

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

**HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
1996/97 OPERATING BUDGET SESSION
August 28, 1996**

PRESENT:

Deputy Mayor Jack Greenough
Councillors: Bill Dooks
Gordon R. Snow
David Hendsbee
Ron Cooper
Condo Sarto
Clint Schofield
John Cunningham
Jerry Blumenthal
Graham L. Downey
Howard Epstein
Russell Walker
Bill Stone
Ron Hanson
Barry Barnet
Bob Harvey
Peter Kelly
Reg Rankin
Jack Mitchell

REGRETS:

Mayor Walter Fitzgerald
Councillors Harry McInroy
Bruce Hetherington
Larry Uteck
Stephen Adams

STAFF MEMBERS:

Mr. Ken Meech, Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. George McLellan, Commissioner, Regional Operations
Mr. Brian Smith, Director, Transportation Services
Mr. Kulvinder Dhillon, Director, Engineering Services
Mr. Phil Cochrane, Manager, Roads and Street
Mr. Doug Rafuse, Manager, Works Services
Mr. Simpson McLeod, Manager, Facilities and Real Estate
Ms. Nancy Jeffries, Supervisor, Operations Administration
Ms. Darlene Ervanowitz, IS Support
Ms. Patti Halliday, Assistant Municipal Clerk

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1. REGIONAL OPERATIONS

Commissioner McLellan opened the meeting by explaining the concept of Regional Operations followed by a presentation regarding the overall Regional Operations operating budget.

Deputy Mayor Greenough suggested a copy of the complete presentation be provided for future reference.

In response to a question from Councillor Dooks regarding the solid waste cushion of 2.5 million dollars, Commissioner McLellan replied this is an added cost to the taxpayer in this current year. Councillor Dooks stated he would like Council to bring this issue up for discussion in depth later so they have a clear understanding of this issue before voting on it.

Councillor Blumenthal expressed concern with the #3 Manors Bus stating he did not want to see this bus eliminated. He suggested advertising could improve the ridership on this route. Councillor Blumenthal also suggested the idea of low floor buses which he felt would help improve access to the Access-A-Bus as more seniors and disabled could use this service rather than Access-A-Bus.

Councillor Snow stated he would like to see a plan from Metro Transit to put some type of transit in Waverley.

Councillor Cunningham expressed concern with adding the 2.5 million dollars reserve to the budget without finding another area in the budget from which to take it.

Councillor Schofield stated staff parking in Dartmouth is an area that needs to be revisited. He also expressed concern with removing the bus service from Highfield Park.

Regarding bus service, Councillor Mitchell noted Districts 1 and 23 are the only districts in the Halifax Regional Municipality that have no bus service at all.

Respecting the 2.5 million dollars, Councilor Hendsbee stated, if there is going to be a charge, he would like to see a flat rate charged to houses and apartments as they all contribute to the solid waste problem.

Other concerns expressed by Councillor Hendsbee regarded playing fields, an inventory of parklands, possible contracting out of greenhouse services and street lights being paid for by area rate. Commissioner McLellan replied street lights is an issue they will mark for discussion noting that currently they have nothing in the budget

for an increase in street lights. Corporate Services will be addressing the issue of area rates tomorrow.

Regarding concerns expressed by Councillor Hendsbee about communication between Regional Operations and Community Services concerning capital projects, Commissioner McLellan replied there is a variety of reasons for why some of these projects have not gone ahead. There was a meeting held in July and there will be another next week to improve this situation and it will be solved.

Councillor Hendsbee left the meeting at 11:50 a.m.

Councillor Epstein expressed concern with the environmental control charges, as he felt it was not appropriate for this to be shown as an environmental charge on the tax bill.

Councillor Rankin expressed concern with the Real Estate budget not having any comparables stating they should have a handle on buildings and what are the costs.

RECESS

A lunch recess was taken at 12:05 p.m. and reconvened at 12:30 p.m.

Those in attendance included: Mayor Walter Fitzgerald ; Deputy Mayor Jack Greenough and Councillors Bill Dooks Gordon Snow, David Hendsbee, Ron Cooper, Harry McInroy, Bruce Hetherington, Clint Schofield, John Cunningham, Jerry Blumenthal, Howard Epstein, Russell Walker, Bill Stone, Barry Barnet, Bob Harvey, Peter Kelly, Reg Rankin, and Jack Mitchell

Those absent included Councillors Graham L. Downey, Larry Uteck, Stephen Adams, Condo Sarto and Ron Hanson.

Staff members in attendance included: Mr. Ken Meech, Chief Administrative Officer, George McLellan, Commissioner, Regional Operations, Mr. Brian Smith, Director, Transportation Services, Mr. Kulvinder Dhillon, Director of Engineering Services, Mr. Phil Cochrane, Manager, Roads and Streets, Mr. Doug Rafuse, Manager, Works Services, Mr. Simpson MacLeod, Manager, Facilities and Real Estate, Ms. Nancy Jeffries, Supervisor, Operations Administration, Ms. Darlene Ervanowitz, IS Support, and Ms. Jane Nauss, Acting Municipal Clerk.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Kelly, Mr. George McLellan, Commissioner of Regional Operations, advised that the concept of self insurance requirements for Halifax Regional Municipality needs to be further studied.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Cooper, Mr. McLellan advised the matter of students not being hired for summer employment (to be paid through area rates) would be reviewed.

