



**HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES
March 11, 2015**

PRESENT: Mayor Mike Savage

Councillors: Barry Dalrymple
David Hendsbee
Bill Karsten
Gloria McCluskey
Darren Fisher
Waye Mason
Jennifer Watts
Russell Walker
Stephen Adams
Matt Whitman
Steve Craig
Tim Outhit

REGRETS: Deputy Mayor Lorelei Nicoll
Councillors Linda Mosher
Reg Rankin
Brad Johns

STAFF: Mr. Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. John Traves, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Cathy Mellett, Municipal Clerk
Mr. Liam MacSween, 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_2015-03-11_live.mp4.html

The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to Council are available online:
<http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/150311cow-agenda.php>

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. Council took a break at 11:45 a.m. and reconvened at 11:55 a.m. Council adjourned at 12:36 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Councillor Karsten, Chair called the meeting to order in Council Chambers, 3rd Floor City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

Councillor Karsten asked members of Regional Council to raise a glass of water in recognition of National Kidney Day.

The Chair noted that Information Item No. 4. Memorandum from the Director of Parks & Recreation dated March 2, 2015 re: Paved Parking for Mainland Common will be added to the agenda for discussion under the Capital Budget Project Implications.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – NONE

3. Capital Budget

i) Capital Budget Project Implications

The following was before Committee of the Whole:

- Extract of Minutes – Committee of the Whole – December 3, 2014
- A staff recommendation report dated February 9, 2015
- Correspondence from Susanna Fuller, Janet Barlow, Ben Wedge and Emily Macdonald dated March 10, 2015 and Pete Smith dated March 10, 2015

Ms. Jane Fraser, Director of Operations Support, introduced Mr. Mike Matheson, Senior Financial Consultant, Operations Support and provided a presentation on the Capital Budget 2015-16 Project Implications.

The Chair thanked Ms. Fraser for her presentation and opened the public participation section of the meeting.

4. Public Participation

The Chair called three times for members of the public to come forward and address Committee of the Whole on the Budget presentation. There were no members of the public present who wished to speak.

The Chair opened the floor for questions of clarification from Committee of the Whole.

MOVED by Mayor Savage, seconded by Councillor Whitman that Committee of the Whole:

- 1. Approve the Cole Harbour Artificial Turf project for funding in the 2015-16 Capital Budget in the amount of \$2.3 million to be cash flowed over two years.**
- 2. Approve funding in the amount of \$35,000, from CAPPOOL for site plan development of the Beazley Field and surrounding area. The site plan is to be carried out in fiscal 2015-16. Staff are to return to Regional Council once the site plan has been completed with a project plan and project budget.**
- 3. Direct staff to develop options for the Bikeway Connection on both sides of the bridge. The options reviewed should include budget implications and partnership opportunities for the connection. Staff should then return to Regional Council for direction.**

4. Direct staff to prepare a cost benefit analysis of the facility rehabilitation costs to support the ongoing use of the St. Mary's Boat Club.

Mayor Savage thanked Ms. Fraser and staff for the presentation and requested further information with the proposed Bikeway Connector project.

Ms. Fraser commented that staff will present the best option to Regional Council to advance the Active Transportation goals and identify partners, along with cost requirements for the project after collecting further data. She further noted that the Halifax Bridge Commission would be a key stakeholder in the project.

In response to a follow up question from Mayor Savage, Ms. Fraser noted that staff will identify options for the harmonization of work on the Bikeway Connection with the Big Lift project that is currently underway on the Macdonald Bridge.

Mayor Savage expressed his support for the Beazley Field project and inquired about staff's process regarding depreciated municipal assets.

Mr. Greg Keefe, Chief Financial Officer, noted that the Capital budget is determined in large part by the condition of assets and noted that assets are constantly monitored by staff to determine viability for future use.

Councillor Watts commented that the access for the bike lane for the Macdonald Bridge as a proposed project is positive but noted concern that a detailed design may not be available by next year. She inquired as to whether or not there will be a public consultation session for the project and if there is a specific timeline for the submission of a preferred option and detailed design to Regional Council.

Ms. Fraser commented that funding for the detailed design and construction, based on the preferred option is to be presented for approval by Regional Council in the summer of 2015 and can be considered for inclusion in the 2016-17 budget provided that staff has the necessary information at hand and is directed to do so by Council.

Mr. Keefe stated that staff would prefer to have as much information in place as possible with respect to the proposed project before putting a place holder in the next year's budget. He referenced the recommendation brought forward by the Auditor General in regard to mitigating risk by having appropriate costing and plans in place prior to committing capital funds for a project. He commented that the municipality assumes risk if place holders are put in the budget without having the necessary information in place.

