

# HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

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## HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES JANUARY 7, 1998

PRESENT:

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

REGRETS:

Councillors Larry Uteck  
Harry McInroy  
Stephen Adams  
Russell Walker

STAFF MEMBERS:

Mr. Ken Meech, Chief Administrative Officer  
Ms. Jane Nauss, Assistant Municipal Clerk  
Ms. Julia Horncastle, Assistant Municipal Clerk

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Mayor Fitzgerald called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

**1. CAPITAL BUDGET**

**1.1 Opening Remarks**

Mr. Ken Meech, Chief Administrative Officer, addressed Council noting the 1998/99 proposed Capital Budget totalled approximately \$94 million (gross). Mr. Larry Corrigan, Commissioner, Corporate Services, would be introduced to provide an overview of the draft budget. Although Mr. Meech stated he was anticipating Council to making a recommendation from Committee of the Whole to Regional Council to adopt the Capital Budget, he suggested this budget should not be formally adopted until the Operating Budget has been dealt with; in otherwords, deal with both budgets simultaneously. It is anticipated the Operating Budget will be tabled in February, 1998.

Staff were requested to review their budgets and prioritize same based on the following four criteria: repair/replace existing infrastructure; promote safety and reduce municipal liability; enhance staff productivity, and to improve quality of life in the Region.

Mr. Corrigan noted this draft Capital Budget was initially tabled with Council December 9, 1997. Further, this is a significant budget which is mostly influenced by capital and operating costs for solid waste (approximately \$38 million).

Various charts (looking ahead five years) were addressed including those entitled Summary of Total Capital by Funding Year; Summary of Proposed 1998-99 General Capital Program; Funding Sources; History/Forecast of "Net" Debt Charges; Summary of Building Program; and Economic Impact of Capital Budget.

In discussing the Funding Sources Chart, it was noted that although funding is restricted, cost sharing has increased over past years. Further, although debt is up to \$59.4 million for 1998/99, staff is forecasting a debt load requirement \$35.7 million.

In discussing the History/Forecast of "Net" Debt Charges Chart, it was noted this takes the debt "picture" and translates it into the affect on the Operating Budget. It was also noted that an interest rate of 7% has been built into this model. This rate is higher than what is currently available on the market.

With respect to amalgamation transition costs (\$24 million), Mr. Corrigan was hopeful that funding from the Province would be realized to offset these costs.

In closing, Mr. Corrigan stated that the reasoning behind increasing debt is to pay for the Solid Waste costs. There is a benefit, however, in that the municipality will have its own solid waste facilities and no longer need to pay the Cumberland charges (\$15 - \$17 million).

In referencing the Economic Impact of the Capital Budget, Mr. Corrigan advised that the municipality's capital budget represents a significant portion of all government capital spending of all governments combined in the province. Further, 90% of the construction companies in the region rely on HRM for a part of their business; and, the 1998/99 capital budget spending will generate over 1,600 jobs.

Mayor Fitzgerald thanked Mr. Corrigan for his presentation.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Barnet on the status of Capital projects to be extended to another year, Mr. Corrigan advised those projects will eventually be carried out; in essence, there is no "sunset" date.

Councillor Blumenthal stated that priorities for capital projects were changing in that this Capital Budget lacks people services (community projects). Mr. Corrigan suggested this statement should be posed in the context of discussions with staff in their budget deliberations. The Councillor made a valid point, however, in that the communication system could be enhanced.

Councillor Blumenthal expressed concern that the left hand turn project on Lady Hammond Road / Kempt Road (heading towards Bedford) has not been given consideration even though it is a safety issue.

In response to a comment from Councillor Epstein regarding Chart #8 - History/Forecast of "Net" Debt Charges in that he suggested actual expenditures over the past number of years was static, Mr. Corrigan advised there has been growth in revenue and that information on same will be provided to the Councillor.

