

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

February 1, 2011

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

REGRETS: Councillor Linda Mosher

STAFF: Mr. Wayne Anstey, Acting Chief Administrative Officer
Ms. Kirby Grant, Acting Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Sherryll Murphy, Acting Municipal Clerk
Ms. Shawnee Gregory, Acting Municipal Clerk
Ms. Sheilagh Edmonds, Legislative Assistant
Ms. Melody Campbell, Legislative Assistant

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	CALL TO ORDER.....	3
2.	APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – None	3
3.	BEDFORD TRANSIT ALTERNATIVES.....	3
4.	CORPORATE PLAN OUTCOME AREAS AND COUNCIL FOCUS AREAS.....	7
5.	ADJOURNMENT	8

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – None

3. BEDFORD TRANSIT ALTERNATIVES

4. COMMUTER RAIL FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS

Council discussion of items 3 and 4 took place concurrently.

Two information reports dated January 10, 2011 were before Council.

Two staff presentations, Bedford Transit Alternatives and Commuter Rail Feasibility Analysis were before Council.

Mr. David Reage, Supervisor of Service Design & Projects, Metro Transit provided the staff presentations. He advised that, in response to two motions passed by Regional Council, staff retained Delphi-MRC to prepare a comparative analysis of express bus and ferry options in the Bedford to Downtown Halifax corridor as well as commuter rail.

Mr. Reage noted that the analysis used the BMO Centre as the start point and Scotia Square as the finish and the results of travel times were as follows:

- MetroLink trip - 31 minutes in morning peak hour and 36 at afternoon peak hours
- MetroLink with a 20% increase – 45 minutes in morning peak hours and 48 minutes in afternoon peak hours
- Ferry - 43 minutes at morning peak hours and 43 afternoon peak hours
- Commuter rail - 38 minutes at morning peak hours and 38 minutes at afternoon peak hours.

Mr. Reage advised that the consultant used a Life Cycle Cost Comparison versus the traditional Cost Benefit Analysis and this has provided cost figures in real dollars and on a per peak-hour seat basis. He noted that the annual operating costs per peak-hour seat are as follows:

- \$1,300 for Ferry
- \$1,500 for MetroLink
- \$2,100 for Commuter Rail

In conclusion Mr. Reage advised that having a choice of three modes of transit alternatives is a rare opportunity for a municipality and that there were positive and negative attributes of all three. He added that there was no simple answer as to which mode would be the best, and that a thorough analysis would require further study.

Councillor Barkhouse entered the meeting at 10:21 a.m.

MOVED by Councillor Lund, seconded by Councillor Wile that staff continue to study the commuter rail option with a review to be undertaken by the Transportation Standing Committee and that it include the involvement of public and experts and report back to Council in six months.

Councillor Dalrymple spoke in support of the motion and suggested that if commuter rail were successful, there would then be the possibility of further expansion to Windsor and to the Valley. He added that he felt this also supports the principles of HRMbyDesign as it would get people to the downtown core, and may help in reviving the downtown. Councillor Dalrymple indicated that he disagreed with the report's estimates on ridership numbers from Windsor, and that commuter rail would encourage people to move to the country.

Mr. Austin French, Manager, Planning Services addressed Council and clarified that all three options presented in the report are consistent with the Regional Plan. He added that there is a second report in regard to extending rail service to Truro and this report questions whether it would be consistent with the Regional Plan. He noted that there is no emphasis in the Regional Plan on encouraging growth outside of HRM's borders.

Councillor Outhit advised that he viewed this matter as a regional opportunity and not simply a Bedford opportunity and that it will help with the vibrancy of the downtown.

Councillor Rankin expressed concern that the wording of the motion was limited to commuter rail. He suggested that there needs to be a wider examination to include Metro Link and the Ferry and that it has to look not only at the short term but at the medium and long term. Councillor Rankin indicated that the six month scope for examination was not relevant when the study is looking at the longer term.

MOVED by Councillor Rankin, seconded by Councillor Outhit that the motion be amended to include all three options.

Councillor Uteck pointed out that in her district CN has removed the train track and it was very unlikely it would be re-installed. Councillor Uteck added that, based on previous experience in dealing with CN, she had significant concern that cost of the study could substantially increase once CN is contacted and provide their requirements. She indicated that studying three options was too much and that Council needs to refocus on a transportation plan.

Councillor Blumenthal advised that he agreed with Councillor Uteck. He suggested that more consideration should be given to the idea of High Occupancy Lanes and getting buses into the downtown in a timely manner. The Councillor pointed out that people will continue to use their vehicles to come into the downtown unless buses become a more efficient alternative to cars.

Councillor Hendsbee entered the meeting at 10:47 a.m.

Councillor Watts advised that she supported this matter going to the Transportation Standing Committee and suggested that there were a number of questions to be addressed such as the clarification on the status of parking at Mill Cove, and the impact of traffic going through Bedford. She referred to the Life Cycle Costing and advised that the report was focused on the economic aspect and that there should be analysis on the environmental impact. In addition, Councillor Watts advised that the impact of moving to a dedicated bus lane (High Occupancy Lanes) and the status of widening of Highway 102 and the impact on Bayers Road should also be addressed.

In response, Mr. Ken Reashor, Director, Transportation and Public Works advised that having this matter go to the Transportation Standing Committee will be an opportunity for staff to pull all these things together and illustrate how they are interconnected.

