

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

GRANTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

November 2, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor Russell Walker, Chair
Councillor Jennifer Watts
Councillor Brad Johns
Councillor Peter Lund
Councillor Jim Smith
Councillor Barry Dalrymple
Ms. Gina Byrne
Mr. Andrew Higdon
Ms. Monica Jordan
Mr. David Woo

ABSENT: Mr. Geoff Baker
Ms. Pamela Henley

STAFF: Mr. Peter Greechan, Community Developer, Community Relations
& Events
Ms. Cathy Mellett, Acting Clerk/Manager, Office of the Municipal
Clerk
Ms. Tara Legge, Community Facility Service Delivery Coordinator,
Community Development
Ms. Carla Thistle, Real Estate Officer, Transportation and Public
Works
Ms. Krista Tidgwell, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 1:06 p.m. in the MacLennan Boardroom, 3rd Floor Duke Tower, Halifax.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - October 5, 2009

MOVED BY Councillor Jim Smith, seconded by Mr. Andrew Higdon, that the minutes of October 5, 2009, as presented, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Additions:

- 7.1 Property Matter: Less than Market Value Sale, 1247 Bedford Highway, Bedford - Alrasoul Islamic Society

MOVED BY Councillor Johns, seconded by Councillor Lund, that the order of business, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. DEFERRED BUSINESS

4.1 Proposed Re-Structuring of HRM Committees: Membership Update - Cathy Mellett, Acting Clerk/Manager, Office of the Municipal Clerk

- A Membership Update Schedule dated October 5, 2009 was before the Committee.

Ms. Cathy Mellett, Acting Clerk/Manager, Office of the Municipal Clerk, provided an overview of the proposed re-structuring of the HRM Committees. The highlights were as followed:

- In 1996, Council had requested staff to bring forward a recommendation in regard to Community of Council Reform and had reaffirmed in January 2009 to review the matter under the governance structure.
- Expectation that the matter would be back before Council by November.
- There are 43 various committees of Council that report directly to Council.
- Possible opportunity to combine several committees.
- Opportunity to review and provide recommendations to Council in regard to their Membership Selection Committee.
- Recommendation is to move to a Standing Committee Structure which would have six Standing Committees made up of Councillors who would have a particular focus relative to Council's mandate:
 - Finance and Audit Committee that would deal with all aspects related to the

- financial management of the municipality, including grants.
- Environment Sustainability
- Appeals Committee
- Planning and Transportation
- Executive Committee
- The Grants Committee, as a Committee, would continue the work that it is doing but would fall under a Standing Committee called Finance and Audit. The HRM Grants Committee would report through Finance and Audit and they would review and provide the recommendation to Council.
- Require a discipline of Council to accept the work of their Sub-Committee.
- Under the Charter there is no ability to give those Committees the final decision making authority, it has to come back to Council.
- Many of the recommendations coming from the HRM Grants Committee currently are being accepted by Council, some still have to go back.
- Only difference in recommendation would be to whom the HRM Grants Committee would report.
- All Councillors can attend any Sub-Committee meeting. They can participate if they are members of that Committee.
- Way to streamline the business of Regional Council by having the Standing Committees of Council do the work.
- Regional Council could make a recommendation to change the Charter to grant more powers to the Standing Committees in the future.
- A motion approved by Council in July allows the current membership appointments to continue until March 31st or until Council makes a decision. A letter will be sent out in this regard to the Boards and Committees.
- Council could turn down the recommendation and make minor revisions.

During the ensuing discussion the following questions, comments and concerns were raised:

- It would be beneficial to have the Chair of HRM Grants Committee at Council to present the recommendation versus the Sub-Committee.
- How many Boards and Committees are the Councillors committed to at present?
- Would the recommendation reduce the number of Boards and Committees the Councillor sits on?
- Would it be mandatory for Councillors to attend the Sub-Committees?
- The positions for volunteers on the Boards and Committees would be scrutinized more.
- How many Councillors would be on the Grants Committee?
- The Finance and Audit Committee would be a very powerful group and would decide the Councillor and volunteer ratio.
- Concern was expressed with Finance and Audit Committee making a recommendation that is different from the original recommendation provided by the Grants Committee or the recommendation being disregarded altogether.
- All Boards and Committees would be dissolved and would start with new structure

of Finance and Audit. The Councillor would apply for Finance and Audit as well five other people and from those people they would choose a Chair for Grants.