A brief discussion ensued on the services offered jointly through Parks and Grounds and Regional Operations. Mr. McLellan advised there are cultural problems which need to be identified and that meetings will be held to determine which department is responsible for which service.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Walker as to why there are no comparisons for other years in the budget document, staff advised the budget was compiled on an activity level as it would take months to prepare the budget otherwise.

Concern was raised by several Councillors on a tax proposed for solid waste.

Councillor Stone requested staff look at maintaining the Mainland North Commons from an Operating Budget point of view at which staff advised this would be studied.

A lengthy discussion ensued on transit routes and the fact that the existing transit budget be maintained.

Councillor Stone requested a staff report on the "Sale of Land" account to which staff agreed.

A discussion ensued on the removal of Bus Route 83 without Council's knowledge.

Mayor Fitzgerald assumed the Chair.

Mr. George McLellan advised that the matter of bus routes was not an easy matter to deal with as staff do not want to impair residents on any route. The Committee felt that the existing transit service was running at a minimum level of service and that it would be hard pressed to reduce the transit budget. Councillor Kelly suggested this would be an opportunity for area rates to keep routes running.

With respect to Material Recovery Facility (MRF) and the fact there was no breakdown provided, Mr. McLellan advised that most of the loss was due to market lowering for recyclable products.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Kelly on a proposed "bag and tag" program for garbage collection, Mr. McLellan advised that Policy and Planning was developing this proposal in order to bring HRM closer to a user/pay system.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Kelly if it would be possible to extend this program across each district with staff providing a breakdown to determine which district produces the most garbage, Mr. McLellan advised this could be carried out at Council's direction.

A brief discussion ensued on areas which are not serviced by transit but whose taxpayers may have to pay for the service. Staff agreed this is a difficult judgement to make.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Kelly if a study could be carried out in-house on real estate operations, Mr. George McLellan advised this has not been dealt with as yet due to the fact that staff have been dealing with crisis management.

At the suggestion of Councillor Kelly, staff agreed to contact FCM and other affiliates to enquire on the existence of a database already in use to assist HRM to design a system that suits its requirements for real estate operations.

Another lengthy discussion ensued on the various plans for bus routes.

With respect to roads, Councillor Barnet suggested that staff look at the initiative of chip sealing to reduce the burden on the capital budget.

With respect to real estate, Councillor Barnet suggested that staff include potential revenue until the end of the year.

With respect to solid waste, Councillor Barnet suggested that taxpayers not be tricked into thinking the surcharge is not a tax when it is.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Stone if a policy was in place to deal with garbage collection for apartment dwellers and owners, Mr. McLellan advised in the affirmative, however, this is a difficult situation. Staff have determined that the larger apartment units must be involved for their input.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Stone if staff could contemplate the purchase of a parcel of land near the Mainland Commons to provide another access to the area, Mr. MacLeod advised that staff would review this.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Stone as to who will be assigned to monitor developments in Bayers Lake Park, Mr. Kulvinder Dhillon, Director of Engineering Services, advised there will be one individual who will co-ordinate same.

Councillor Stone requested staff consider the plowing of all sidewalks.

Councillor Walker requested staff look into obtaining a better rate for the purchase of bridge tokens due to the volume purchased by HRM.

Councillor Walker requested a staff report on ready mix concrete as he felt the budget was inconsistent in this regard.

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Greenough and Councillor Hetherington to direct staff that no cuts be made to the transit service this year. Further, that the \$400,000 in required savings be found elsewhere in the budget.

In speaking to the Motion, Councillor Rankin requested this Motion be tabled to be considered under a general debate.

No vote was taken on the Motion.

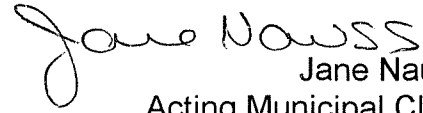
Councillor Dooks expressed concern regarding safety issues i.e. crosswalks, and crosswalk lighting within intersections. He requested these issues be reviewed by staff.

Councillor Dooks further requested a staff report on the solid waste transfer station in the Sheet Harbour area as it required maintenance.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Hendsbee as to what type of contingencies were in place should there be a heavy snowfall, Mr. McLellan advised that staff utilize a three year average to budget for snow fall amount.

Councillor Hendsbee requested staff monitor expenditures for this budget year in the core and urban areas in order to prevent taxpayers paying for services they are not receiving.

MOVED by Councillor Walker and Deputy Mayor Greenough to adjourn at 4:00 p.m. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.


Jane Naus
Acting Municipal Clerk