Councillor Fisher indicated that he was supportive of moving forward and looking at rail options, but had a concern about working with CN. He added that there needs to be a Park and Ride at Mill Cove, and that a shuttle service will add too much cost to the plan. Councillor Fisher referred to the staff report and noted that it stated that a report which was initiated in 2004 on behalf of HRM has not been submitted. He questioned if any payment had been given for this report.

In response, Mr. Eddie Robar, advised that there would not be a completed report and there had been no payment issued.

Councillor Wile indicated she supported the idea of commuter rail but there were decisions that needed to be made before there is any redesign of the Bedford or Rockingham waterfront areas.

Councillor Hum asked for staff to comment on how commuter rail would impact decisions that have already been made in regard to the vision for the Bedford Basin.

In response Mr. Roger Wells advised that there was no conflict, adding that the study took this into account.

Councillor Adams expressed concern about Council proceeding with a study first without knowing the parameters, and suggested that the discussion with CN on using their rail lines should be held first.

Mayor Kelly advised that making contact with CN would be part of the process.

Councillor Adams indicated that he found it difficult to support enhancing an existing service when communities such as Sambro are looking for the basic transit service.

Councillor Karsten expressed concern about sending this matter back to the Transportation Committee and advised that the six month scope was an unreasonable expectation. He suggested that the proviso of six months should be removed from the motion.

Councillor Nicoll pointed out that the hub of the Municipality was the harbour and that there needs to be a master plan for Halifax Harbour. With regard to the motion, she suggested that this matter should also be discussed at the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee, and the Regional Plan should be the focus.

Councillor Lund noted that the economic development component has not been discussed and suggested it should be included. He also suggested that the ferry be set aside and the focus be on rail. Councillor Lund advised that he would be willing to remove the proviso for six months but he would want something back to Regional Council before next year's budget and that an interim report be provided in the fall.

As seconder of the motion, Councillor Wile agreed to remove the proviso for six months.

Councillor Hendsbee advised that he supported sending this matter to the Transportation Standing Committee and suggested that the study needs to consider all aspects in and around the harbour that affect transportation. Councillor Hendsbee also noted that the focus has to be within the Municipality's boundaries.

Council recessed at 12:00 p.m.

Council reconvened at 1:13 p.m.

Councillor Johns suggested that a link bus be made available to enable people to commute to downtown universities and hospitals from Scotia Square.

Councillor Walker requested that his suggestion that HRM consider putting their own dedicated tracks in the area of the south rail bed be referred to the Transportation Standing Committee.

MOVED by Councillor McCluskey, seconded by Councillor Uteck, that Council defer decision on the commuter rail until HRM receives detailed information from CN. MOTION DEFEATED.

Councillor Barkhouse suggested that staff work with the Federal Government on funding initiatives for the projects.

AMENDMENT TO MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

The motion now reads:

MOVED by Councillor Lund, seconded by Councillor Dalrymple, that Halifax Regional Council request staff to continue to study all three options, as set out in the January 10, 2011 Information Reports, as potential long term strategies with

review being undertaken by the Transportation Standing Committee and with the public and experts involved in this review and further that a report come back to Council. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

5. CORPORATE PLAN OUTCOME AREAS AND COUNCIL FOCUS AREAS

An Information Report dated January 27, 2011 was submitted.

Mr. Brad Anguish, Director, Business Planning and Information Management, provided the presentation, HRM Community Outcome Planning & Council Priority Setting, to Council.

Mr. Paul Dunphy, Director, Community Development, provided the presentation, Well Planned & Engaged Communities, to Council.

Discussion ensued among Council whether the Corporate Plan Outcome Areas and Council Focus Areas presentation should be addressed by Council or the Standing Committees. Council agreed that the presentation be addressed through Council.

The meeting recessed at 2:58 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 3:10 p.m.

Mr. Richard MacLellan, Manager, Sustainable Environment Management Office, provided the presentation, Clean and Healthy Environment, to Council.

Chief Frank Beazley, Halifax Regional Police, provided the presentation, Safe and Welcoming Communities, to Council.

Mr. Ken Reashor, Director, Transportation & Public Works, provided the presentation, Integrated & Affordable Transportation Networks, to Council.

Mr. Paul Dunphy, Director, Community Development, provided the presentation, Diverse Lifestyle Opportunities, to Council.

Ms. Jennifer Church, Managing Director of External & Cultural Affairs, provided the presentation, Economic Prosperity, to Council.

Mr. Brad Anguish, closed the presentations expressing appreciation to Council. He welcomed comments.

The following points were brought forward by Council:

- Community programs such as Good Neighbours, Great Neighbourhoods, can be changed if they are not meeting the needs of the public.
- The Greenprint Plan needs to be put in place, at this point it is being rolled into the Regional Plan process.

- Public consultation is an important process in Councils' decision making
- Measuring the progress of outcome areas and reporting back to Council is necessary
- The anti-idling program needs to be highlighted
- Energy conservation, ie. retrofits to older buildings and lighting has to be considered as a project
- Community art is an important initiative
- Stormwater management initiatives need to continue
- Additional work needs to be done regarding groundwater, lake pollution and water quality
- Affordable housing initiatives should be considered in developments
- Additional Capital Cost Contributions should be adopted for transportation initiatives
- Economic prosperity is key and the Municipality must promote that HRM is open for business
- Good news stories from HRM and the Greater Halifax Partnership should be communicated
- Gains must be made on sustainable transportation initiatives

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Cathy J. Mellett
Municipal Clerk