- The goal to bring in more citizen input and the Standing Committees would be composed of residents.
- Councillors and citizens need to support each other by sitting on a Committee together.
- Was the current system so broken that HRM needed radical change?
- Many Councillors would be missing out on learning opportunities as they would not be sitting on the Committee.
- Public needs to hear councillors voice and councillors need public voice.

In response to a question from Councillor Johns, Ms. Mellett confirmed that the Chair of the Audit Committee would be a Council member of Finance and Audit.

In response to a question from Ms. Byrne, Ms. Mellett advised that there would be a Standing Committee of Council called Finance and Audit on which six Councillors would sit. She noted that it would be determined by Council which Councillors serve the Finance and Audit Committee and would become Chairs of the Sub-Committees.

In response to a question from Ms. Byrne, Ms. Mellett advised that the recommendation would reduce the Councillor's commitment to two Standing Committees of Council and any of the Sub-Committees of those Committees that Councillor choose to participate in. Ms. Mellett advise that it would be up to the discretion of the Finance and Audit Committee to determine how many members sit on the Grants Committee. She noted that the Chair would always be a Councillor.

In response to a question from Councillor Watts, Ms. Mellett advised that all Committees of Council are advisory committees. She noted that the HRM Grants Committee, along with all other groups, are being brought together in order to give their knowledge and expertise of their communities, interest areas and neighbourhoods and their interests to Council. No advisory Committee of Council has the authority to make the final decision. They have the authority to make recommendations to provide that voice and input. Under this structure nothing changes except that a representative body of Councillors will take the advice and direction of their advisory committee and make recommendations to Regional Council that they believe are justifiable, defensible and in the best interest of the citizens of the region. This will streamline Council's decision making.

Ms. Mellett noted that the Membership Selection Committee is open to suggestions on how the appointments should be made. This could be done through expression of interest, lottery or having the Mayor making the appointment. She noted that the selection would be public and the committees would still have to establish a terms of reference.

4.2 Community Grants Program 2010-2011 - Eligibility of Community Gardens

- Interpretation Bulletin # 3 was before the Committee.

Mr. Peter Greechan, Community Developer, Community Relations & Events, presented Interpretation Bulletin #3 and provided the Committee with an overview of the origin. Some of the highlights were as follows:

- There is a growing popularity for community gardening across Canada and the United States.
- Staff are seeing an increase in the requests from Councillor's constituents, as well as, staff throughout HRM in regard to support for community gardens. Many individuals want to know where they can go to participate or how they can start their own community garden.

Ms. Gina Byrne asked whether there would be an increase in funding to the Committee's budget and whether staff would be advertising the increase. Ms. Byrne requested clarification in regard to whether applicants would be applying in the 2010-2011 year.

In response to Ms. Byrne's questions, Mr. Greechan advised that there would not be an increase in the Committee's budget. He confirmed that applicants would be applying in the 2010-2011 year and the deadline for applications would be March 31st. Mr. Greechan noted that the Grants Guidebook would have additional information referring to community gardens eligible projects that would cover all sectors and therefore, no additional advertising was required.

Councillor Watts advised that several departments throughout HRM have an interest in community gardens. She noted that an Information Report was tabled at Regional Council on October 27th. Councillor Watts had requested this item be added to the agenda for the next Council meeting, at which time staff would make a presentation.