Councillor Mason stated his support for the staff recommendation respecting the St. Mary's Boat Club. He expressed his opinion that the St. Mary's Boat Club needs to remain in operation as there is no other viable recreation facility in the immediate area. He requested further information with respect to Active Transportation plans within the budget for bike users as well as a progress update in using the old Macdonald Bridge decking to help build pedestrian bridges. He concluded by requesting further information with respect to potential increases to the road recapitalization budget as well as building plans for playgrounds.

Ms. Fraser noted that there are several projects there that will be going forward which utilize the old bridge decks from the 'big lift' project. With respect to paving, she commented that staff will increase the funding in the out years to \$30 million and advised of the status of the pavement management system within the Enterprise Asset Management program.

Ms. Margaret Soley, Manager of Parks and Recreation, commented that there are ten playgrounds up for renewal which are mainly state of good repair projects at a cost of \$ 400,000.00. She remarked that staff will provide more information with respect to playgrounds as part of the final budget presentation in April.

Councillor Fisher requested further information with respect to the Beazley Field upgrade project.

Ms. Fraser commented that the \$35,000.00 line item within the project is to determine the nature of the work required on the site as well as to identify life-cycle improvements. She advised of staff's intention to determine the total investment for the necessary upgrades and commented that a staged level of funding may be considered to complete the work.

In response to a follow up from question from Councillor Fisher, Ms. Fraser noted that that the commitment for funding for the Artificial Turf project in Cole Harbour is within the budget but is not represented in the current fiscal year the work on the project will not take place until the following fiscal year. She advised that construction at the site should commence in December of 2016.

Mr. Brad Anguish, Director of Parks and Recreation noted that discussions are ongoing in relation to any potential for doming of the artificial turf in Cole Harbour through partnership funding.

Councillor Hendsbee expressed the opinion that the installation of a park and ride parking lot should be considered at the former Chebucto Ford site in Dartmouth and that the recommendation for the McNab's Island project should be re-evaluated by staff. He requested a progress update with respect to the proposed Fire Training facility and noted his opinion that a pathway for bicycles on the Macdonald Bridge will likely need to be funded by the municipality. He suggested that that more money for dynamic messaging for the harbour bridges approaches should be incorporated in the budget. He requested further information with the Shubenacadie Canal Greenway Trail and the impact of the request for day lighting will have on the budget. He concluded by inquiring about parkland acquisition plans as well as the the road corridor acquisition plan.

Ms. Fraser commented that the McNab's Island proposal does not match up with connectivity and urban greenways goals as established in the Active Transportation Plan approved by Council. She advised that the Fire Services training facility is a potential project which may go forward depending on funding levels and advised that the daylighting request for the Shubenacadie Canal Greenway Trail would be considered as part of the Halifax Water Commission's project planning.

With respect to Parkland acquisition, she noted that resources will be allocated for open space projects which align with Council's priorities.

In response to a follow up question from Councillor Hendsbee, Ms. Donna Davis, Chief Information Officer, provided commentary with respect to the Information Technology application recapitalization project, noting that much of the work to be undertaken is state of good repair enhancements. She advised that application and software solutions, as well as the server infrastructure utilized by the organization, have an asset life cycle which is nearing its end. With respect to the internet program, she commented that staff will begin the next phase of the Halifax.ca upgrade which involves replacing the backend storage system which is at the end of its life cycle. She further advised that the initiative will take place in installments over the next two years.

Councillor Outhit inquired if there is enough room within the budget to handle a bad season for potholes. He requested an update with respect to the proposed Burnside to Bedford expressway project which is being undertaken by the province. He further inquired about perspective plans for a bikeway along the proposed route.

Ms. Fraser noted that discussions with the province are ongoing with respect to the project. She advised that staff will bring a report before Council with more information on the subject in the near future after further consultations with the province have taken place. With respect to the Bikeway, she noted that further conversation with the provincial department of Transportation will need to take place to determine cost sharing strategies.

Mr. David Hubley, Manager Design and Construction Services noted that it is difficult at the current time to determine the impact on the budget for pothole maintenance. He stated that staff will have a better

determination as to the impact on the budget by the spring and stated that the plants which produce hot asphalt are not yet open.

Councillor McCluskey noted a problematic area on Windmill Road where "heaving" is occurring.

Mr. Hubley commented that there are a few roads across the municipality where heaving is taking place. He noted that the section of Windmill Road where heaving is occurring is on a recently paved section of the road and that the contracted company who undertook the work has been made aware of the situation. He advised that staff is assessing the situation very closely and stated that in some instances, the problem can rectify itself.

