

10.4.1



PO Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5

Halifax Regional Council

July 5, 2005

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: *H. Millward*
Dr. Hugh Millward, Chair, Regional Planning Committee

DATE: June 27, 2005

SUBJECT: **Draft Regional Plan - Public Consultation**

ORIGIN

June 10, 2003 - Regional Council approved Regional Planning Process, Time Line and Work Plan.

September 2, 2003 - Regional Council approved overall Regional Plan Public Consultation Process.

May 10, 2005 - Regional Council approved detailed public consultation program on draft Regional Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council not direct the Regional Planning Committee to schedule any additional policy workshops; and
2. Regional Council endorse the approach for a public hearing as outlined in this report.

BACKGROUND

On May 10, 2005 Regional Council endorsed a detailed consultation program to seek public feedback on the draft Regional Plan. The recommendation followed several days of discussion by Council of the contents of the draft regional plan.

DISCUSSION

Council's Questionnaire

During Council's discussion, April 26th to May 10th, Council generated a list of specific issues and questions (aka, the "parking lot") to be included in the consultation. Staff subsequently created a questionnaire for distribution at all public sessions. The questionnaire has been in distribution since May 16th and available on the Regional Planning website in PDF. As of June 15th, 84 completed questionnaires had been returned to the regional planning office. An on-line, interactive version went live June 16th and will remain active until Friday, July 29th. It is necessary to close the questionnaire at the end of July to allow staff and the Regional Planning Committee (RPC) sufficient time to review the comments, propose changes to draft policies, and present this information to Council. A report on public feedback on the parking lot items is expected to be presented to Council in September, along with a summary of all spring and summer 2005 consultation on the draft regional plan. A notice to residents, directing them to the online questionnaire, is being circulated through local and community newspapers and the regional planning mailing list.

Policy Workshops

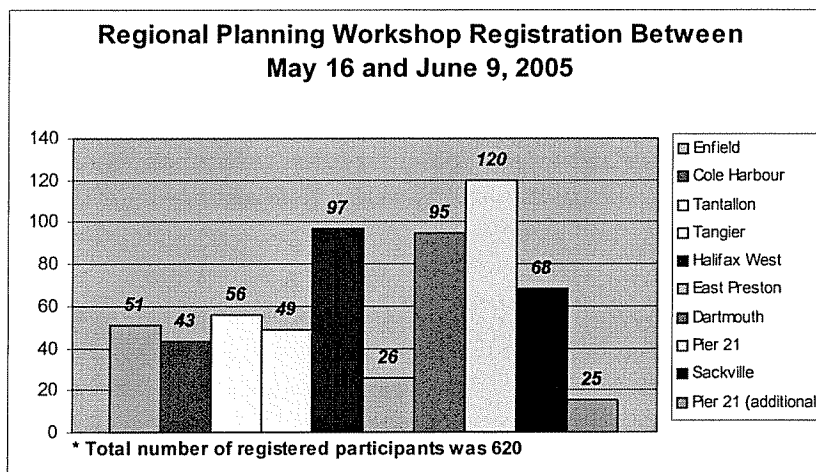
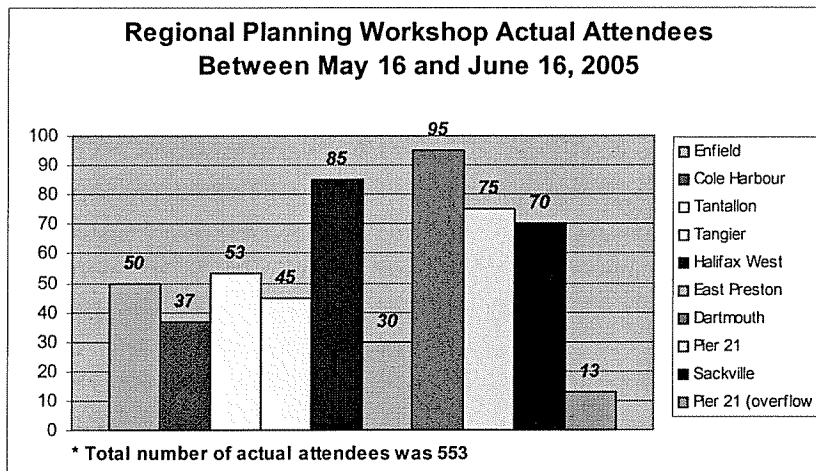
Between May 16th and June 9th, 553 residents participated in ten (10) policy workshops held in the region. Overall, attendance was good, and feedback on the workshop format positive. Many participants completed workshop evaluation forms which provided excellent comments for consideration in future consultation activities. Pre-registration worked well, and allowed staff to properly allocate resources.

