

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MINUTES
APRIL 23, 1997

PRESENT:

Mayor Walter Fitzgerald
Deputy Mayor Jack Greenough
Councillors Bill Dooks
Gordon R. Snow
David Hendsbee
Ron Cooper
Harry McInroy
Condo Sarto
Bruce Hetherington
Clint Schofield
John Cunningham
Jerry Blumenthal
Graham L. Downey
Howard Epstein
Russell Walker
Bill Stone
Ron Hanson
Barry Barnet
Robert Harvey
Reg Rankin
Jack Mitchell

ABSENT:

Councillors: Larry Uteck
Stephen Adams
Peter Kelly (regrets)

STAFF MEMBERS:

Mr. Ken Meech, Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. Dan English, Commissioner, Community Services
Mr. Richard Cameron, Director of Community Services,
Recreation and Leisure
Mr. Blair Blakeney, Superintendent, Policy and Planning,
Recreation and Leisure
Mr. Bill B. Campbell, Manager, Planning Services, Western
District
Ms. Jane Nauss, Assistant Municipal Clerk

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Mayor Fitzgerald called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

1. **1997/98 CAPITAL BUDGET**

1.1 **Community Services**

Mr. Dan English, Commissioner, Community Services, provided an overview of the 1997/98 Capital Budget, as it pertains to Community Services. The Department's Capital Budget for 1996/97 totalled \$9,153 with the 1997/98 proposed Budget totalling \$5,423 of which \$3 million is funded from the Sale of Land Account. .

Library

Mr. English introduced Mr. John Kitz, Chairman of the Library Board and Ms. Judith Hare, CEO, Library Board.

Mr. Kitz addressed Council noting three separate systems have been merged to establish the Halifax Regional Library Board. Now, the Board will be seeking funding from the municipality to commence the process to build a central library in the city to support the branches and overall library system. The selected site is located on the existing Spring Garden Road Library.

Ms. Hare addressed Council noting this Capital Budget presentation is founded on the goals and objectives which are in the business plan (copies of which had been distributed to Council). The Board wishes to improve public service throughout the Library system as a result of amalgamation and want to upgrade all their facilities in order to provide a quality service throughout the entire Region. Total projects which have been deferred or eliminated total \$2,267,000.

A summary of the Board's request include the following:

North Branch Building Repair	\$ 27,000
Spring Garden Road Building Repair	\$ 60,000
New Central Library	\$500,000 *
North Branch Elevator	\$ 25,000
Automation Project Phase II Cabling	\$ 53,000
Automation Project Phase II Peripheral Upgrade	\$ 65,000

Note * - HRM's Capital Budget documentation indicates an allocation of \$100,000 for this project, however, the Board was respectfully requesting \$500,000.

Ms. Hare suggested the central library would serve as a resource centre to rural residents. Currently, there are 230,000 people registered borrowers of the Halifax Regional Library and with a population of 348,000 that is very substantial. This acts as

an indicator that people from all over the Region are using public libraries. Essentially, Ms. Hare stated that the central library could make an enormous contribution to this municipality.

With respect to funding, there is approximately \$4 million dollars available in the Keshen Bequest. Any interest that is gained from that bequest is being added back into the project (5% per year), therefore, this is a bequest that is growing and will be dedicated to this project. The Board has also committed to fundraising at least \$500,000 and it is anticipated the Province will be contributing \$3,300,000.

Ms. Hare advised that the Halifax Regional Library Board was seeking approximately \$10,890,000 in total from the municipality (could be phased in over a number of years), thereby increasing the central library project costs to \$18,690,000. Ms. Hare further stated that the Board is aiming for the project to be completed by the 250th anniversary of Halifax (1999).

Mr. Kitz, clarified the need for an increase in municipal funding from \$100,000 to \$500,000 for a new central library. Further, should the municipality agree to contributing \$500,000, the Board would be in a position to approach Canada Trust for use of the Keshen Bequest.

A lengthy discussion ensued where it was suggested by various Members of Council that the proposal for a new central library be referred back to staff for further consideration; that this be deferred for one year; this be discussed in more detail.

Councillor Sarto enquired as to what impact this allocation would have on the Operating and Capital Budgets.

Councillor Downey suggested there may be monies available in the Explosion Fund for the upkeep of the building.

Councillor Rankin suggested a reasonable time schedule for the new central library i.e. over a period of six to ten years.

Deputy Mayor Greenough suggested staff determine a plan for funding to be spread out; further that the Board should be able to "tap" into provincial infrastructure money.

Councillors Cooper and Barnet expressed concern on a potential increase in the municipality's debt. Councillor Cooper suggested staff conduct an analysis of the proposal.

Mayor Fitzgerald suggested monies are available and that the municipality should move ahead - in phases - with this project.

Community And Property Development

Deputy Mayor Greenough assumed the Chair.

Mr. Blair Blakney, Superintendent, Policy and Planning (Recreation and Leisure) addressed Council noting the following changes to Community Services' Capital Budget:

- G4 - "Sackville Sports Stadium Upgrades/Renovations" - staff were recommending that \$10,000 be removed from the budget.
- 29 - "Centennial Arena Entry Way" - staff were recommending \$12,000 be allocated for this project in this year's Capital Budget.
- 13 - "Cherry Brook Recreation Centre Renovations" - staff were recommending this be deleted as this project is included under Regional Operations.

Metro Centre

In response to enquiries of Council respecting the Metro Centre, Mr. English advised that the municipality is currently subsidizing the operating deficit by approximately \$332,000. Further, that these are capital repairs that are not included in the Operating Budget.