During the ensuing discussion the following questions and concerns were raised:

- Plant materials should be covered under the eligible expenses list. Items such as plant material are the core foundation of starting a community garden.
- The policy should explain additional sources of funding.
- Rural areas do not have enough designated land available to put a community garden on.
- Could a group put a community garden on HRM land?
- Is there a way for municipal and other governments to enter into some form of a leasing agreement for community garden lands?
- Groups coming to the Committee to acquire money for equipment would probably not have money to purchase land.
- Equipment purchased with grant money should be returned or passed along to a similar organization should the group cease operations.
- Is there a possibility of setting up a community garden that would be managed by HRM through the recreation program and invite registration for people who have an

interest in participating.

- There should be alternative ways for HRM to support non-profit groups.
- There are 15 community gardens already on the Peninsula that are on church land, water commission land, school land, private land, etc.
- There is a need to get better organized and a concern in regard to being too bureaucratic.
- The Information Report going to Council on October 27th will provide information as to who can put a community garden on HRM land.
- HRM and others are concerned about insurance and liability issues.
- If a group was insured, would that allow them to get onto HRM land?

In response to the Committee's discussion, Mr. Greechan advise that the eligible expenses list was developed to cover more of the expensive items. He noted that if a non-profit group were to support a community garden, items such as plant materials would be core items required as a foundation to start a community garden. Mr. Greechan advised that at this point there was no policy in place that would support a community garden on municipal land. He noted that steps were being taken by staff in order to encompass all spectrums. Mr. Greechan advised that there were some community gardens now that were located on HRM land property but have been there for years. He noted that most non-profit organizations do have a clause in their by-laws that state should they cease operations, the assets would go to a charity or non-profit group of similar nature. However, it would be up to the non-profit organization to confirm that this clause was in their by-laws. Mr. Greechan advised that the Province is working on an insurance program for non-profits. He instructed the Committee that should they have a concern in regard to items listed or not listed, then members could make a motion to amend the report to reflect the change.

The Committee requested Mr. Greechan forward their comments to Ms. Peta-Jane Temple. The Committee asked that Ms. Temple provide them with her feedback by way of email prior to the December 7th meeting.

Councillor Walker advise that on page 5, second paragraph, of the October 5th Minutes, Ms. Peta-Jane Temple had already addressed the issue of schools in regard to community gardens.

4.3 Grants & Contributions Appeals - Current Practices

- An Information Report dated August 6, 2009 was before the Committee.

Mr. Peter Greechan, Community Developer, Community Relations & Events, provided an update.

Some of the concerns the Committee raised relative to the Information Report where as follows:

- The applicant needs to report back to the board if he/she are appealing.
- Councillors are reporting back to the Committee but the people who had applied did not know that Council was appealing their grant.

- Concern was expressed that the Grants Committee recommendations that Council does not agree with are not referred back to the Grants Committee for further discussion.
- A Councillor should have the authority to appeal from the group they are representing.

In response to a question from Councillor Watts in regard to the suggested policy implications, Mr. Greechan advised his understanding is that there was no process in place to change the sector allocations. He advised that Ms. Peta-Jane Temple would like to have a process that would allow for this. He noted that Ms. Temple was adjusting all programs, not just the community grants program.

Ms. Watts requested clarification as to whether the items under the suggested policy implications would come back to the Committee over the next couple of months in terms of working on policies.

In response to Ms. Watts' question, Mr. Greenchan advised that Ms. Temple would like to provide some consistency around the appeals process, sector allocations and contingencies for some of the programs that she feels either do not have any contingency or do not have enough contingency fund to accommodate the potential appeals.

MOVED BY Councillor Barry Dalrymple, seconded by Ms. Monica Jordan, that the HRM Grants Committee recommend that:

- 1. The appeal must come from the applicant that made the initial request; and**
- 2. That the Councillor can make the appeal on behalf of the applicant at their request.**

In response to a question from Councillor Johns, Mr. Greechan advised that the five suggested policy implications listed on page 5 in the report, were changes that Ms. Peta-Jane Temple would like to see in the policy to bring a sense of equity.

