreational Club, Mr. Anguish stated that it would be an ideal partner.

Deputy Mayor Nicoll highlighted that all playgrounds on school properties are provided by HRM. She encouraged creativity with using open spaces throughout the municipality for active living.

Councillor Mason requested an update on the Dartmouth 4-pad. He stated that he was uncertain if the authority had been given to proceed with a design-build-operate facility. He voiced concern for contracting out arenas to private operators. He stated that there needed to be a shadow bid to see what it would look like for the municipality to build and operate it.

Mr. Anguish clarified that design-build-operate was within the Parks & Recreation budget and was distinctly different than multi-district facilities. He also indicated that there would be a March-April 2015 stakeholder consultation, but he would provide a further update to Council regarding the Dartmouth 4-pad approach.

Mayor Savage questioned if Youth Live was part of the recreation program. Mr. Anguish responded in the affirmative.

The question was called for the main motion.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m.

Cathy J. Mellett
Municipal Clerk