

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE OF WHOLE  
MINUTES

April 2, 2012

PRESENT:

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

STAFF:

Mr. Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer  
Mr. Randolph Kinghorne, Acting Municipal Solicitor  
Ms. Cathy Mellett, Municipal Clerk  
Ms. Krista Vining, Legislative Assistant  
Ms. Sheilagh Edmonds, Legislative Assistant

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – NONE**

**3. BUDGET DELIBERATIONS**

**MOVED by Deputy Mayor Karsten, seconded by Councillor Walker that it is hereby resolved that:**

a) the Operating Budget in the amount of **\$788,752,200** gross expenditures (which includes **\$667,707,200** in municipal expenditures including the reserve withdrawals specified in the Operating and Project Budget), **\$585,143,400** in property tax revenues (including area rate revenues) and **\$203,608,800** in other revenues be approved;

b) the Project Budget in the amount of **\$131,600,000** be approved;

c) the general rates of taxation on commercial and business occupancy be set at

(i) **\$3.084 for the urban area;**

(ii) **\$3.084 for the suburban area; and**

(iii) **\$2.733 for the rural area**

And applied to the taxable assessment of the property;

d) the general rates of taxation on residential and resource property be set at

(i) **\$0.661 for the urban area;**

(ii) **\$0.645 for the suburban area; and**

(iii) **\$0.639 for the rural area**

And applied to the taxable assessment of the property;

e) that Council approve the Metro Transit Annual Service Plan and that the tax rates associated with Transit Taxation be set at

(i) **\$0.051 for the Regional Transportation tax rate;**

(ii) **\$0.105 for the Local Transit tax rate**

And applied to the taxable assessment of the property;

- f) (i) the boundary of the urban, suburban and rural areas is as delineated in the attached "Tax Structure Map";  
  
(ii) the boundary of the Regional Transportation area includes all properties within communities included within the attached "Regional Transportation map";  
  
(iii) the boundary for the Local Transit area includes all properties within 1km walking distance of any HRM transit stop.
- g) **Supplementary Education**, under Section 80 of the Halifax Charter, shall be set at the rate of \$0.037 to the residential and resource assessment and at \$0.110 to the commercial assessment including business occupancy;
- h) **Fire Protection** rates shall be set at the rate of \$0.025 for all residential and resource assessment and at \$0.075 to the commercial assessment including business occupancy; for properties which are within 1,200 feet of a hydrant that is designed and operated for public fire protection purposes.
- i) the final tax bills will become due on **Wednesday, October 31, 2012**;
- j) the interest rate on the Special Reserve Funds, designated as requiring interest under Section 121(2) of the Halifax Charter, be set at the rate of return on funds invested by HRM for the period April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013;
- k) the interest rate on the Pollution Control Reserves be set at the rate of return on funds invested by HRM for the period April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013;
- l) the interest rate on all reserves except for those identified in j) and k) will be set at the rate of return on funds invested by HRM for the period April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013;
- m) that staff return to Regional Council with a proposed Business Case for a Multi-District Facilities Reserve before July 3, 2012;
- n) that the Mayor write the Property Valuation Services Corporation (PVSC) requesting their assistance in analyzing commercial taxation trends including, but not limited to, assessment data and metrics for individual properties such as the valuation of land, buildings and improvements and the square footage of individual structures.

**- Executive Overview (CAO /Deputy CAO/Chief Financial Officer)**

Mr. Mike Labreque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer provided an executive overview of how the budget will be presented to Council. It was noted that the fleet budgets and

management costs have been consolidated into Transportation and Public Works, for which Director Ken Reashor would provide a breakdown of this budget change.

### **- Transit**

Mr. Eddie Robar, Director of Metro Transit provided the 2012-2013 Metro Transit Budget presentation. He advised that the budget focuses on increased transit service, greater efficiencies and a state of good repair. Compensation and benefits have increased by \$6.1 million (11.3%) resulting from new full time employees, annual compensation adjustments and appropriately funded overtime. Vehicle expenses have increased by \$3.5 million (22.7%) to account for bus maintenance and repair (30% cost increase to parts), as well as rising fuel costs. The ferry reserve and operating capital has decreased by \$3.4 million (30.4%). Equipment and communications has increased by \$68,000 (11.6%) to obtain bus maintenance equipment at Ragged Lake Transit Centre. External services have increased by \$62,000 (11.8%) to allow for additional security services and infrastructure at ferry terminals and transit facilities. Supplies have moved to vehicle repair and maintenance with a decrease of \$3,500 (100%) in materials.

Councillor Nicoll entered the meeting at approximately 10:30 a.m.

It was noted that there is a Chebucto Community Council meeting scheduled for 7 p.m. this evening. Council agreed to adjourn budget discussions at 4:30 p.m., rather than the regularly scheduled time of 6 p.m.

Mr. Robar responded to questions raised by Council.

Councillor Walker requested clarification as to what is being done to bring forward the report on resolving zoning issues in relation to the Lacewood Terminal.

Councillor Uteck requested an update on what the general tax rate would be if the transit service was funded entirely through the general tax rate to pay for the entire transit service. Staff noted that an information report was before Council in September of 2011 regarding this but staff would provide a status update.

In response to a question raised by Councillor McCluskey on the ratio of supervisors to drivers, Mr. Robar advised that there is an approximate 1-50 ratio of street supervisors and 1-100 ratio of employee supervisors.

Councillor McCluskey requested staff identify how much less costly would it be for Metro Transit to keep articulated buses on the street during the middle of the day versus switching the bus out with another driver. Mr. Reashor responded that the current method of delivery was the most cost effective approach.

