

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES March 17, 2003

PRESENT:

Mayor Peter Kelly
Deputy Mayor Harry McInroy
Councillors: Steve Streach
Gary Hines (10:40 a.m.)
Keith Colwell
Ron Cooper
Brian Warshick (10:50 a.m.)
Condo Sarto
Bruce Hetherington
Jim Smith
John Cunningham
Jerry Blumenthal (a.m. only)
Dawn Sloane
Sue Uteck
Sheila Fougere
Russell Walker
Diana Whalen (11:30 a.m.)
Stephen D. Adams (a.m. only)
Robert P. Harvey
Len Goucher (10:40 a.m.)
Reg Rankin

ABSENT
WITH REGRETS:

Councillors: Linda Mosher
Brad Johns
Gary Meade

STAFF:

Mr. George McLellan, Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. Wayne Anstey, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Vi Carmichael, Municipal Clerk
Ms. Patti Halliday, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kelly called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

2. 2003/2004 OPERATING AND CAPITAL BUDGET DELIBERATIONS

Overview

Mr. George McLellan, Chief Administrative Officer, provided brief opening comments regarding the 2003/2004 Operating and Capital Budgets. Mr. McLellan stated staff are proposing that the tax rate be left as is, noting the average home increased in value by 5.4 percent in 2003. The condition of taking \$5.1 million of additional value was to provide more money for capital support and infrastructure refurbishment in HRM recognizing the need to reinvest. Staff will work with Council throughout the year to call on other levels of government to assist in this process.

Before the budget process commenced, Councillor Hetherington suggested Council should have a consensus on the direction it wishes to take with regard to holding the tax rate as is. Following a brief discussion, the general consensus was to leave the process open for the time being.

In response to a question of Councillor Sarto, Ms. Dale MacLennan, Director, Financial Services, stated staff anticipate having the area rates before Council in the next three to four weeks. Councillor Sarto requested that, at some point in time, staff provide Council with a list of the general rates plus the area rates that will top them up.

General Government

Ms. Betty MacDonald, Director, Governance and Strategic Issues, presented the General Government 2003/04 Operating and Capital Budgets to the Committee.

There were no questions of Council regarding this department. Mayor Kelly thanked Ms. MacDonald for her presentation.

RCMP

Insp. Peter Lepine, Operational Support Officer, RCMP, presented the RCMP 2003/04 Operating and Capital Budgets to the Committee.

Mr. McLellan noted the intent of the policing study was to find economies of scale and efficiencies by avoiding duplication that would yield additional resources. He stated that it

appears likely this will be the case and any savings would yield additional staffing complement on the street.

Insp. Lepine responded to questions of Council. Mayor Kelly thanked Insp. Lepine for his presentation.

(Councillors Goucher and Hines took their places at the meeting at 10:40 a.m.)

Halifax Regional Police

Acting Chief Frank Beazley presented the Halifax Regional Police 2003/04 Operating and Capital Budgets to the Committee.

Acting Chief Beazley responded to questions of Council. During the discussion, the following requests were raised:

- C Councillor Blumenthal requested that Halifax Regional Police meet with the Department of Housing to discuss continual problems faced by the residents (ie. vandalism) in housing units.
- C Councillor Uteck expressed concern regarding adequate port policing in light of the need for increased security. Acting Chief Beazley responded there are upcoming meetings with Fire Services and EMO to discuss issues of this type, and he offered to meet with Council in the future for a briefing on these issues. Councillor Uteck also expressed concern regarding accessibility issues, particularly in the case of fire at the port facilities. Later in the meeting, Councillor Uteck stated EMO Planning needs to be a priority considering the state of world affairs. Mr. McLellan indicated that this will be examined and something brought back to Council.

(Councillor Warshick took his place at the meeting at 10:50 a.m.)

