

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES JANUARY 12, 2010

PRESENT: Mayor Peter Kelly
Deputy Mayor Brad Johns
Councillors: Steve Streach
Barry Dalrymple
David Hendsbee
Lorelei Nicoll
Gloria McCluskey
Darren Fisher
Bill Karsten
Jackie Barkhouse
Jim Smith
Mary Wile
Jerry Blumenthal
Jennifer Watts
Russell Walker
Debbie Hum
Linda Mosher
Stephen Adams
Robert Harvey
Tim Outhit
Reg Rankin
Peter Lund

REGRETS: Councillor: Dawn Sloane
Sue Uteck

STAFF: Mr. Wayne Anstey, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Ms. Mary Ellen Donovan, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Christen MacDonald, Acting Municipal Clerk
Ms. Cathy Mellett, Acting Municipal Clerk
Ms. Barbara Coleman, Legislative Assistant
Ms. Krista Tidgwell, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10:09 a.m.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - December 8 & 15, 2009

**MOVED BY Councillor Dalrymple, seconded by Councillor McCluskey,
that the minutes of December 8 and December 15 be approved as distributed.**

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Mayor Kelly advised Council that Item 4, Unsolicited Proposal - Fast Ferry, would be deferred until January 26, 2010. In response to Council's question as to why this item was being deferred, Mr. Wayne Anstey advised Council that staff has been continually trying to reach the proponent. A conference call occurred yesterday with senior staff and one member of Council participating. Staff received clarification from WaterLink Transportation that they are still interested in providing a fast ferry service from Bedford to Halifax; however, it would be approximately six months before the service could be implemented. The hover craft that was originally planned for HRM has been deployed to another community in Canada. The proponent, Mr. Harrass advised Council that two weeks would be needed to update his presentation to Council.

Councillor McCluskey inquired why the conference call meeting was not open to all of Council? Mr. Anstey advised that it was Councillor Outhit who had requested that it be deferred until further information could come forward. Councillor McCluskey suggested that any meetings of this type should be open to all of Council.

The Mayor advised that the delay had been caused due to the fact that Mr. Harrass was out of the country and could not be reached before Monday.

Councillor Hum suggested that Councillors are not receiving the information they need to answer resident's questions. She further noted the two page report before Council today did not contain adequate information on the Navy's position on the implications of WaterLink Transportation using the Bedford Basin for its high speed ferry service between Bedford and Downtown Halifax. She suggested that HRM should contact the Navy with regard to this issue.

Councillor Walker suggested that Council should be notified in future of items being removed from the agenda.

Councillor Outhit agreed that the matter should be removed from the agenda until the proponent can prepare a proper presentation.

3. COUNCIL FOCUS AREAS

Transportation

- A December 2009 - Council Focus Area staff presentation was before Council.
- A 2009/10 Council Focus Area Report on Transportation last revised January 12, 2010, was also before Council.

Mr. Mike Labrecque, Deputy CAO, Corporate Services & Strategy, reviewed the presentation before Council explaining what has been done, what is being done and what needs to be done to bring the various pieces of transportation planning together. He indicated that several members of his team were present to answer any questions that Council may have.

Highlights of the presentation were as follows:

- Council had previously approved transportation planning as opposed to traffic planning because transportation planning is all inclusive
- in planning for change, an internal steering committee was struck to manage the work in the Transportation Council Focus area with the objective to coordinate the work in a timely and efficient manner
- the Dartmouth Terminal integration into an open space master plan is evidence that the various pieces are coming together under the Transportation Plan.

Councillor Wile entered the meeting at 10:23 a.m.

- staff is working closely with Harbour Bridges through the Strategic Joint Transportation Planning Committee which is the only cross jurisdictional group in the HRM

Councillor Mosher entered the meeting at 10:28 a.m.

- HRM Transit assets are in excellent shape. Over the last 4 to 5 years, HRM has made progress in replacing the outdated fleet with new buses
- HRM will continue to leverage funds to obtain expansion articulated buses and repatriate older buses to a more serviceable area of HRM
- the spare bus ratio will continually be assessed in order to protect day to day service
- improved service delivery will be implemented through the use of staff documenting the work that needs to be done. Operationally this will improve the service standard

- staff will be returning to Council with Street-Based Service Standards
- EcoMOBILITY Pilot Plan will generate revenue to reinvest in more sustainable transportation options
- The Peninsula Corridor Study identifies dedicated lanes and transit priority features along the Peninsula. This will need to come back to Council.
- Services that need to be increased are Access-a-Bus and Metro X as per a study approved by Council
- Other terminals that need to be completed and/or constructed are the Highfield Terminal, Bridge Terminal, Lacewood Terminal, and the Burnside Terminal.
- The Ragged Lake Transit Centre will be commissioned in the Spring of 2010.
- Security on the buses and the terminals has been increased through the use of cameras

Discussion on the presentation ensued with questions answered by staff. Highlights of the discussion were as follows:

- parking revenue could be raised by charging a small fee for park and ride users
- Highfield Park Terminal does not meet the operational requirements to allow for layovers and washroom facilities for the bus drivers making it a priority for upgrading
- service in the rural areas is limited to express service. Anything further will need to be built into the 5-year plan and funding will need to be found for the endeavour

Mr. David McCusker, Manager, Regional Transportation informed Council that interim measures have been worked out with surrounding businesses to alleviate the overcrowding at the Sackville Terminal Park and Ride. Metro Transit is currently reviewing the order of priorities of their park and rides and the park and ride at the Sackville Terminal would be a part of this discussion.