Councillor McCluskey inquired as to the proposed plans for Evergreen House. Ms. Fraser responded by noting that that basic deferred maintenance will take place at the property to ensure that the building is safe and secure.

In response to a follow up question from Councillor McCluskey, Ms. Soley noted that Councillor District Funds account for one third of the total budget for playground installation and maintenance.

Councillor Dalrymple inquired if there is a list which outlines the groups which will receive decking from the Big Lift project. Ms. Fraser replied in the affirmative and noted that staff would provide Council with the list of community groups which will receive the old bridge decking.

Councillor Dalrymple noted a projected budget gap of \$50-60 million with respect to the Capital Budget and inquired if the municipality can afford to complete the listed capital projects.

Ms. Fraser stated that there is a funding gap of approximately \$50-60 million within the Capital project budget in out years and advised that staff will be paying particular attention to cash flows to determine how much can be spent on Capital projects within a given year. She noted that the analyses of available cash flow helps determine which projects staff recommends to move forward to align with Council's identified priorities.

Mr. Keefe noted that Council will receive the full budget books one week prior to discussions on the final budget. He advised that affordability for projects will be judged on cash flow and new funding sources which staff will bring forward with the final proposed budget.

Councillor Watts suggested the following amendment to recommendation three (3) of main motion:

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Whitman that Committee of the Whole amend recommendation three to incorporate the following direction: "Staff should then return to Regional Council for direction on the progress report by July 31, 2015 and include options for detailed design for inclusion in the capital budget for 2016/2017".

Mayor Savage commented that he does not wish to place an artificial deadline on the project but noted his support for a progress report for inclusion in the 2016/17 budget.

Councillor Dalrymple noted his support for the progress report but cautioned that he would not support the project jumping the queue, if there are other project priorities which take precedence.

MOTION TO AMEND PUT AND PASSED.

The motion before Committee of the Whole now reads:

MOVED by Mayor Savage, seconded by Councillor Whitman that Committee of the Whole:

- 1. Approve the Cole Harbour Artificial Turf project for funding in the 2015-16 Capital Budget in the amount of \$2.3 million to be cash flowed over two years.**

2. **Approve funding in the amount of \$35,000, from CAPPOOL for site plan development of the Beazley Field and surrounding area. The site plan is to be carried out in fiscal 2015-16. Staff are to return to Regional Council once the site plan has been completed with a project plan and project budget.**
3. **Direct staff to develop options for the Bikeway Connection on both sides of the bridge. The options reviewed should include budget implications and partnership opportunities for the connection. Staff should then return to Regional Council for direction on the progress report by July 31, 2015 and include options for detailed design for inclusion in the capital budget for 2016/2017.**
4. **Direct staff to prepare a cost benefit analysis of the facility rehabilitation costs to support the ongoing use of the St. Mary's Boat Club.**

Councillor Hendsbee inquired if there will be a report before Harbour East – Marine Drive Community Council regarding Shubenacadie Canal Greenway Trail. Ms. Fraser replied in the affirmative and noted that the staff report will be before the Community Council for its next meeting.

In response to a follow up question from Councillor Hendsbee, Ms. Soley commented that the playground budget is focused primarily on a state of good repair with the exception of the projects previously identified. With respect to the Lake Charlotte Boat Launch, she noted that staff received an extension to continue work on the project into the spring due to inclement weather.

Councillor Walker proposed the following supplemental motion with respect to paved parking lot for the Mainland Common dog park:

MOVED by Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Hendsbee that Committee of the Whole authorize an increase of \$200,000.00 to the 2015-16 Capital Budget for the purposes of paving and marking the parking lot of the dog park on Westridge Drive, Halifax.

Councillor Dalrymple commented that he would not support the increase to the budget for the parking lot.

Councillor Watts requested further information on the second stage of development for the Mainland Common Park.

Mr. Anguish commented that he did not have the exact number available but noted that phase two of the project would include approximately \$70,000.00 for fencing and walkway enhancements.

Councillor Watts noted that she would not support the motion at the current time.

Councillor Walker expressed his concern that HRM is establishing facilities without finishing the necessary amenities. He commented that the parking lot is shared with the baseball diamond which is heavily used by the community.

Councillor McCluskey commented that she does not see a problem with using an unpaved parking lot and stated that she will not support the motion as the municipality cannot afford it.

