

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY
STANDING COMMITTEE
MINUTES

August 8, 2013

- PRESENT: Councillor Barry Dalrymple, Chair
Councillor Jennifer Watts, Vice Chair
Deputy Mayor Reg Rankin
Councillor Lorelei Nicoll
Councillor Darren Fisher
Councillor Bill Karsten
Councillor Steve Craig
- REGRETS: Mr. Richard MacLellan, Manager, Energy and Environment
- STAFF: Mr. Mike Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. Joshua Judah, Solicitor
Ms. Jane Fraser, Director, Planning and Infrastructure
Ms. Jennifer Duncan, Energy and Environment
Mr. Gord Helm, Manager, Solid Waste Resources
Mr. Ted Aubut, Legislative Assistant
Mr. Darcy Warren, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m., in the Halifax Hall, Main Floor, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – June 6 & 24, 2013

MOVED by Councillor Nicoll, seconded by Councillor Craig, that the minutes of June 6 & 24, 2013, be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

Additions:

9.1 Councillor Nicholl – Implementation of Urban Forest Master Plan

MOVED by Councillor Craig, seconded by Councillor Nicoll, that the order of business be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Status Sheet Update

Status Sheet Updates were circulated to the Committee. No changes were made to the status sheet.

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – None

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS

6.1 Correspondence - None

6.2 Petitions - None

6.3 Presentations

6.3.1 Dalhousie University - Wildfire Risks

Ms. Ellen Whitman, Dalhousie University, made a presentation to the Committee called “Future Wildfire Risk in the HRM Wildland-Urban Interface Under Climate Change”, and “Urban Forests and Hazard Management: Trade-offs Between Wildfire Risk and Benefits From Trees In The HRM Wildland-Urban Interface”. These reports were co-authored by Ellen Whitman, Dr. Eric Rapaport and Dr. Kate Sherren.

Ms. Whitman noted that the earth's climate is changing due to anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases. In Nova Scotia and HRM, climate change is expected to result in steadily increasing temperatures and increasing frequency and volume of precipitation. The HRM Acadian Forest is expected to have both direct and indirect effects due to climate change. The Acadian Forest stands in HRM are defined as wildland – urban interface (WUI). Ms. Whitman informed members that with future climate change the Acadian Forest will be altered due to storm event severity and altering tree species will affect the fire risk in WUI.

Ms. Whitman stated that the report covers a hundred year time scale. The main drivers of fire risk include fire weather, storm severity, species composition and pest outbreaks. She stated that the modelling of future fire weather suggested that the severity of fire weather in HRM will increase. Ms. Whitman stated that over the next one hundred years HRM should see a decline in fire risk. She also stated that HRM must manage intermediate stages of elevated risk and manage WUI development.

Ms. Whitman concluded her presentation by stating that HRM has two existing policies that impact the management of the urban forest. Regional Council adopted the Urban Forest Master Plan in 2012 to guide the development of a sustainable urban forest, and to steer decisions around urban forest issues. HRM also has recommendations for the implementation of fuel treatments to reduce wildfire risk in the WUI.

The Chair thanked Ms. Whitman for her presentation and opened the floor for questions and comments. A copy of the presentation is on file.

In response to a question Ms. Whitman confirmed that the report before the committee was in part funded by the FCM

Councillor Watts noted that new corridors are to be or should be established and more trees planted. She also stated that owners have a responsibility to care for their trees, i.e. if a tree has dead branches, remove them.

Councillor Fisher commented that the HRM policy provides that, if a tree falls, it is left to rot; there are some cases where it would be buried. Councillor Fisher stated this was in accordance with best practice.

Councillor Craig commented on the rising risk of fire indicating there are mitigating circumstances, not only due to climate change but also human error. He stated HRM needs to keep raising fire awareness.

7. REPORTS

7.1 Staff Reports

7.1.1 Highway 101 Leachate Treatment Facility – Recommendation Report – July 2, 2013

Mr. Gord Helm, Manager, Solid Waste Resources presented a recommendation report dated July 2, 2013, regarding the Highway 101 Leachate Treatment Facility, to the Committee.

Mr. Helm advised that the purpose of the report is to build a business case around the Highway 101 Leachate Treatment facility, HRM organics program risks related to leachate processing; options, costs and next steps in decision process.