- C Councillor Smith requested that consideration be given to providing beat or bicycle officers in high-crime areas for a few weeks in the summer as a preventative measure.
- C Councillor Smith asked that some consideration be given to providing uniforms or an additional incentive to long-term crossing guards.
- C In response to comments of Councillor Hetherington, Mr. McLellan stated he would look into the status on discussions related to a photo-radar study and provide an update to Council via memo.

911

Mr. Mike Mahar, Manager, 911 Emergency Dispatch Centre, presented the 2003/04 Operating and Capital Budgets for the 911 Emergency Dispatch Centre and responded to questions of the Committee.

During the discussion, the following requests were raised:

- C Councillor Blumenthal expressed concern with some residents calling 911 to report break and enters and being told their calls should be directed to the non-emergency number. He agreed to discuss this further directly with staff.
- C Councillor Warshick expressed concern with the number of false alarm fines being imposed upon schools and requested that staff explore alternate ways to address this issue.
- C Mayor Kelly expressed concern with the fact that not all the money collected for 911 on the phone bill is being used for 911 and stated this is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Mayor Kelly thanked Mr. Mahar for his presentation.

Fire and Emergency Services

Deputy Chief Steve Thurber presented the 2003/04 Operating and Capital Budgets for the Fire and Emergency Services. Deputy Chief Thurber and Deputy Chief Bill Mosher responded to questions of the Committee.

During the discussion, the following requests were raised:

- C Councillor Sloane requested confirmation as to whether or not the repairs to the West Street Fire Station tower are included in this year's budget.
- C Councillor Hetherington requested that the cost of fire services to universities due to fire alarms be examined in light of the fact they do not pay taxes to recoup this cost.
- C Councillor Adams requested that staff contact Chief Powell, Harrietsfield, to explain the surplus and reserve process.
- C Councillor Streach inquired about the roll out schedule for the construction of the Mosher River Fire Station.
- C With respect to wellness and fitness programs, Councillor Blumenthal inquired if there is an intent to start testing firefighters and implementing benchmarks. Deputy Chief Thurber stated this would require a change in the collective agreement. Mr. McLellan stated this will be raised again during contract negotiations.
- C Councillor Hines asked that staff look into the possibility of providing funds in this year's budget for engineering and a regulatory body to oversee the installation of some

- existing tanks in District 4 to be used as dry hydrants.
- C Councillor Streach inquired if there was any possibility of using the new well in Upper Musquodoboit as a dry hydrant. Deputy Chief Mosher agreed to raise this with the Chiefs and the Halifax Regional Water Commission.
- C Councillor Streach requested that Meagher's Grant be considered as a location for a dry hydrant.
- C Councillor Warshick requested that HRM approach the Province regarding the possibility of having a representative from Council on the Halifax International Airport Authority. Mr. McLellan noted this Board is under federal jurisdiction, but agreed to pass the request on.
- C With regard to Conferences and Travel, Councillor Warshick requested further information on the combined total for urban and rural.
- C Councillor Hetherington suggested that HRM should be obtaining some Memorandums of Agreement with some of the organizations for which it provides fire services (ie. DND, Imperial Oil, etc.).
- C Councillor Hetherington expressed concern regarding the implications of approving a budget that has risk factors. For the record, the Councillor inquired if Fire Services is currently and will be continuing to meet all required standards. Mr. McLellan responded in the affirmative.

Mayor Kelly thanked the Deputy Chiefs for their presentation.

RECESS

The Committee recessed at 12:10 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 1:40 p.m., with the following members absent with regrets: Councillors Blumenthal, Mosher, Adams, Johns and Meade.

Financial Services

Ms. Dale MacLennan, Director, Financial Services, presented the 2003/04 Operating and Capital Budgets for Financial Services and responded to questions of the Committee.

During the discussion, the following requests were raised:

- C It was requested that the Fiscal Services presentation follow the Financial Services presentation in future budget deliberations.
- C Councillor Cooper suggested HRM should be exploring revenue generating opportunities while assisting other municipalities and UNSM with regard to sharing technology and knowledge.
- C Councillor Colwell requested that the tax bill format be adjusted in the next tax year to show a breakdown of where the tax dollars go, particularly the funding that goes to the

Province.