Councillor Johns noted that number five of the suggested policy implications on page 5 in the report, would provide the most direction and would still allow Council the most flexibility.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4.4 Proposed 2010 Meeting Schedule

- A Proposed 2010 Meeting Schedule was before the Committee.

MOVED BY Ms. Gina Byrnes, seconded by Councillor Brad Johns that the HRM Grants Committee approve the 2010 Meeting Schedule as presented, with the exception of the January 4, 2010 meeting being rescheduled to January 11, 2009.
MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

5. **BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF MINUTES - NONE**

6. **REPORTS**

6.1 **Community Leases: Bloomfield Centre, 2786 Agricola Street, Halifax:
Less than Market Value Lease**

- A Report dated September 28, 2009 was before the Committee.

Ms. Tara Legge, Community Facility Service Delivery Coordinator, Community Development, presented the report.

Ms. Legge advised that the matter had first come before the Committee on April 20, 2009.

MOVED BY Mr. Andrew Higdon, seconded by Councillor Peter Lund, that the HRM Grants Committee recommend that Regional Council approve a change to the lease agreement and to continue to lease space to Centre for Diverse Visible Cultures at the Bloomfield Centre with a significant space reduction as detailed in the discussion section of the September 28, 2009 report.

In response to a question from Ms. Byrne, Ms. Legge advised that the Bloomfield Centre was not currently in arrears.

Ms. Byrne asked why there were different leasing amounts of \$8 and \$5 per square foot.

In response to Ms. Byrne's question, Ms. Legge advised that all of the groups should be at \$8, with the exception of the Ecology Action Center because they are on a step up program and the Safe Harbour Metropolitan Church because they are a food bank and occupy a very small space. Ms. Legge noted that the Ecology Action Centre would be brought up to \$5 per square foot by 2011/2012.

In response to a question from Councillor Johns, Ms. Legge advised that very few of the non-profit groups would fit within HRM's mandate. She noted that the Northern Lights Senior Citizens Club might fit.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

6.2 **Property Matter: Former Musquodoboit Harbour Elementary School,
7962 Highway #7, Musquodoboit Harbour**

- A report dated August 27, 2009 was before the Committee.

Ms. Carla Thistle, Real Estate Officer, Transportation and Public Works, presented the report.

Ms. Thistle advised that the former Musquodoboit Harbour Elementary School was not officially organized as a non-profit but were working towards it. She noted that there was

question as to whether or not in the long term the school would be able to continue operating financially.

MOVED BY Councillor Dalrymple, seconded by Councillor Johns, that the HRM Grants Committee recommend that Regional Council:

1. **Accept the offer of \$1 for the purchase of the property located at 7962 Highway #7, Musquodoboit Harbour; and**
2. **Approve that early occupancy by the group be granted in advance of the closing date of sale, subject to proof of applicable insurance coverage; further, that any Agreement of Purchase and Sale include specific conditions intended to reduce certain risks to HRM be met by the end of June 2010. Such conditions would include but are not limited to:**
 - a) **formal registration as a non-profit organization and submission of constitution and by-laws for same; and**
 - b) **confirmation of the organization's financial capacity to cover the following immediate costs:**
 - building and liability insurance**
 - basic utilities ie. power, water, heat**
 - well and septic inspection**
 - building inspection**
 - permit fees as applicable**
 - cost of sale expenses (legal fees, survey, deed migration)**
 - confirmation of initial capital financing**

During the ensuing discussion, the Committee noted the following:

- If the school were to be sold to another individual or company, the heritage status would still be upheld on the interior of the building, should the building be designated heritage.
- The appraised value came in at \$105,000 and staff listed the building through the Request For Proposal (RFP) at \$120,000, in hopes that offers would be close to the appraised value.
- Through the visioning exercise there was no recreational need for more space in the community.
- The building is currently sitting vacant
- The building should be designated as a heritage site.
- Did the purchaser intend to use the building for community recreation?
- Does the community group have a preference in regard to either of the options provided by staff?
- Can the proponent's proposal also state that they are not going to receive any additional funding from Council or Committees at this time.
- The school is well over a hundred years old.
- It could take four (4) to six (6) months to become a non-profit organization.

