

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

HRM TAX REFORM COMMITTEE

MINUTES

September 11, 2008

PRESENT: David Grace, Chair
Councillor David Hendsbee
Councillor Sue Uteck
Councillor Andrew Younger
Patrick Flinn
Mark Gilbert
Giselle Kakamousias
Andrew Murphy

REGRETS: Councillor Brad Johns
Councillor Reg Rankin
Janice Malay
Robert Grace

STAFF: Bruce Fisher, Manager, Fiscal & Tax Policy
Andre MacNeil, Financial Consultant
Barbara Coleman, Legislative Assistant

Table of Contents

1.	CALL TO ORDER	3
2.	APPROVAL OF MINUTES	3
3.	APPROVAL OF ORDER OF BUSINESS.	3
4.	BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES	3
5.	CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS	3
6.	CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND DELEGATIONS	3
7.	REPORTS	
	7.1 Review of Consultations (oral)	3
	7.2 Draft Survey for Tax Reform	3
	7.3 Review of Timeline	3
	7.4 Information Report for September 23, 2008	3
8.	ADDED ITEMS	6
9.	NEXT MEETING DATE	6
10.	ADJOURNMENT.....	6

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 11:45 a.m.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES - None**

3. **APPROVAL OF ORDER OF BUSINESS**

MOVED By Ms. Giselle Kakamousias, seconded by Councillor Uteck that the Order of Business be approved.

4. **BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

5. **CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS**

6. **CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND DELEGATIONS**

6.1 Staff provided the Committee with emails and letters and HRM's responses to these for Committee Members to review at a later time. It was noted that Mr. Ken Donnolly, Consultant would be putting together a report of the correspondence.

7. **REPORTS**

7.1 **Review of Consultations (oral)**

Observations of the Open House Survey Results were noted as follows:

- disconnect between the figures as the neutrals/ don't know/ not answers are not shown;
- survey results show that 43% believe it should be based on municipal services with 42% believe it should be based on municipal services with the ability to pay;
- more thought that the new proposal should move to a more service oriented basis.

MOVED By Councillor Younger, seconded by Andrew Murphy that:

- **Staff explore the cost of services per dwelling based on the cost to deliver such services per dwelling, differentiated by neighbourhood home type; and,**
- **Staff to report on degree of difficulty and ability to produce such data.**

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

7.2 **Draft Survey for Tax Reform**

- Draft Survey for Tax Reform (Version Two)
- Mr. Bruce Fisher presented the Draft Survey for the Committee Member's review noting the following recommendations for changes:

- “HRM Property” be added to the title so that the title would now read, Draft Survey for HRM Property Tax Reform Proposal
- Add option, “*property value based on assessment*”
- Question 7 - Change the word *flat* to *fixed* and *an* to *a* and include the word *more to read*, “. . . *system of fixed tax amounts . . . will provide for a more . . .*”. Flat taxes are seen as a poll tax and have negative connotations.

It was further noted that out of the 50% of the people that answered the form, most were upset or wanted to provide angry feedback.

Mr. Fisher asked the Committee, what exactly do they want to obtain from the results of the second survey going out. Staff advised that once the Committee has established what they need to know (from the survey) then a consultant will take the questions and wordsmith the questions to get the best possible concise answers.

MOVED By Dr. Mark Gilbert, seconded by Ms. Giselle Kakamousias that staff be instructed to:

- **Update the correlation/relationship between household income and the residential property value using the most recent data available;**
- **Collect data for apartment dwellers should be collected and a similar analysis undertaken.**

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

At this time Councillor Uteck informed the Committee that she needed to leave. Mr. Fisher advised the Committee that he needed Item 7.4 completed before quorum was broken by the departure of Councillor Uteck. Therefore the Committee agreed to move to Item 7.4 at this time.

7.4 Information Report for September 23, 2008

Discussion ensued regarding a report to Council noting that it would be more beneficial to wait until the survey was completed.

MOVED By Councillor Andrew Younger, seconded by Mr. Mark Gilbert that the report to Council is deferred until after the survey is completed and summarized. MOTION PUT AND PASSED

Councillor Uteck left the meeting at 1:15 p.m.

7.3 Review of Timeline

Due to the lack of quorum, this item was deferred.

7.4 Information Report for September 23, 2008

This item was previously dealt with. (See page 4.)

10. ADDED ITEMS

11. NEXT MEETING DATE - TBA

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m. due to the lack of quorum.

Barbara Coleman
Legislative Assistant