Councillor Cooper suggested Council should decide on priorities. The Councillor expressed particular concern with infrastructure. In response, Mr. Corrigan stated that the Councillor was correct. Further, senior staff agree with the fact this budget does not address the need to maintain infrastructure.

Councillor Stone suggested the process is incorrect and that the priorities are not citizen priorities. Further, there is no fair distribution of projects. The Councillor stated that Council must look at the Capital and Operating Budgets collectively.

Councillor Hendsbee hoped the municipality could categorize the manner in which debt will be pro rated on tax rates. Further, the Councillor enquired if there will be debt financing on urban and rural tax rates, and, requested detailed information on past debt.

Councillor Greenough referenced the fact that the municipality is not receiving a portion of the gasoline tax and registration fee and that this was unfair. Further, to put things into perspective, solid waste would have been a cost to each unit whether amalgamation had taken place or not - solid waste *should* be the highest priority of residents. The Councillor suggested this was a reasonable budget and that a 10% debt ratio is appropriate.

Council was reminded if there had been Social Service payments from the province as well as reasonable treatment of transition costs, this would equate to \$30 million.

The meeting, after recessing at 11:30, resumed at 1:15 p.m. with the following Councillors in attendance: Dooks, Snow, Hendsbee, Cooper, McInroy, Greenough, Sarto, Hetherington, Schofield, Cunningham, Blumenthal, Downey, Uteck, Epstein, Stone, Hanson, Barnet, Harvey, Kelly, Mitchell, Deputy Mayor Rankin and Mayor Fitzgerald.

Absent were Councillors Adams and Walker.

## **1.2 REGIONAL OPERATIONS**

Mr. George McLellan, Commissioner, Regional Operations, addressed Council advising the Regional Operations component consisted of Buildings, Fleet and GIS, Parks and Playgrounds, Streets and Roads, Sewers, Sidewalks, Traffic and Solid Waste.

Councillor Hetherington stated that sidewalks and streets are deteriorating and enquired when these issues would be addressed. The Councillor further enquired if records would be maintained of the revitalization of streets and sidewalks in each district with the respective Councillor being kept informed.

(Councillor Uteck arrived at 1:45 p.m.)

### **Buildings**

Mr. Doug Rafuse, Manager, Facilities & Traffic Systems, referenced page 5, Buildings and advised this comprised office buildings, works depots, parks maintenance facilities, transit facilities, police station and any facilities that fall under the building transition program. Further, there are a number of recreational type facilities that fall into this category although the majority are budgeted for under Community Services.

Mr. Rafuse stated the projects have been prioritized as per the criteria (health and safety issues, risk management, code requirements, and opportunity costs). A number of the major projects included in this year's budget is the construction of a salt dome and sand shed in the Woodside Industrial Park, the Halifax Police Station step improvements, and facilities upgrades account.

Councillor Blumenthal referenced the McIntosh Depot and questioned whether the work was necessary for this year. In response, Mr. Rafuse advised the significant part of the McIntosh Depot is the electrical distribution system and the current situation restricts staff from making welding repairs to the fleet.

Councillor Barnet referenced A5 and enquired if \$20,000 is over and above the amount that was listed as consulting fees. In response, Mr. Rafuse stated this has been a phased -

in project. Further, a large portion of the refurbishing was to be carried out this year but it has been delayed pending discussions on cost sharing with the other levels of government.

Councillor Barnet referenced A2 regarding bus shelters and suggested this is an expenditure that could be put off for another year.

Councillor Barnet referenced the Khyber Building and enquired how much has been spent to date on the building, what the projected costs are, and value of the building. In response, Mr. Phillip Townsend, Capital Projects Co-ordinator, advised repairs to address code violations have been carried out as well as stabilization of the building and reinforcement of the roof. Mr. Townsend stated there are still structure issues to be addressed. The long term plan is for this building is for it to be made more accessible through the installation of an elevator.

(Councillors Stone and McInroy arrived at 2:00 p.m.)