Mr. David Hubley, Manager Design and Construction, advised that there is some merit in having bike lanes serve as walking lanes. Further review of this issue would be required.

Highlights continued as follows:

- immediate plans for using the rail line for an alternate transportation method are not being considered as it is not part of the five-year Regional Plan

- when the Corridor Plan comes back in more detail to Council it will speak to what is needed for the corridor along Bayers Road including a dedicated bus lane
- Maintenance Planning Supervisors are on the street as of last week. How Councillors are to be engaged in this process requires further discussion
- the land has been purchased for the Waverley Park and Ride. The tender is slated to be issued at the end of January with construction to begin this summer
- discussions are taking place now with the Halifax International Airport Authority regarding their offer of financial support toward the bus service to the airport and the design of that service
- staff have been talking to staff of the City of Edmonton about what type of bus would be needed for the Halifax International Airport Authority service. Edmonton is considering a similar service for their city.
- staff are still looking at being able to provide the Halifax International Airport Authority service in 2011

Committee of the Whole recessed at 11:20 a.m. and reconvened at 11:27 a.m.

Discussion ensued with the following highlights:

- the notification area of the Lacewood Terminal Open House to be held on January 25, 2010 was quite significant covering the three districts that would be impacted
- it should be noted that the Lacewood Terminal is not a Park and Ride
- a neighbourhood bus service in that context is not being considered at however improved community based service will be reviewed.

Councillor Smith requested a staff report comparing the cost of using a grinder attached to a truck to repair sidewalks that fall below the 76 % deficiency to actually repairing the sidewalks using a concrete patch product that was used in his area a few years ago.

Highlights of the discussion continued:

- bus shelters can be put anywhere providing the money is there to fund them
- staff advised that HRM is slightly behind with some project specific items such as the Dartmouth Terminal
- staff indicated that the Woodside Ferry is in the 5-year plan and would have been funded under the Build Canada Fund. This is no longer the case.
- the Woodside Ferry will be partially funded by the Ferry Reserve and the balance will need to be included in the Capital budget.

- the scope, design and scale of the new Woodside Ferry will need to be determined.

In response to Councillor Barkhouse's inquiry as to whether the transit plan has been negatively impacted by funding commitments in other areas, Ms. Cathie O'Toole, Director, Finance, responded that the Woodside ferry had been included in the 2009/10 capital budget subject to Build Canada approval, which was not received. However, when the Strategic Transit 5 year operating plan comes back to Council, the Woodside Ferry will be included in the proposed capital plan with design starting in 2010/11 and acquisition in 2012/13 or 2013/14 depending on funding.

- more rural service is needed above the express rural service such as the Metro X

Mr. Labrecque reviewed the Work Management Project.

Committee of the Whole recessed at 12:05 p.m. and reconvened at 1:18 p.m. with Councillor Hendsbee in attendance.

Council continued their discussion with staff responding to questions. The following highlights were noted:

- rural bus service is identified in the plan as a rural standard; it prescribes standards for rural transit, as well as some urban standards, to allow Council to identify what options there are to deliver the type of service; rural services over and above the rural express are not identified in the plan

Mr. Labrecque noted that all questions not responded to in the presentation to Council on the 5 year transit strategy, will come back as part of the staff report on January 26th.

- it is important that HRM has a link from HRM's core to the Eastern Shore, airport, Musquodoboit Harbour and other outlying areas
- rural express is best referred to as rural transit.; transit travels from an outlying area and is linked between one of the terminals within HRM's core

Councillor Streach asked whether HRM is willing to offer assistance to members of the public who want to set up ATV and snowmobiling trails. Peter Verge, Manager Municipal Operations, Transportation and Public Works, advised that Council has directed staff to carry out an Active Transportation mandate, which is identified by staff as "human powered" rather than off road vehicles. He noted that Council has not had direct dealings with ATV and snowmobiling groups in regard to non multi-use trails.

Staff is in discussion with the Province to identify how HRM might participate in provision of infrastructure to accommodate ATV and snowmobiling groups. Once a plan has been identified, staff will bring back a recommendation for Council's consideration.

- District 1 and other neighbouring areas have a great desire to access public transportation for recreational activities
- The EcoMOBILITY Pilot Project looks at having HRM residents pay for on street parking and monies collected would be directed to more sustainable transportation options

Councillor Watts stated that Active Transportation funding is an important contribution, which enables HRM to potentially reduce the cost of road development and maintenance. She also noted the importance of repairing sidewalks in a timely manner. She asked how HRM is making decisions regarding planning for transportation and noted that there are approximately seven major projects which have no Councillor or public involvement. Councillor Watts expressed concern regarding the possibility of losing advances made toward the establishment of a Transportation Committee when implementing the Council Committee restructuring process.

