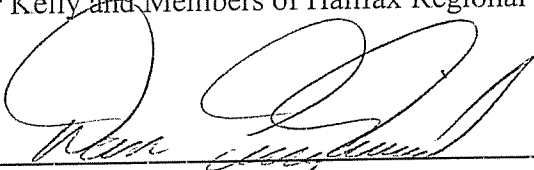


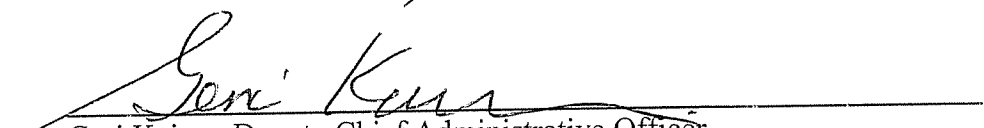


PO Box 1749
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Halifax Regional Council
Committee of the Whole
September 26, 2006
October 3, 2006

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: 
Dan English, Chief Administrative Officer


Geri Kaiser, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: September 19, 2006

SUBJECT: Council Focus Areas 2007/8

ORIGIN

Questionnaire on Council's perceptions of the Council Focus Area process used in the 2006/7 Budget and Business Planning Process suggests changes should be discussed. Council direction is required to finalize the budget/business planning process for 2007/8.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that:

1. Council continue with the Council Focus Area process for 2007/08
2. Council select three Council Focus Areas (new or 2006/07) for discussion during the 2007/08 Budget & Business Planning Process.
3. The Council Focus Area discussions be completed by December, 2006, in order to facilitate the tabling and approval of the 2007/8 Budget and Business Plans before March 31, 2007.

BACKGROUND

Council has clearly indicated it wanted a more direct involvement in the development of priorities to be considered in business planning and budget preparation. A new process was introduced for the 2006/7 Business Plans and Budget. Council held a workshop and identified a number of issues it was concerned about, and went through a process to select the most important ones. These topics were then discussed at a Committee of the Whole, and Council agreed on 12 topic areas that would be discussed with Council, with a view to assessing issues and identifying opportunities to do things better.

A discussion paper was produced on each topic identified, which included Council concerns and interests, current initiatives, issues, and options for future action. Discussions on each topic were held at a Committee of the Whole. All topics were concluded at the end of January, 2006, and a summary report was approved by Council highlighting the direction received from Council, and briefly describing the area of discussion. The direction provided was further developed by staff and resourced in the 2006/7 budget. The 2006/7 Budget and Business Planning book outlines, in the Priorities section of the book, all the initiatives being undertaken in support of Council Focus Areas.

DISCUSSION

For many of the topics, the issues are not short term and require further discussion and resourcing. Others have been addressed for the moment, and may not merit further priority attention. The process of discussing Council priorities is critical to the budget and business planning process.

Council participated in a questionnaire in August provided feedback on the Council Focus Area process. The majority of those who responded generally supported the Council Focus Area process and felt that the 2006/07 budget and business plans reflected Council's priorities. The majority felt the topics need to be revised in September, and that it is important to ensure the discussion on the Council Focus Areas be concluded by December.

Council and staff are subject to time constraints. A majority of Council felt that the budget must be approved by March 31st. In order to achieve this, staff recommend the Council Focus Area discussions be concluded by December 31, therefore staff are suggesting Council choose a minimum of top three Council Focus Areas for 2007/08.

The ability of Council to deal with the number of topics dealt with last year before Christmas is constrained. The discussions, while useful, take a few hours each at a Committee of the Whole, and indeed a few topics took longer. It is therefore staff's recommendation that Council select 3 - 5 topics for this year.

It is also evident the majority of Council wish to have the budget approved no later than the end of March.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

None.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

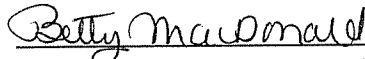
ALTERNATIVES

1. Council could appoint a new committee of Council to identify and develop priorities outside of a Committee of Whole, and recommend priorities to Council approval. This will require additional meetings of Councillors, and all Councillors may want to participate in the discussions. It would still be important to complete the work of the Committee and have Council approve the priorities before the end of December.
2. Council could eliminate the Council Focus Area process and direct staff to prepare a report recommending priorities to Council. Again, Council should decide on the priorities before the end of December.

ATTACHMENTS

List of 2006/07 Council Priorities

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.



Report Prepared and Approved by: Betty MacDonald, Director, Business Planning & Information Management
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2006/2007 Council Focus Areas

Regional Plan
Infrastructure
Transit
Traffic
Public Safety
By-law Enforcement
Community Relations
Youth
Community Recreation
Community Development
Economic Development
Taxation