

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE BUDGET DELIBERATIONS MINUTES

April 17, 2008

PRESENT: Mayor Peter Kelly, Chair
Deputy Mayor Stephen D. Adams
Councillors: Steve Streach
Krista Snow
David Hendsbee
Harry McInroy
Andrew Younger
Bill Karsten
Jackie Barkhouse
Jim Smith
Mary Wile
Patrick Murphy
Dawn Sloane
Sue Uteck
Sheila Fougere
Russell Walker
Debbie Hum
Linda Mosher
Brad Johns
Robert Harvey
Reg Rankin
Gary Meade

REGRETS: Councillors: Gloria McCluskey

STAFF: Mr. Dan English, Chief Administrative Officer
Ms. Mary Ellen Donovan, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Julia Horncastle, Acting Municipal Clerk
Ms. Melody Campbell, Legislative Assistant
Ms. Barbara Coleman, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m.

2. BUDGET

Public Works and Transportation

Councillor Mosher brought forward the following questions:

- What would be the cost savings by converting all traffic signals to LED.
- What areas get sidewalk sweeper services.
- Is the leaf removal program offered only in the Peninsula and so, why.
- Is there an report on occupancy at Alderney Gate.
- Can reductions in overtime be a cost savings.

Staff addressed Councillor Mosher's queries:

- Staff advised there would be benefits to using LED. The tender costs came in double what was expected with a 12-14 year return. There would have to be discussion to reissue the tender or work with NSPI as an opportunity to cost share with their green initiative.
- Street sweeping is done all over the city or as communities request.
- Leaf maintenance is done to keep storm drains clear and for esthetics. It is done on the Peninsula, but other areas can be addressed if it is reported to the 490-4000 line. The request will be dealt with within a week or if it is a safety concern, it will be done immediately.
- Alderney Gate is full, with a vacancy of nearly zero.
- Staff continue to look at ways to approach overtime. There is a need to compensate staff for their hours. The winter work restructure is working well, a report will come back to Council after the winter season. Contracting for grass cutting is working, it gives opportunity for staff to be trained in other areas such as field rehabilitation enabling better use of staff resources.

Councillor Smith asked how the litter plan is managed. Mr. Huck advised that the seasonal and student staff is now being hired and litter is a main priority for the downtowns. Mr. Huck advised that there needs to be a change in community culture when it comes to litter.

Councillor Smith inquired as to why some of the HRM-owned lands are not sold off. It costs money to maintain these properties. Staff advised that some lands are held for reasons, such as future infrastructure planning.

Councillor Younger addressed the matter of street lights in Dartmouth and the County and placed the following motion:

MOVED BY Councillor Younger, seconded by Councillor Karsten, that Halifax Regional Council request a staff report to come back to Council regarding information on the lease agreements with NSPI for street lights in Dartmouth and County areas including:

- 1. What the challenge are in regard to taking on the lights**
- 2. Cost benefit analysis**
- 3. Options for Council**
- 4. How many lights per month or per year are out that we pay still have to pay for**
- 5. In new subdivisions, responsibility for lights go from Developer to HRM instead of NSPI**

Councillor Streach added that this light issue needs to be addressed and HRM should be taking over the street lights. Councillor Karsten added that this is a huge issue in his area as well. Councillor Hendsbee advised that he has been requesting this information for years and has not seen a report. Councillor Snow added there are no identifying markers to report outages and HRM is paying for lights that are burnt out.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Councillor Murphy asked if there is any fleet strategy with the high cost of gasoline and diesel. Also he questioned if the Smart Car Program is giving results. Has there been any thought to power washing streets after the winter. The Councillor inquired about the winter plow damage, and when those issues would be addressed. Mr. Labrecque advised that the Smart cars are working well. Fleet is working on a gas saving policy, no idling has been implemented. The street power washing has been contemplated. Winter work damage by contractors is to be completed by mid June.

Councillor McInroy added that clean cities have staff to keep the city clean. He advised that the Rehab lands are not surplus and this property should not be sold off. The Councillor noted that Council was told that the Central Library was faced with a 2.5 million deficit, and there was a 1.5 million deficit for snow and ice. Council has now been advised that there is no deficit and snow and ice has been replenished. The strategy is to borrow more. Why not have a one time diversion to the library fund from the sale of land account. Mr. English advised a library scope study is now happening. HRM has to complete the land acquisition and once elements are in place, staff will come back to Council with the financing proposal.

Council took a break at 10:50 a.m.

Council reconvened at 11:05 a.m.

Councillor Mosher asked what the \$500,000 under Asset Management is for. Ms. O'Toole advised that this is a constrained budget for Asset Management, it includes technology of asset Management tools, consultants for asset conditions, capital funded term FTEs that are

working on assets.