Councillor Sloane requested information on the number of ridership to Route #3 Mumford since the reduction of one trip in 2011-2012.

Councillor Mosher expressed concern with the reduction of service after 8 p.m. for Route #15 Purcell's Cove. She suggested that if the frequency of this route were increased, more people would use this service. Councillor Mosher could see reducing service to 8 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays but stopping at 8 p.m. on weekdays would affect passengers that use this service to get to and from work; many of whom work at the Halifax Shopping Centre and in Bayers Road.

Mr. Robar advised that Route #3 is not meeting the service standard; there are approximately six (6) passengers heading outbound and four (4) passengers heading inbound combined on the two trips being reduced.

Councillor Mosher questioned why Route #22 Armdale would not be reduced after 8 p.m. as there are only seven (7) passengers per hour. Mr. Robar indicated that staff typically allows 18-24 months for a new route to generate ridership and suggested waiting until the 2012-2013 budget before reviewing augmented service for this route.

**MOVED by Councillor Mosher, seconded by Councillor Adams that Halifax Regional Council reduce the evening after 8 p.m. frequency for Route #22 Armdale from thirty (30) minutes to one (1) hour and that Halifax Regional Council keep the week day frequency for Route #15 Purchell's Cove after 8 p.m. MOTION PUT AND DEFEATED.**

Councillor Barkhouse entered the meeting at 11:36 a.m.

Councillor Smith requested information on the savings in dead heading when the two transit centres were built.

Councillor Lund requested clarification as to why Metro Transit's 2011-2012 operating budget would not have been set at \$96,365,239 as that was the projection, rather than \$92,935,189.

Councillor Rankin commented that the public is not being well served and requested answers as to why the new terminal for Lacewood has not been completed to date, as well as to provide answers on transit efforts in Bayers Lake Park.

Councillor Blumenthal requested staff identify in writing the ratio of supervisors to drivers.

Councillor Johns expressed his disappointment for the 2012-2012 transit budget, in that:

- There is no new route planned for Margeson Drive or Lucasville Road; over \$350,000 was budgeted last year to purchase a bus to move forward with the route for Lucasville Road; community consultation was held, with an expectation that the Lucasville route would commence in 2012-2013

- There has been significant reduction to existing routes in identified growth areas in the Regional Plan (ie. Sackville, Lucasville and Beaver Bank)
- There has been no new routes or expansions identified as previously suggested by the Sackville community and in the 2011-2012 budget
- Congestion issues along Hammonds Plains Road are continuously being raised at North West Community Council meetings; however, the 2012-2013 budget does not allow for alleviation of some of these issues, through a more robust transit service

Councillor Johns noted the importance of putting appropriate budgets in place to provide for infrastructure in growth areas.

In response to concern expressed by several members of Council respecting the reduction of Route #3 Mumford, which is used by many seniors, it was **MOVED by Councillor Sloane, seconded by Councillor Blumenthal that Halifax Regional Council allocate the funding needed from the \$450,000 ear marked for the Rural Transit Plan to keep Route #3 Mumford operating for another year. MOTION PUT AND DEFEATED.**

Council recessed at 12:12 p.m.

Council reconvened at 1:09 p.m. with Councillor Harvey in attendance.

The following motion was on the floor:

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### **- Police Services**

Mr. Earl Gosse, Chair of the Police Commission; Chief Frank Beazley, HRP; and Superintendent Jean Michel Blais, RCMP provided the 2012-2013 HRM Police Budget presentation. Chief Beazley advised that with the efficiencies found and enhanced revenue, and some costs moved out of police budget such as Fleet, the proposed budget is \$69,906,600 which is a 2.8 percent reduction.

Superintendent Blais advised that this past year, the RCMP budget was \$21,591,400. With the re-signing of the Provincial Police Services Act there will be some changes but they have yet to be finalized. Supt. Blais added that he is anticipating a variance of 4.4%, but it will be June before the actual amount is confirmed.

Chief Beazley responded to questions.

**MOVED by Councillor Streach, seconded by Councillor Sloane that the Police Services budget be moved into the overall budget process.**

Councillor Uteck indicated she was a member of the Police Commission and the Commission has discussed the department's fine and fee structure and the possibility of having these revenues go back into the department's budget rather than to General Revenues. Councillor Uteck advised that for the 2013-2014 budget, she would like staff to consider this idea.

**MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

### **- Fire & Emergency Services**

Chief Doug Trussler, Fire and Emergency Services presented the 2012-2013 budget for his department and responded to questions. In his presentation, Chief Trussler advised that the budget has a decrease of \$2.7 million (4.6%), and it was achieved primarily through anticipated vacancy management strategies, and the reduction of overtime through efficiencies.

Chief Trussler responded to questions.

Council recessed at 2:32 p.m.

Council reconvened at 2:51 p.m.

#### **- Transportation & Public Works**

Mr. Ken Reashor, Director, Transportation and Public Works presented the budget for Transportation and Public Works for 2012-2013. In outlining his budget, Mr. Reashor advised that there is a \$14.2 million increase over last year's budget, and explained that there are no increases from what the department was doing previously, but that the increases are related to areas that were previously underfunded and transfers in from other Business Units for fleet maintenance. He also noted that there were areas in which they have not had to fund in order to sustain what they were doing because of the efficiencies. These efficiencies have reduced costs and helped to offset future increases. Mr. Reashor emphasized that this budget will start to address the state of repair of HRM's assets.

Mr. Reashor and Mr. David Hubley, Manager, TPW Design and Construction responded to questions.

Councillor Blumenthal advised that he would like information on how much the Municipality spends on fuel, overall.

#### **4. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:33 p.m.

Cathy J. Mellett  
Municipal Clerk