Wayne Anstey, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, advised that the Chief Administrative Office has designated staff from various HRM departments to prepare an issue paper regarding the Capital Transportation Authority. He noted that one of the Standing Committees being proposed under the restructuring of the Council committees would be a Transportation Standing Committee, which would have Councillor representation. He further noted that there is a Coordinating Committee and an Interprovincial Municipal Committee in place to ensure that all levels are coordinated when dealing with issues that impact planning or infrastructure.

Councillor Hum asked whether HRM would be undertaking an initiative regarding roundabouts in an effort to establish a policy for transportation improvements. Ken Reashor, Acting Director/Traffic Authority, Transportation and Public Works, advised that the Province is working on a policy in regard to roundabouts. HRM reviews each of the locations being considered on a case by case basis. He noted that staff will be bringing forward a presentation to Council regarding roundabouts to discuss the pros and cons and potential concepts that Council may wish to consider.

Councillor Hum noted that HRM should review the following transportation aspects for roadways:

- pedestrian accessibility
- active transportation and initiatives
- design factors

Councillor Mosher indicated that the Spryfield Terminal and Metro Link, which are included in the Regional Plan, have been re-prioritized. She noted that she and Councillor Adams would like to meet with staff to discuss this matter further.

During further discussion, Council made the following suggestions regarding bike lanes:

- include appropriate bike lanes within HRM's development agreements; have staff investigate whether this matter could be done through Legislation
- there should be more basic or enhanced maintenance of bike lanes
- there should be more street sweeping to clear away gravel and debris
- prohibit individuals from parking on bike lanes; make restrictions part of an educational campaign or include it in HRM's literature
- put up signs regarding cyclists and pedestrians sharing the lanes
- have a special pass in conjunction with Metro Park and Ride which includes the Metro Link and parking
- look at putting two to three bike lanes in the down town core

Councillor Wile stressed the importance of not neglecting citizens with disabilities and their needs.

Mr. Reashor advised that a request has been made to the Province regarding protection for cyclists and pedestrians when travelling in bike lanes. He indicated that cyclists and pedestrians also have the use of the shoulder of the road as shared access.

During continued discussion, the following additional points were made:

- HRM has surplus properties in rural areas, which have been suggested as prime locations for future rural transit park and rides
- railway tracks are owned by CN and are designated for heavyweight trains
- lightweight trains are prohibited from using existing tracks and are not built in the same way as heavyweight trains
- there is not enough land in HRM's core to separate the train tracks; there must be a physical barrier between the tracks to prevent collisions
- day liners are not designed for an urban system; rail systems need high volumes of passengers to be successful
- staff are conducting a ferry needs assessment regarding the Woodside Ferry and should be able to tender an architect to develop the plans within three to four months
- Access-a-Bus is available to residents within 610 metres of an existing transit service route.

- staff will provide Council with information regarding how to provide a higher level of service for Access-a-Bus
- Roxane MacInnes, Transportation Demand Management Planner, Regional Transportation, has started the implementation of parking and is working on By-laws with HRM Planning
- concern was raised that if people have to pay to park and ride the buses, they will expect a parking spot to be available when they arrive
- Park and Ride parking lots are currently first come, first serve
- it was suggested that sidewalks and bike lanes be combined
- concern was raised regarding public safety in specific areas with heavy traffic volumes; it was suggested that staff meet with the Active Transportation Committee to discuss this issue

MOVED BY Councillor Mosher, seconded by Councillor Watts, that Halifax Regional Council endorse a letter to the Minister of Transportation asking for legislative authority to regulate parking and other parking limitations on bike lanes in HRM.

Staff are reviewing the development of bike lanes in the urban portion of HRM and are looking into parking restrictions for people who park in bike lanes. Staff are reviewing whether bike lanes should have parking restrictions be in effect at all times, or at least throughout parts of the day.

Council raised concerns regarding a lack of parking for residents and facilities in the urban area. Staff will provide a report to Council on this matter.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Councillor Outhit raised concern as to whether a study has been undertaken by HRM staff, that would indicate the use of the existing rail lines in conjunction with the day liner and whether it would be viable if there were stops along the way in to HRM's core. Staff advised that an estimation of the number of potential passengers has not been studied. The possibility of adding additional stops within communities outside of HRM could be identified in the study.

MOVED BY Councillor Outhit, seconded by Councillor Dalrymple, that Halifax Regional Council request a staff report on the feasibility of a commuter train service for HRM, extending beyond HRM boundaries as required.

During the discussion Council indicated that the report also needs to address, future transportation requirements and day liner approach.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Committee of the Whole recessed at 2:46 p.m. and reconvened at 3:08 p.m.

Infrastructure

Item was deferred until the next Committee of the Whole meeting.

**4. UNSOLICITED PROPOSAL - HARBOUR FERRY
(Referred from Regional Council December 15, 2009)**

Item was deferred until the next Committee of the Whole meeting.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:09 p.m.

Cathy Mellett
Acting Municipal Clerk