Councillor Cooper expressed concern on this relationship the Metro Centre has with the municipality, noting particularly that the facility does not allow for replacement of equipment, repairs etc.

Councillor Hanson, who sits as a Metro Centre Board Member, stated that the facility is close to breaking even.

To clarify further, Mr. English stated that the facility, although owned by the municipality, does not have a management agreement in place on the same basis as the other major facilities in the Region because it is operated under a previous agreement through the Trade Centre Limited. Mr. English advised that arrangements could be made for Mr. Fred McGillvray and Mr. Scott Ferguson to address Council during Operating Budget discussions, should Council so desire.

Councillor Hendsbee advised he would like to see a schedule of replacement or life cycle costs of machinery and machinery. Further, he enquired as to how many years the equipment has been in operation and how much more use is expected on some of the other apparatus.

In closing the discussion on the Metro Centre, Councillor Stone stated these are replacement items that are for the good of the Metro Centre. These are liability items and if not replaced, there could be a possibility of liability which the municipality would have to deal with.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Councillor Downey declared a Conflict of Interest due to the fact he was on the Board of the Jefferson Estate (Fall River), and removed himself from the discussions.

In response to enquiries from Council, Mr. Dan English advised that the balance in the Sale of Land Account , unaudited, as at March 31, 1997, totalled approximately \$6.4 million and that the balance in the Parkland Account totalled \$759,000 as at March 31, 1997.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Barnet if funds from the Parkland Development Fund would stay in the same District, Mr. Blakeney advised that staff were addressing this issue and that a report would be forthcoming in this regard.

Councillor Barnet referenced projects G12, G13 and G14 - Clayton Park West Oversized Streets, Clayton Park West - Streets with Park Frontage and Clayton Park West - Oversized Sewers, stating there was no common policy across the Region. In response, both Mr. Campbell and Mr. English advised that staff were looking at existing cost sharing policies; further, the extension of an existing policy (i.e. that of the former City of Halifax) could be realized for the interim thereby allowing ample time for a comprehensive policy to be developed.

Councillor Barnet referenced project #G19 - "Connolly/Chester Street" and expressed concern on the monies allocated (\$650,000) for a playground. In response, Mr. Blakeney this is valuable inner city federal surplus land.

Councillor Barnet suggested that the municipality must be more aggressive when property is being sold and purchased. The Councillor further suggested that \$650,000 is too expensive a price for a playground. Prior to voting on this item, the Councillor requested more effort on the part of staff on this particular item.

Councillor Barnet referenced G20 - "Bedford Lands - Recreation Centre" noting that prior to spending money, he would like to be assured that this facility is actually needed.

In response, Mr. English noted there are three particular areas currently being examined - Mainland North Commons, Lakeside-Timberlea area, and Bedford. Further, there were calls for proposals going out to engage consultants to assist with examining this issue in terms of where the best location for a recreation facility would be. Should either Lakeside-Timberlea or Mainland North Commons be chosen, the land is already owned by the municipality therefore there was no need to show any monies in the budget. If Bedford was recommended, however, there is no land currently available, therefore, the money would be earmarked out of the sale of land account.

Councillor Sarto referenced G16 - "Mossman Property" noting approximately three or four years ago, there was an unsightly hazardous building on the property and the owner did not have it torn down and the debris trucked away. The former City of Dartmouth carried out the work. At the time, the City was to be reimbursed for the work. Councillor Sarto enquired if staff was aware of this and that perhaps this could be a credit to the municipality. Mr. Blakeney advised he would investigate the matter.

Councillor Harvey also expressed concern with G19 - "Connolly/Chester Street" and the allocated funds (\$650,000) for a playground. Projects 22 and 23 ("Walker Ave. Subdivision" and "Leaside/Realty Streets") did not make the priority list for this year and that it would only take \$25,000 to put a playground in each area.

Councillor Harvey suggested there is a deficiency in Sackville of approximately 400 acres of parkland - recreational land (this was determined from a study carried out two years ago). The Councillor stated he received a call from residents who want the municipality to purchase land along the Little Sackville River - it is environmentally sensitive land, a flood plain land (portion). Further, there are several large parcels of land currently for sale, that run from Sackville Drive back to the river. Councillor Harvey suggested that \$650,000 could be well spent in the Sackville Drive area on parkland. Further, there is one lot that is on the market for \$200,000. Councillor Harvey stated the real estate agent had advised him if the municipality purchase the lot for \$200,000 - a nine acre island on Springfield Lake would be included.

Councillor Harvey suggested that Mr. English would take notice that the Sackville area has recreational land deficiencies, that land is available and at a reasonable cost. Further, the Councillor noted he will be bringing this matter back to Council in the near future to see if the municipality can acquire lands outside the peninsula area for public purposes.

In response, Mr. Blakeney stated this reiterates the necessity to come back to Council with a recommendation as to the parkland reserve funds and how it is administered. That report will be essential and will enable us to work together on acquiring some of these parcels as they are required - outside of the capital budgeting process.

Councillor Stone expressed concern with \$350,000 being included in the Capital Budget for "Bedford Lands - Recreation Centre." Further, he suggested this project be removed until there is a detailed report on the need for the facility.

Councillor Stone requested the total amount in the Sale of Land Account and detailed information as to where the funds were derived (location of each project in each region).

Councillor Cooper also referenced G-19 - "Connolly/Chester St." requesting a detailed report on what is actually being purchased.

Councillor Mitchell supported requests for staff reports on projects G19 and G20.

**MOVED by Councillors Barnet and Harvey to adjourn the meeting at 3:55 p.m.
MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Jane Nauss
MUNICIPAL CLERK