He indicated that HRM produces between 8-13 million litres of organic leachate per year and that Nova Scotia processing options for organic leachate are limited. He also indicated that notification of leachate processing closures are a major program risk along with a steady decline in options that equate to a significant rise in program costs.

Mr. Helm informed the Committee that the Business Case includes the following:

- Program Risk Mitigation
- Program Cost Reduction
- Future Price Agreement Cost Savings
- Utilization of a Regional Asset
- No Environmental Impact; and
- No Community Impact

Mr. Helm stated the current options for leachate treatment are (A) New Alta Facility in Quebec, (B) Facility in Northern New Brunswick, (C) Evolving Technologies and (D) Highway 101 Leachate Plant. He circulated a copy of option costs and budget savings. He further explained future price agreement impacts. HRM's two compost plant price agreements expire in March 2014, and the Municipality will be renegotiating new price agreements this fall (2013). HRM control and management of leachate processing a significant cost control measure in price agreement negotiations.

Mr. Helm concluded the presentation advising that the best way forward would be to confirm Regional Council endorsement of the Business Case, prepare application for change to the closure permit at the Highway 101 treatment site and apply to Nova Scotia Environment for changes.

A copy of the presentation is on file.

The Chair thanked Mr. Helm for the presentation and opened the floor for discussion, questions and answers.

Councillor Watts asked staff to describe the risks and impacts of leachate in the landfill and composting. Mr. Helm responded that when it rains that the leachate is filtered and treated through the treatment facility, he also noted that with compost it becomes very

wet and sloppy and is removed to be treated. Mr. Helm reassured the Committee that leachate is very well monitored.

Councillor Karsten noted that the Otter Lake Facility is used for organic leachate treatment and that the Highway 101 facility is only at 35% capacity and will need capital upgrades.

Councillor Watts questioned if there will be more than one public consultation, and stated that quantity is one thing but quality is also very important. Mr. Helm indicated that the Committee would determine the number of public consultations. He also stated that the landfill is tested for organic leachate, not the number of litre's produced. Upgrading the Highway 101 facility would have minimal impacts to the environment.

Councillor Craig indicated that he would like to work more closely with the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer and staff during the public consultation process. Councillor Craig also advised that the area is not in his district and that Councillor Johns is aware of the work of the Committee.

Councillor Fisher stated that HRM is not using leachate as a resource and asked staff if we have a responsibility to look after our own leachate. Mr. Helm responded that HRM takes ownership and responsibility of all waste.

Councillor Rankin asked that the term "public meeting" be changed to "public consultation". All Committee members agreed to this change.

MOVED by Councillor Karsten, seconded by Councillor Nicoll that the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee:

- 1. Endorse the Business Case on offsite leachate processing at the Highway 101 site;**
- 2. Recommend that Regional Council endorse the Business Case for processing offsite leachate at Highway 101 site;**
- 3. Recommend that Regional Council direct staff to undertake the application to change the Highway 101 site closure permit to accept offsite leachate; and**
- 4. Direct staff to undertake all required aspects of the permit application process, including public consultation, and submit to Nova Scotia Environment for approval.**

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

8. MOTIONS – None

9. ADDED ITEMS

9.1 Councillor Nicoll – Implementation of Urban Forest Master Plan

The following motion was added to the agenda by Councillor Nicoll to the Committee in conjunction with the presentation given by Ms. Whitman on fire risks:

MOVED by Councillor Nicoll, seconded by Councillor Watts, that the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee request a staff report detailing progress to date on the following Urban Forest Master Plan implementation priorities for 2013 – 2014:

- 1. Increase funding, plant more trees on HRM land and improve urban forest maintenance**
- 2. Adopt new regulations and standards to reflect the community's interest in conserving the urban forest from large scale removal**
- 3. Promote citizen urban forest stewardship and develop educational programs.**

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

10. NOTICES OF MOTION - None

11. NEXT MEETING DATE – September 5, 2013

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for Thursday, September 5, 2013, beginning at 1:00pm in Dartmouth Chamber, 90 Alderney Drive, Dartmouth.

12. IN CAMERA

The Standing Committee may rise and go into a private In Camera session, in accordance with Section 19 of the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, for the purpose of dealing with the following:

12.1 Approval of In Camera Minutes – June 6, 2013

The Committee dealt with this matter in the public session.

MOVED by Councillor Nicoll, seconded by Councillor Karsten, that the In Camera minutes of June 6, 2013 be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

13. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:53 p.m.

Darcy Warren
Legislative Assistant