

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MINUTES
MAY 15, 2001

PRESENT:

Mayor Peter J. Kelly
Deputy Mayor Jerry Blumenthal
Councillors: Gary Hines (2:00 p.m.)
Keith Colwell (2:05 p.m.)
Ron Cooper
Harry McInroy
Brian Warshick
Condo Sarto
Bruce Hetherington
Jim Smith
John Cunningham
Dawn Sloane
Sheila Fougere
Russell Walker
Diana Whalen
Brad Johns
Robert Harvey
Len Goucher
Gary Meade

ABSENT:

Councillors: Steve Streach
Sue Uteck (regrets)
Linda Mosher (regrets)
Stephen Adams
Reg Rankin

STAFF:

Mr. George McLellan, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. Wayne Anstey, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Vi Carmichael, Municipal Clerk
Ms. Julia Horncastle, Assistant Municipal Clerk

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The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - April 5, 11 and May 1, 2001

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Blumenthal, seconded by Councillor Sarto that the minutes of April 5, 11 and May 1, 2001 be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Blumenthal, seconded by Councillor Fougere, that the Order of Business be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. REQUEST FROM VOLUNTARY PLANNING TASK FORCE ON NON-RESIDENT LAND OWNERSHIP

- A memorandum from Mr. Ken Meech, Chief Administrative Officer, dated May 4, 2001, on the above noted, was before Council.
- Correspondence and attachments from Mr. James W. Moir, Jr., Chair, Voluntary Planning Task Force on Non-Resident Land Ownership, dated April 25, 2001, was before Council.

Deputy Mayor Blumenthal noted additional tax would provide additional revenue to the Municipality.

Councillor Fougere noted increased by-law enforcement costs can result from non maintenance of properties in those instances where there is an absentee owner.

In response to Councillor Hetherington, Mr. Anstey advised that currently the Municipality cannot differentiate on whether a land owner is a resident or non-resident. The Councillor suggested restrictions could be placed on the percentage of water lots that would be available.

Councillor Harvey stated he did not believe that charging a higher tax rate is going to solve the problem and does not feel tax rates should be charged based on a person's address.

Councillor Cunningham stated he felt it would be premature for Council to take a stand on this issue without having seen the minutes of the public meetings. The Councillor stated it would be important to know what the definition of non-resident would be as well as having information on how much of a surtax will be added. The Councillor expressed concern that such a tax would escalate rents.

Councillor Meade noted assessments on waterfront lots in St. Margaret's Bay are higher as a result of foreign ownership.

Councillor Whalen noted many Nova Scotians who winter out of the province can be difficult to locate. The Councillor cautioned HRM becoming involved in the debate as it could be interpreted as a grab for extra money.

Councillor Goucher expressed concern with the spin-off effect and how it affects the residents, noting even though the value is increasing, so are the taxes. The Councillor stated access to the shoreline also needs to be protected.

Councillor Warshick suggested the issue be referred to UNSM and request they develop a paper in response.

Councillor Cooper noted this reflects growth and barriers should not be put up to discourage non residents from purchasing property in the province. The Councillor suggested the issues be clearly identified.

Mr. McLellan noted that in P.E.I. foreign ownership took productive land out of production and it increased the cost factors relative to agriculture and fisheries. It created an economic condition that led to some erosion in the cost competitiveness of P.E.I.

Deputy Mayor Blumenthal stated that a distinction should be made between residential and commercial ownership, noting many absentee landlords of commercial properties are not taking care of their properties.

Councillor Hetherington cautioned taxing commercial properties under foreign ownership as most of the larger businesses in HRM, as well as businesses in the industrial parks, are under foreign ownership.

Councillor McInroy stated he does not feel this has been properly thought out and, in his opinion, the Province is saying - let the Municipalities handle it by way of a increased tax burden to discourage people from outside Nova Scotia or Canada from owning property in Nova Scotia. The Councillor suggested HRM ask the Province to identify the problems associated with foreign ownership and provide provincial legislation to deal with these.

Following discussion, Council did not take an official position on the issue.

4. ADJOURNED

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Blumenthal, seconded by Councillor Cooper, that the meeting be adjourned at 2:15 p.m. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Vi Carmichael
Municipal Clerk