Councillor Sarto referenced A21 and enquired on the portion of the budget to be allocated for consultation. In response, Mr. Townsend advised that the \$50,000 indicated is an additional amount to provide for the removal of lead containing paint, on the Alexander McKay school.

Councillor Schofield noted A7 should read "Albro Lake-Harbourview."

(Mayor Fitzgerald assumed the Chair)

Councillor Hendsbee referenced A7, A11, A21, A27 and A30 and enquired on the method of cost recovery. In response, Mr. Bruce Fisher, Budget Co-ordinator, advised the recovery would be based on the manner by which a facility would be taxed under the tax structure.

### **Fleet**

Mr. Louis Coutinho, Manager, Support Services, advised there are approximately 200 buses in the Metro Transit fleet with 90% of the fleet available for service at all times. Mr. Coutinho advised the Metro Transit portion of the fleet is worth approximately \$65 million. Further, there are six buses being replaced in this fiscal year. The public works fleet has approximately 700 pieces of equipment with a total asset value of \$25 million.

Mr. Coutinho confirmed the new buses would be low floor buses.

Councillor Barnet enquired if it was possible to extend the life of the equipment. In response, Mr. Coutinho advised there is a maintenance cost associated if the service life is extended.

Councillor Hetherington noted ongoing maintenance of the fleet was expensive and enquired whether the Municipality has investigated products that may save wear and tear on vehicles. In response, Council was advised a program was being undertaken to test these products to determine if anything is available that would provide cost savings.

### **GIS**

Mr. Louis Coutinho referenced page 12 and advised the \$150,000 would be utilized for updating of mapping.

### **Parks and Playgrounds**

Mr. Stephen King, Manager, Parks and Natural Services, advised there are approximately 600 individual park and playground facilities throughout HRM. Mr. King further advised the projects were prioritized utilizing the criteria of public safety, standard requirements, usability, and overall need of the facilities. Council was advised that Regional Operations would consider projects that would be classed as routine repair but large enough to be Capital. Those requiring major repair were grouped under Community Services.

In response to Councillor Barnet, Mr. King advised \$98,000 of last year's budget for trees had been expended. Councillor Barnet questioned whether there was additional funding available from an outside agency or government group, to offset the \$50,000. Mr. King advised this is being investigated.

Councillor Barnet requested information on the Grennan Drive to Smokey Drive walkway.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Dooks, Council was advised there are approximately 45 facilities in District 1, many of which did not meet all the CSA standards for playgrounds. The Councillor expressed concern with the level of safety and what is actually being offered to meet recreational needs.

Councillor Schofield referenced G1 and enquired which upgrades would be carried out, and when. Mr. King stated those that are of a routine upgrading nature fall under Regional Operations; those which are considered of a larger scale, are the responsibility of Community Services. Mr. King further stated that safety is the greatest concern and work will be carried out on a priority basis.

Councillor Schofield referenced G1 requesting the status of the Farrell Road and Howe Street Parks on G2. In response, Mr. King advised Farrell Road Park is high on the priority list. Further, as the Howe Avenue ballfield is a safety issue, this project also is of a high priority.

Councillor Stone referenced the Mainland Commons and enquired as to how Regional Operations' staff plan on budgeting to repair the road, and install sewer and water. In response, Mr. Kulvinder Dhillon, Director, Engineering & Transportation Services, advised staff approached the Province for infrastructure monies to develop the road as well as the installation of sewer and water off Lacewood Drive.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Cooper, Mr. King advised as a result of the \$50,000 minimum ceiling some of the projects were grouped together, and not separately. However, staff advised a breakdown of projects would be provided.

(Councillor Epstein arrived at 3:15 p.m.)

### **Streets, Roads, Sewers, Sidewalks**

Mr. Dhillon stated the streets are categorized under new paving, resurfacing and reconstruction. Four streets have been paved to date at a cost of \$330,000 from a \$1 million budget. Tenders have been called for chip sealing of various streets (which have been approved by Council). Mr. Dhillon advised there are five streets where the abutters have agreed to local improvement charges. After completion of the above noted projects, there will be approximately \$ .5 million dollars left in the budget for new paving and chip sealing.