Mayor Kelly thanked Ms. MacLennan for her presentation.

Human Resources

Mr. Louis Coutinho, Director, Human Resources, presented the 2003/04 Operating and Capital Budget for Human Resources to the Committee and responded to questions. During the discussion, the following request was raised:

- C With respect to HRM employee absenteeism, Councillor Streach stated he would like to see this reduced to at least the national average.

Mayor Kelly thanked Mr. Coutinho for his presentation.

Shared Services

Ms. Geri Kaiser, Director, Shared Services, presented the 2003/04 Operating and Capital Budgets for Shared Services to the Committee and responded to questions. During the discussion, the following requests were raised:

- C Councillor Goucher raised the issue of potential savings through electronic data management, noting the budget documents being provided on compact disc as an example.
- C Councillor Warshick requested that a "call wait time" feature be explored in the RFP for software for the Call Centre.
- C Responding to a question of Councillor Streach regarding a dealer network for cell phones, Ms. Kaiser indicated that information will be provided to Council in the next few weeks regarding this issue.

Mayor Kelly thanked Ms. Kaiser for her presentation.

Legal Services

Mr. Wayne Anstey, Director, Legal Services, presented the 2003/04 Operating and Capital Budgets to the Committee and responded to questions. During the discussion, the following request was made:

- C In response to a question of Councillor Warshick regarding settlement claims, Mr. Anstey indicated a report would be coming to Council in the next couple of weeks containing statistics on how many claims were made, what was claimed, what was paid out, how many went to litigation, etc.

Mayor Kelly thanked Mr. Anstey for his presentation.

Planning and Development Services

Mr. Paul Dunphy, Director, Planning and Development Services, presented the 2003/04 Operating and Capital Budgets for Planning and Development Services to the Committee and responded to questions. During the discussion, the following requests were made:

- C In response to a question of Councillor Uteck regarding the Halifax Waterfront Master plan, Mr. Dunphy indicated staff will be attending a lecture regarding coastal development by a Washington speaker and any materials received from this lecture will be circulated to Council.
- C Councillor Streach requested that reinstatement of a part-time staff person be considered for Musquodoboit Harbour to deal with permits. In response, Mr. Dunphy suggested this may be appropriate during the summer months.
- C Councillor Smith requested information regarding by-law enforcement harmonization.
- C Deputy Mayor McInroy expressed concern with the fact that the Cole Harbour Millbrook Reserve houses offices of federal employees, yet the taxpayers of HRM continue to carry the burden of the cost to provide a full range of services to that area. The Deputy Mayor stated in Council's fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayer, HRM should not be providing free services at that scale. Mr. McLellan stated this issue will be addressed within six weeks.
- C In response to concerns expressed by Councillor Cooper regarding the effect regional planning has had on community planning staff resources, Mr. McLellan requested that Mr. Dunphy, Ms. MacDonald and Ms. Macomber discuss what the capacities will be during the two year regional planning period. Following this, some general information will be forwarded to Council.
- C Responding to concerns expressed by Councillor Colwell regarding by-law enforcement, Mr. McLellan stated a something regarding the format of the relationship between all the enforcement efforts will be back to Council in a couple of months.
- C Councillor Sloane requested that staff meet with her to discuss an amendment to an RC-2 zoning.

Mayor Kelly thanked Mr. Dunphy for his presentation.

Ms. MacLennan noted the upcoming departments have a heavy capital component, and, therefore, she stated there will be a brief presentation tomorrow on the Canada/Nova Scotia Infrastructure list. Supplementary and mandatory education components of Fiscal Services will be addressed at the same time as Library Services.

3. ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Councillor Walker, seconded by Councilor Warshick, that the meeting adjourn at 3:45 p.m. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Vi Carmichael
Municipal Clerk