Councillor Mosher requested that along with the project of the Purcells Cove repaving project, it would be beneficial to pave the shoulders as well. This is a main arterial road with no sidewalks where children walk to school. The area is known to get very foggy. It is a very dangerous situation for walkers. Mr. Reashor advised that in order to pave the shoulder, funding would normally come from the bikeways account. There is currently no money available in the account. Mr. Reashor advised that it would cost approximately \$200,000 for this project.

MOVED BY Councillor Mosher, seconded by Councillor Rankin that \$200,000 be added to the parking lot for paved shoulder on the Purcells Cove Road to coincide with the repaving project scheduled for 2008. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED BY Councillor Snow, seconded by Councillor Johns that \$150,000 be moved into the parking lot for traffic signals to be located at the Beaverbank Road.

Mr. Reashor advised that this location is not warranted. All warranted locations have street lights. Councillor Johns added that this is an ongoing issue that needs to be resolved.

MOTION DEFEATED.

MOVED BY Councillor Uteck, seconded by Councillor Hum that the parking lot be discontinued and have a review of the fire and police issues.

MOTION DEFEATED.

MOVED BY Deputy Mayor Adams, seconded by Councillor Mosher, that \$65,000 be added to the parking lot to be allocated to build the washroom facilities at the Ravenscraig Field.

Councillor Younger questioned why the washrooms for Ravenscraig are \$65,000 and the cost for Shubie's washroom was over \$200,000. Mr. Blakney advised that the Ravenscraig facility has site servicing, the Shubie site required site servicing.

Councillor Karsten questioned why this has already gone out to tender. Mr. Blakney advised that this is an ongoing project that has been in the budget for two years. It is in second phase and over budget. Staff recommended that to save money, the washrooms not be built.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Councillor Snow, seconded by Councillor Smith as a Motion of Reconsideration that \$150,000 be moved into the parking lot for traffic signals to be located at the Beaverbank Road.

The motion was ruled "out of order".

MOVED BY Councillor Mosher, seconded by Councillor Murphy that Halifax Regional Council request the Halifax Dartmouth Bridge Commission eliminate tolls for all HRM-owned vehicles.

Councillor Harvey advised that tolls are the only revenues for the Halifax Dartmouth Bridge Commission. If HRM gets a free pass, other levels of government will be looking for the same opportunity.

Councillor Hendsbee added that if HRM gets free toll, HRM must work with the Halifax Dartmouth Bridge Commission in a partnership model.

MOTION DEFEATED.

Council recessed at 12:03 p.m.

Council reconvened at 1:15 p.m.

MOVED BY Councillor Johns and seconded by Councillor Meade that \$500,000 be moved from the Sackville Landfill Closure account into the parking lot for the Streets and Roads Budget to be used directly for paving of gravel roads, not in any particular area, but within the municipality, staff will prioritize.

Councillor Johns noted that the Sackville Landfill Closure (Q119) has a balance of \$5,600,000. HRM is looking at putting approximately \$400,000 into that reserve and that reserve does not need to be that much. The money that has been allocated to go into the reserve can be used for this purpose.

Councillors Smith and Barkhouse entered the meeting at 1:20 p.m.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED BY Deputy Mayor Adams and seconded by Councillor Johns that \$190,000 be moved from the Strategic Transit Fund (Q136) into the parking lot for one new community bus or two refurbished buses for new routing at the discretion of staff and their priorities. MOTION DEFEATED.

Councillor Fougere entered the meeting at 1:36 p.m.

MOVED BY Councillor Rankin and seconded by Councillor Meade a letter from Destinations Southwest Nova Association be received and put forwarded to Staff for consideration for \$32,000.00 towards their Municipal Tourism Strategy. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

In response to Councillor Harvey, Mr. English proposed that Staff can come back in June with a multi year financing strategy for the library project.

MOVED BY Councillor Streach and seconded by Councillor Harvey that Staff provide a report on potential financial options for the library.

Following discussion, the mover and seconder agreed to withdraw the motion.

Councillor Hum entered the meeting at 1:53 p.m.

Councillor Mosher entered the meeting at 1:55 p.m.

Councillor Mosher requested staff provide data on the open hours of the library, what they are, and what are the preferred hours either by library or public.

Councillor Walker requested for the record that the expansion of the Keshen Goodman Library be looked at in 2009/10.

MOVED BY Councillor Fougere and seconded by Deputy Mayor Adams that \$135,000.00 be added to the parking lot to cover the expense of replacing 300 trees in HRM that would die over the coming year. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED BY Councillor Snow and seconded by Councillor Barkhouse that \$45,000 be allotted for a FTE for the Councillor Support Office. MOTION DEFEATED.

MOVED BY Councillor Snow and seconded by Deputy Mayor Adams to move \$100,000.00 into the parking lot to go to GHP to help defray transitional costs which are one-time costs. MOTION DEFEATED.

Councillor Murphy entered the meeting at 2:35 p.m.

MOVED BY Deputy Mayor Adams and seconded by Councillor Streach to approve the budget as amended pending report by staff. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

Julia Horncastle
Acting Municipal Clerk