Councillor Adams expressed his opinion that the municipality can afford to pave the parking lot at the Mainland Common dog park and advised that the dog park was moved from another location. He expressed his opinion that as a matter of fairness, the parking lot should be paved.

Councillor Outhit expressed his opinion that one project cannot be selected over another. He stated that as a matter of fairness, Regional Council should adopt a policy which paves all parking lots for all parks, not one over another. He commented that Council must set priorities and that enough money has been spent on dog parks.

MOTION PUT AND DEFEATED.

Councillor Karsten expressed his disappointment with respect to the recommendation for McNab's Island and noted its potential as a tourist destination, worthy of the support of all levels of government. He advised that the Tallahassee Recreation Centre in Eastern Passage could use a needs assessment under the state of good repair component of the budget.

Mayor Savage thanked Mr. Keefe for the information report which outlines the feedback from the Shape Your City portal. He encouraged all members of Council to consider the comments left by concerned citizens and stated that over six thousand visitors accessed the site.

THE MOTION, AS AMENDED, WAS PUT AND PASSED.

ii) Permit Data Exchange Project

The following documentation was before Committee of the Whole:

- A staff report dated February 23, 2015

Mr. Greg Keefe, Chief Financial Officer gave a presentation pertaining to the Permit Data Exchange Project. The Chair thanked Mr. Keefe for his presentation.

4. Public Participation

The Chair called three times for members of the public to come forward and address Committee of the Whole on the budget presentation. There were no members of the public present who wished to speak.

The Chair opened the floor for questions of clarification from Committee of the Whole

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Walker that Committee of the Whole recommend that Halifax Regional Council approve the participation of Halifax in the shared Data Permit Exchange project at a cost of \$439,011 net of HST in fiscal 2015/16.

Councillor McCluskey stated that she does not support the staff recommendation and commented that she sees no value in a permit exchange program. She provided further commentary regarding the work of property assessors and expressed her opinion that there is no substitute for field assessments to determine appraisals and property valuation.

Councillor Mason agreed with Councillor McCluskey assessment respecting field visits and noted that he supports the technological aspects of the program to derive efficiencies through the digital transfer of permits. He commented that site visits will likely still need to take place to determine if the correct work was completed with respect to building permits and inquired as to how this will be undertaken.

Mr. Keefe agreed with Councillor Mason and Councillor McCluskey's assessments and commented that the expectation is that the inspection work will be completed and noted that the system will eliminate the need for additional site visits. He provided further commentary respecting the difference between assessment appraisals and mass appraisals.

Mayor Savage agreed with the Councillor McCluskey's assessment and noted her past experience in the field of property assessments. He inquired about the financial benefit of the program, noting the proposed efficiency savings and the return on investment.

Mr. Keefe commented that potentially the investment in this system could see a full return on investment through efficiency savings within a year and a half. He noted that he felt that those projections were slightly optimistic and stated that a full return on investment would likely be actualized within several years.

In response to a follow up question from Councillor Hendsbee, Mr. Keefe stated that there is nothing within the initiative that will address change in property assessments without the issuance of a permit. He advised that the program is in place to share information and resources.

Councillor Outhit agreed with Councillor McCluskey's comments and noted that he would not feel compelled to pay forty percent of the costs for a program administered by the Property Valuation Services Corporation (PVSC).

Mr. Keefe noted that the system is a joint initiative of staff from HRM, the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, PVSC as well as several other municipalities. He commented that the intention of the program is to make assessments more accurate by streamlining processes.

Councillor Walker noted that there are pros and cons associated with the program and advised of the main benefit to get assessments and permits recorded and delivered in a timely fashion. He noted that HRM has been trendsetters in this regard.

Councillor McCluskey stated that she has no problems streamlining the process respecting permits. She advised that property assessors are specially trained in assessing the value of properties which is a responsibility outside the role of a building inspector. She reiterated an earlier point regarding the necessity for full site visits to determine an accurate property assessment. She inquired as to where the revenue increases will be derived through participation in the program.

Mr. Keefe commented that the increases in revenue will come through changed assessments from building permits being applied to the overall assessment roll.

Mayor Savage inquired if HRM did not participate in the program, could the project be completed by the PVSC alone.

Mr. Keefe noted that would be a decision for the PVSC Board. He advised that HRM contributes roughly 40% of the organizations total budget given that HRM comprises a large share of Nova Scotia's commercial and residential assessments.

Councillor McCluskey left the meeting at 12:25 p.m.

Further discussion ensued.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. Public Participation

This matter was dealt with earlier in the meeting. Please see pages 2 & 8.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:33 p.m.

Cathy J. Mellett
Municipal Clerk