For all but one workshop, all residents wishing to register were accommodated. Due to last minute registration of a large number of interested residents from Peninsula Halifax, a waiting list for the Pier 21 workshop was necessary. To accommodate the waiting list, an additional workshop was immediately scheduled for June 16th. At all workshops there were some pre-registered participants who did not attend. This allowed sufficient capacity to accommodate people who had not pre-registered. The two tables on the following page illustrate and compare the "actual" number of persons attending each workshop and the number who registered for each.

Total capacity (space available) for all workshops was estimated at 780, based on the individual venues being able to accommodate 60-100 people. All residents interested in attending the workshops have been accommodated. The Regional Planning Committee, therefore,

recommends no additional policy workshops be scheduled. The RPC feel there has been ample opportunity provided for representation and participation at the workshops, and it is time for the committee and staff to focus on resolving the issues and writing the revised draft.

A synopsis of the results (feedback) of the workshops is being prepared by regional planning staff and will be presented to the RPC. The RPC will consider the results of the workshops as the draft plan is amended and a revised draft prepared for Council for early fall. When the revised draft is tabled with Regional Council, the RPC will attend Community Council meetings to provide a thorough briefing on public feedback and resulting areas of policy change (see discussion on the Public Hearing, p. 5).



(Note: As the second table illustrates, the pre-registration for Pier 21 exceeded the capacity for this venue. The overflow was accommodated by adding a workshop)

Distribution of the Draft Regional Plan

~~Since tabling the draft regional plan and land use by-law with Regional Council, approximately 400 hard copies of the draft plan and land use by-law have been distributed to the public. Additionally, approximately 50 copies of the draft plan/by-law have been distributed on CD.~~

The Regional Planning website has been experiencing a lot of activity. Downloads of the draft plan and bylaw since April 26th have included:

- 5,583 total downloads of all or part of the draft regional plan
- 3,485 total downloads of the maps
- 1,065 total downloads of the land use by-law.

Visits to the Regional Planning section of the HRM website in May totaled 8,959, and as of June 14th, there were a total of 3,262 visits to the Regional Planning section of the HRM website.

Ongoing Consultation with Stakeholders

Throughout this phase of public consultation (May-September 2005), staff will continue to meet with stakeholder groups - residents' associations, special interest groups, development industry, non-governmental organizations, as well as staff and officials from other levels of government and adjacent municipalities. Meetings during May and June include:

1. Tripartite Forum
2. NS Department of Natural Resources (management and staff)
3. Halifax Urban Greenways, Halifax Regional Trails Association and HRM Bikeways Advisory Committee (joint meeting)
4. Nova Scotia Community College (Akerley Campus) Integrated Science Class
5. Municipality of East Hants (planning and engineering staff)
6. Councillor Kent's Town Hall Meeting
7. Terrain Group's Lunch and Learn (with planning, engineering and surveying staff)
8. Sport and Recreation Commission
9. Shubenacadie Watershed Environmental Protection Society
10. Halifax Chamber of Commerce
11. Housing and Income Support, NS Department of Community Services (with director and senior managers)
12. Chaswood Co-housing Project Group, Middle Musquodoboit
13. Urban Development Institute (attend regular monthly meetings)
14. Members of Development Industry (concerning developments in progress)
15. Landowners (lands north of former Sackville Golf Course)
16. Representatives of Peninsula South Residents' Association
17. Capital District Task Force
18. Sheet Harbour Chamber of Commerce

19. Spryfield Residents Association, Friends of Whimsical Lake and the Chocolate Lake Community Association (joint meeting)
20. St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association
21. Five Bridges Wilderness Trust
22. Rural Developers - Eastern Region

The Regional Planning project office also participated at the 1st Family Expo trade show, May 14 and 15th, at the Dartmouth Sportsplex with an information booth and display. Several hundred people visited the booth.

e - Consultation and Other Opportunities to Provide Input

“Engage HRM” is a new e-consultation on-line bulletin board designed to allow residents to post their views and provide feedback on the draft Regional Plan, suggest solutions for improvements to draft policies, as well as, read the views of others and communicate directly with other bulletin board users. To register as a user, residents can go to www.halifax.ca/regionalplanning/forum. As with Council's online “parking lot” questionnaire, residents can post comments on the draft plan to Engage HRM until July 29, 2005.

