

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES February 17, 1998

PRESENT:

Mayor Walter Fitzgerald
Deputy Mayor Reg Rankin
Councillors: Bill Dooks
Gordon R. Snow
David Hendsbee
Ron Cooper
Harry McInroy
Jack Greenough
Condo Sarto
Bruce Hetherington
Clint Schofield
John Cunningham
Jerry Blumenthal
Russell Walker
Bill Stone
Ron Hanson
Stephen Adams
Barry Barnet
Bob Harvey
Peter Kelly
Jack Mitchell

ABSENT:

Councillors Graham L. Downey
Larry Uteck (Regrets)
Howard Epstein

STAFF MEMBERS:

Mr. Ken Meech, Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. Wayne Anstey, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Vi Carmichael, Municipal Clerk
Ms. Patti Halliday, Assistant Municipal Clerk

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Halifax Regional Municipality 1997 Citizen Survey Results 3

Mayor Fitzgerald called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

1. HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY 1997 CITIZEN SURVEY RESULTS

C Copies of the Halifax Regional Municipality 1997 Citizen Survey were circulated to the Committee.

C Copies of the results of the Halifax Regional Municipality 1997 Citizen Survey were circulated to the Committee.

Mr. Geoff Strople, Coordinator, Project Evaluation, Priority and Policy, presented the results of the Halifax Regional Municipality 1997 Citizen Survey to the Committee.

Mayor Fitzgerald thanked Mr. Strople for his presentation, noting the survey results will act as the benchmark for years to come.

Councillor Blumenthal congratulated Mr. Strople on the project. The Councillor noted the number one concern of residents is taxes, and suggested a large number of capital projects should not be approved this year to avoid an increase in taxes.

In response to a question from Councillor Snow regarding survey distribution, Mr. Strople replied questionnaires were sent to 1.7 percent of the adult population of Halifax Regional Municipality, which equalled about 4,000 questionnaires. Based on population, the number of surveys distributed were proportionate in the rural, urban and suburban areas.

Councillor Walker requested information on how many questionnaires were returned for each Community Council and District. Mr. Strople replied this information can be provided, but he noted, in most cases, there were less than one hundred questionnaires from each District. This limited number is not enough to look at each District in isolation. For this reason, staff chose to breakdown the information by Community Council area. Councillor Greenough noted results broken down by District would be very helpful for individual Councillors. The Councillor inquired how often follow-up surveys should be conducted. Mr. Strople suggested a large survey, similar to this one, could be conducted every four or five years, with smaller surveys being conducted every one or two years in between to keep up to date. He suggested the first follow-up survey should be conducted this fall. Mr. Strople noted the margin of error would be larger in the smaller surveys; and, therefore, the interpretation of results must be done carefully.

Councillor McInroy agreed the survey was a good exercise as it shows an attempt on the behalf of HRM to seek public input and opinion. The Councillor stated he would be

interested in being updated on the cost of this process. With respect to the following statement in the Opposition to Amalgamation - Before and After question: *Older respondents, those with less education and those not working were more likely to be opposed*, the Councillor stated he would like to see something that supports this statement. Councillor McInroy suggested a limited number of colour copies of the results report should be provided for future surveys, as the bars in the graphs are indistinguishable in black and white. With respect to satisfaction with Police Services, the Councillor suggested some responses may have been influenced by law enforcement issues that are out of the hands of the municipal government. Councillor McInroy suggested it may be helpful for Planning staff to receive a copy of this report, particularly those involved in the Small Lot Housing report preparation.

Councillor Hendsbee suggested there should be plebiscite questions put to the public regarding supplementary education and the expansion of the public library. The Councillor congratulated staff for their work on this project. Councillor Hendsbee noted the results are consistent with some of the problems faced by rural residents such as taxation, amalgamation, playgrounds, parks and streets. The Councillor stated he appreciates the results of the survey and looks forward to an update survey in the fall.

Councillor Harvey also expressed appreciation to Mr. Strople for his presentation. The Councillor suggested too much should not be read into the negative feelings about amalgamation, as a lot are left over from the process. Councillor Harvey noted this is just one tool to assist Council in making decisions, and cautioned Council not to become overly dependent upon surveys and polls in making decisions. The Councillor stated he would be interested in a Community Council breakdown regarding supplementary education funding. Mr. Strople replied staff looked for any differences in support for supplementary school funding by Community Council, and there were no statistically significant differences.

In response to a question from Councillor Sarto, Mr. Strople stated the percentage of surveys returned by District varied between 50 and 70 percent. Councillor Sarto requested that information be provided as to how many surveys were sent out to each District. With respect to individual District results, Mr. Strople stated there would need to be at least 400 questionnaires per District to provide valid results. Councillor Sarto suggested the sample size per District could be larger in future surveys. Mr. Strople replied in order to have each District represented, a sample size of about 10,000 - 12,000 would be required, which would be logistically difficult to conduct.

Councillor Barnet noted a couple of opportunities may have been missed with this survey in areas, such as obtaining input on the proposed construction of the Central Library. The

Councillor suggested future surveys be planned around timely issues on which Council must make decisions. With respect to future surveys, Councillor Barnet inquired if it is the intention to ask the same questions in the same format. Mr. Strople replied a number of questions, especially those regarding quality of service, will be asked in a similar format. However, there are also questions in this survey that may not be asked again, so there is room for additional questions, while still maintaining benchmark information. Councillor Barnet stated individual District surveys, such as the one conducted by Councillor Kelly in his District, are also very useful.

Councillor Schofield stated it is important to have supplementary education funding for all of the Municipality. In response to an inquiry from Councillor Schofield, Mr. Strople explained the question regarding the Relative Importance of Municipal Services to Respondents. Each respondent was requested to allocate \$100 to the following categories. The figures quoted represent the total dollars allocated from all respondents to the questionnaire.

Police Services = \$52,000
Streets and Roads = \$43,000
Fire Services = \$41,000
Parks and Playgrounds = \$15,000
Metro Transit = \$15,000
Recreation Facilities = \$13,000
Library Services = \$12,000
Other Services = \$11,000

Mayor Fitzgerald thanked Mr. Strople again for his presentation.

MOVED by Councillors Hetherington and Blumenthal that the meeting adjourn at 4:20 p.m. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Vi Carmichael
Municipal Clerk