- The building is no longer required for HRM operations, therefore, the lights and heat will be turned off.
- The assessed value of the land is approximately \$90,000.
- Some capital money would need to be put into the building.
- There are mold issues. If the building were to be vacant over the winter, it could lead to greater problems.

In response to the Committee's questions, Ms. Thistle advised that the proponent's original proposal was for recreational purposes, however, staff had asked them to provide more information. When the proponent had come back, they had changed their proposal to a more cultural arts use. Ms. Thistle advised that the RFP had gone out in March and that HRM had been working with the proponent since then.

In response to a question from Ms. Byrne, Ms. Thistle advised that the Committee could add whatever conditions they would like. She also noted that the building would likely meet the criteria for a heritage building. Ms. Thistle noted that staff could prepare the paperwork for early possession along with a buy back agreement and place all of the conditions within the agreement of purchase and sale. The property would not close and be transferred until the proponent was able to meet some or all of the conditions.

Ms. Thistle advised that there had only been one response to the RFP, however, since that time there had been other inquiries from individuals. She noted that staff must finish the current proposal process prior to entertaining other interests.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

6.3 HRM Community Facilities Partnership Fund - Verbal Update by Staff

This matter was **deferred** to the December 7, 2009 meeting.

7. ADDED ITEMS

7.1 Property Matter: Less than Market Value Sale, 1247 Bedford Highway, Bedford - Alrasoul Islamic Society

- A Report dated September 1, 2009 was before the Committee.

During the discussion on the matter the following was raised:

- A previous offer had been received for the market value of the property but had been turned down due to the fact that HRM wanted the building for community use.
- The purchaser had suggested they would open the building for some community bookings but there was no indication that the community would even get the use of the building.
- HRM has a parking lot that was 10 feet from the side door of the building.
- The parking lot and the building are two separate lots.
- Could HRM sell the former Bedford Fire Hall/Youth Centre without having the

- number of parking spaces that were needed for any future use?
- HRM mandates are being met through the LeBrun Centre and the future four pad arena.
- Once the building was sold there was no way to guarantee the building would be used for the community.

In response to the Committee's concerns, Ms. Carla Thistle confirmed that Council had agreed not to approve the initial sale. She noted that Council had asked Community Development to take a second look at the building to determine if there still was a community need for the building. Ms. Thistle advised that HRM had previously gone through the process and had determined that there was no community need.

Councillor Johns expressed concern about selling the building at this time for less than market value.

MOVED BY Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Dalrymple, that the HRM Grants Committee recommend that Regional Council:

1. **Enter into an Agreement of Purchase and Sale whereby the property located at 1247 Bedford Highway, Bedford, be conveyed to the Alrasoul Islamic Society Centre at less than market value for the sum of \$375,000, plus all associated costs as per the terms and conditions set out in the report; and**
2. **Set a date for a public hearing.**

Councillor Johns noted that the building had been sitting vacant for three (3) to four (4) years.

Councillor Smith exited at 3:30 p.m.

In response to a question from Councillor Lund, Ms. Thistle advised that the building was in good shape and was currently being heated. She noted that HRM operation, along with a couple of community groups had been using the building for storage space. Ms. Thistle confirmed that the parking lot was surplus and would not be sold with the building.

Ms. Byrne requested the vote be recorded.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

The following members voted in favour of the motion: Councillor Walker, Councillor Watts, Councillor Johns, Councillor Lund, Councillor Dalrymple, Mr. Higdon, Ms. Jordan and Mr. Woo.

The following member voted against the motion: Ms. Byrne

8. **NEXT REGULAR MEETING DATE - December 7, 2009**

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:44 p.m.

Krista Tidgwell
Legislative Assistant

Information Items

1. Letter re: Request for Donation of Property Located at 2190 Barrington Street,
Halifax