A list of streets was circulated to members of Council.

(Councillor Walker arrived at 3:30 p.m.)

Councillor Snow questioned why Lockview and Lakeview Roads were not included in this budget. In response, Mr. Dhillon advised Windsor Junction Road is listed as reconstruction. Further, he will contact Councillor Snow with regards to the other roads referenced.

Councillor Barnet suggested the streets be petitioned prior to listing.

Councillor Barnet referenced Fenerty Road requesting supporting documents as to why this project was not being considered this year.

Councillor Harvey questioned why Stonemount was not listed under new paving. In response, Mr. Dhillon stated he would contact the Councillor directly.

Mr. Dhillon advised there is \$6 million budgeted for resurfacing with \$2 million for reconstruction. Further, staff is recommending \$4 million be allocated for resurfacing and \$2.5 for reconstruction.

Councillor Sarto requested the \$60,000.00 allocated for patching be applied to reconstruction from Wanda Lane to Kimberley Crescent.



Councillor Blumenthal referenced Barrington Street and Duffus Street enquiring when these projects would be included in the Capital budget. In response, Mr. Dhillon suggested this would be put on a high priority; when the funds become available, after the approved projects are completed, staff can return to Council for consideration of approval of same.

In response to Councillor Cooper, Mr. Rick Paynter, Manager, Construction Services, advised the SDI index would be upgraded once every two years.

Councillor Harvey referenced Cobequid Road and enquired whether or not that street is a standard width.

Mr. Dhillon requested that proposed sewer project on Point Pleasant Drive now shown in 1999/2000, be moved to 1998/99 to be done in conjunction with the street project.

Councillor Hanson advised item 31 on page 19 should be "Spryfield/Herring Cove."

Mr. Dhillon reviewed the sidewalk portion of the budget suggesting that item 1 under New Sidewalk, St. Margarets Bay Road - be completed.

Councillor Harvey requested staff provide an update on the brook that is eroding properties along Old Sackville Road.

Councillor Kelly referenced Dartmouth Avenue and enquired when the sidewalk project may be carried out. In response, Mr. Dhillon advised he would investigate and report directly back to the Councillor.

Councillor Sarto referenced priority 52, page 17 advising it should read "from Wanda Lane" and not "Waltdale."

Councillor Blumenthal noted Livingstone Place is not listed. Mr. Dhillon advised he would investigate and report directly back to the Councillor.

Mr. Dhillon reviewed the traffic improvement portion highlighting the priorities which include five crosswalks, signal installation, the Macdonald Bridge ramps, and the Bicentennial Highway to Joseph Howe Drive.

Councillor Blumenthal enquired when a left turning lane at Kempt onto Windsor would become a priority.

Councillor Harvey requested the corner of McGee and Glendale, Sackville, be considered for inclusion in this budget year.

Councillor Stone referenced L3, Traffic Calming, and suggested staff review the Traffic Calming Policy and determine whether it should be included in the budget.

The Councillor referenced the area between Dunbrack and Willet Street noting it is a congested area between two shopping centres and requires traffic lights. Councillor Stone requested a report as to how close those lights are to being included in the budget.

The Councillor further enquired if the crosswalk at the Mainland Linear Parkway was to be installed, if it could be installed without the RA5 and if not, when is the RA5 going to be included. In response, Mr. Kenny Silver, Manager, Traffic and Transportation, advised there have been a number of locations where traffic lights had to be replaced to meet the eight foot standards and DOT requirements. Further, the light on Lacewood would be included in next year's budget.

Councillor Kelly referenced the Bedford Highway lights being out of synchronization with timing and pressures. In response, Mr. Silver advised he would contact the Councillor directly on this issue.

The meeting adjourned at 5 p.m. to Thursday, January 8, 1998 at 10:00 a.m.

Jane Nauss  
ASSISTANT MUNICIPAL CLERK