The spring workshops provided the first chance to participate in discussion of the draft Regional Plan. There is, however, still lots of opportunity to get involved over the summer through the Regional Planning website or by contacting the project office.

Public Hearing Process

Prior to tabling the revised draft of the Regional Plan with Regional Council for First Reading, and the setting of a date for the public hearing, the RPC proposes to attend Community Council sessions to provide a thorough briefing and update regarding the results of Council's questionnaire (parking lot), workshop results, all other public feedback, and the resulting areas of policy change. The RPC also proposes to review a detailed time-line and a process for the public hearing at this time. It is anticipated any interested Councillors can attend the Community Council sessions in the various areas of HRM. The public may wish to comment during the public participation portion of the Community Council sessions. The sessions at Community Council would be for information/educational purposes only and in no way would constitute a part of the formal public hearing process.

The overall Regional Plan Public Consultation Process approved by Regional Council on September 2, 2003, will culminate with a final public hearing to consider approval of a Regional Plan for HRM. Given the process to prepare the regional plan remains on schedule and within budget, a public hearing would be expected to occur in November of this year.

Due to a continued and growing interest in the regional plan, the Regional Planning Committee is anticipating a significant number of residents may wish to address Council during the public

hearing process. To accommodate this interest, it may be appropriate for Council to consider an alternative location to the HRM Council Chambers where residents can see and hear first hand, the hearing proceedings. While it has been suggested the public hearing be moved around the region and held in several different communities over a period of several days, the RPC does not recommend Council move the location of the public hearing from community to community. The RPC is concerned that should one or more councillors miss a session for valid reasons, they would not be able to vote on the regional plan. The MGA, Section 205(7) is clear, "only those council members present at the public hearing may vote on second reading". As well, it would be impossible to anticipate the amount of time needed in each community, and thus the ability to advertise when Council would be available in each community.

Therefore, to meet the need for a larger venue, the RPC recommends Council direct the investigation of an alternative location within the Regional Centre and accessible to HRM residents. The RPC recommends the venue be booked to allow the hearing to proceed over several days should the need arise. In order to provide improved access to the hearing proceedings for those members of the public wishing to watch from home, the RPC recommends Council direct the investigation of the use of live cable television, satellite television, and/or web-cast services.

The Municipal Government Act requires, that prior to holding a public hearing to consider approval of a municipal planning strategy (the regional plan), first notice of the public hearing must be published at least fourteen (14) days before the date of the hearing. To ensure the public has ample opportunity to review the revised draft, the RPC recommends the final draft of the Regional Plan be available for approximately one month prior to the public hearing.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Any ongoing costs associated with the implementation of the components of the consultation process will be allocated from the resources of the Governance and Strategic Initiatives business unit.

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

~~Regarding the first recommendation, Council could direct the RPC to hold additional public meetings in the fall. This is not recommended for the reasons cited in the report.~~

Regarding the second recommendation, Council may choose to recommend the public hearing be held at the Council Chambers. This course of action is not recommended as there may not be sufficient space to accommodate everyone wishing to attend. Alternatively, Council may choose to hold the public hearing in several different locations throughout the region. This course of action is not recommended due to the possibility of councillors missing a session for valid reasons and therefore being unable to vote on second reading. The MGA, section 205(7) is clear, "only those Council members present at the public hearing may vote on second reading". Also, it would be impossible to anticipate the amount of time needed in each community, and thus the ability to advertise when Council would be available in each community.

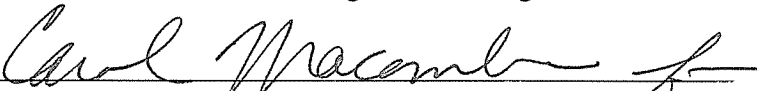
ATTACHMENTS

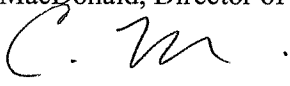
NA

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by: Susan Corser, Senior Planner, Regional Planning

Report Approved by:


Betty MacDonald, Director of Governance and Strategic Initiatives


Carol Macomber, Project Manager, Regional Planning