



**HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES
January 15, 2014**

PRESENT:

Mayor Mike Savage
Deputy Mayor Darren Fisher
Councillors: Barry Dalrymple
David Hendsbee
Bill Karsten
Lorelei Nicoll
Gloria McCluskey
Waye Mason
Jennifer Watts
Linda Mosher
Russell Walker
Stephen Adams
Reg Rankin
Matt Whitman
Brad Johns
Steve Craig
Tim Outhit

STAFF:

Mr. Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. John Traves, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Cathy Mellett, Municipal Clerk
Mr. Quentin Hill, Legislative Assistant

The following does not represent a verbatim record of the proceedings of this meeting.

*A video recording of this meeting is available:
http://archive.isiglobal.ca/vod/halifax/archive_2014-01-15_live.mp4.html*

*The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to Council are available
online: <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/140115cow-agenda.html>*

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m., Committee of the Whole adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Deputy Mayor Fisher called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – None

3. Budget Presentation – Transportation and Public Works

The following items were before Council:

- Staff report dated January 8, 2014
- Correspondence from Ms. Phyllis Smith dated January 9, 2014
- Correspondence from Mr. Ben Buckwold of Bicycle Nova Scotia dated January 13, 2014.

Mr. Mike Labrecque, Deputy CAO and Mr. David Hubley, Acting Director Transportation and Public Works provided the staff presentation to Council. They provided the following 2014-2015 budget highlights:

- Reduction of \$5.3 million in operating costs.
- Increase of \$2.4 million to Solid Waste budget to deal with pressures.
- Increased assets through development, including roads, sidewalks etc.

Mr. Labrecque also explained the Solid Waste pressures and the reason for the increase of \$2.4 million to the budget including:

- Collection contract fees have increased by \$660,000.
- Otter Lake Operating costs have increased by \$146,000.
- Compost Facility operations costs have increased by \$1 million.
- MRF (Materials Recycling Facility) operations costs have increased by \$200,000.
- RRFB (Resource Recovery Fund Board) revenue has decreased by \$1 million.

Deputy Mayor Fisher thanked staff for the presentation and opened the floor to members of Council for questions of clarification.

Mayor Savage asked for an update on the snow and ice removal budget for the remainder of the year. He also wanted to know what percentage of TPW winter works budget was fixed and what percentage was variable based on storm conditions.

Mr. Labrecque advised that the 2013-2014 snow and ice removal budget was around 19 million dollars. He stated that approximately 6.9 million dollars of that budget had been spent to date. He noted that 60 percent of the budget is fixed and that includes HRM staff and performance based contracts and that the variable portion includes costs for overtime, salt and equipment repairs. The overall TPW budget is approximately 37 million dollars and 19 percent of that is earmarked for winter works.

Councillor Watts requested information on the implementation of round-a-bouts and the active transportation component for the project in the North Park area. The Councillor also requested information on what the process is for maintenance of bike lanes in regards to winter snow removal and summer debris removal. She also wanted to know if there was going to be improvements to sidewalks and crosswalks with better accessibility standards.

Mr. Hubley advised that the proposed round -a-bouts will have some active transportation component and staff would be going out and getting feedback from the public. Bike lane maintenance is tied to road maintenance. Mr. Hubley advised that there is difficulty cleaning bike lanes during the winter when the emphasis is on clearing the travel ways.

Mr. Chris Mitchell, Manager Municipal Operations advised that staff is reviewing how cleaning operations handle the removal of debris from bike lanes. He added that to increase the service on cleaning bike lanes would require removal of services in other areas.

Mr. Hubley advised that staff is waiting for a recommendation report to come back from the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee before staff would make any recommendations for changes to crosswalks. He added that there are over 350 kilometers of sidewalk installation requests each year and staff is only able to undertake a small portion of those requests.

Councillor Outhit requested clarification on the savings in the fleet noted in the budget. He also wanted to know if there was money set aside to implement some of the ideas that would come forward from the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee. The Councillor also stated there is a need to resolve the new requests for sidewalks and the reconditioning of older sidewalks.

Mr. Labrecque advised that when the capital budget comes back the Committee could debate and discuss the requests for sidewalks versus the reconditioning of old sidewalks. There is a fleet policy and it triggers when staff should or should not have a vehicle, which has reduced the need for vehicles. He noted that the reduction would not result in any additional requirement to rent or lease vehicles. In regard to crosswalks, Mr. Labrecque stated that staff would wait to hear back from the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee and that there would be time for Council to consider any recommendations that come from the Committee.

Councillor Dalrymple advised Council that the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee was expecting to have its report to Council by March prior to budget approval. He added there will be some funding requests for infrastructure such as zebra crosswalks and reflective tape at intersections. He asked if the streetlight switch to LED was almost complete and does it include all Nova Scotia Power and provincial lights. He wanted to know how Council members would access the recently completed bridge ratings, and inquired whether the early arrival of potholes would affect the budget.

Mr. Labrecque advised that potholes are accounted for in the operating budget and staff typically fill about 150 potholes a day when the weather permits. He added that the report on street light inventory would be before Council soon.

Mr. Hubley believed that the bridge ratings were a public document and staff would get back to Council on how to obtain it.

Councillor Walker questioned where the tree planting program will take place in 2014. He requested that staff bring a list of what streets would have street lights replaced and a timetable of when they are expected to be completed.

Mr. Hubley advised that there were 5 neighborhoods that would receive tree planting in the upcoming year including; Chebucto, Fairview, Colby Village, North End Halifax and Eastern Passage. He indicated that there are approximately 300 trees planted each year.

Councillor Mason agreed with previous speakers that there is a need to have funding in place for implementing recommendations coming from the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee. He raised concern about some of the infrastructure in the parks and questioned what the plan is for maintaining assets such as the fences and trails. He questioned what staff is planning regarding SCOOT replacement and if it would be repaired or replaced. He noted there has been significant crosswalk slab replacement around the peninsula with over 400 slabs replaced. He wondered if the slab replacement was going to continue downtown in 2014. Councillor Mason also asked what Active Transportation projects are planned for 2014.

Mr. Labrecque advised that the Active Transportation plan would be best discussed during the budget deliberations of Planning and Infrastructure. He stated that the work on the slab replacement would continue with a focus on the remaining identified slabs.

Mr. Hubley stated, in regard to the SCOOT system that it will be a complete replacement.

Mr. Mitchell clarified that staff are looking at repairs and maintenance in the parks.

Councillor McCluskey asked if there was any tree planting scheduled for downtown Dartmouth. She advised that she has had a number of complaints that snow is not being cleared properly at crosswalks. She requested an update on the status of the project at the intersection of Portland Street and Alderney Road.

Mr. Hubley advised that the Urban Forest master plan was approved by Council and included Chebucto, Fairview, Colby Village, North End Halifax and Eastern Passage for the pilot project.

Councillor Nicoll felt there needed to be integration between HRM road systems and provincial roadway systems. She expressed concern regarding the use of spray paint in HRM right of ways, noting that contractors are using paint for temporary markings that does not wash off. She asked if there would be consistency in the sidewalk patching and concrete on concrete repairs. Councillor Nicoll also wanted to know when HRM would take over the street lights.

Mr. Labrecque stated that the street lights project update would be provided during the Planning and Infrastructure budget deliberations. He advised that the province is involved with HRM in discussion of road network priorities.

Councillor Mosher advised that there were 4,263 snow complaints from all across HRM from December 11, 2013 to January 14, 2014. Surplus properties should have buildings torn down if the cost is too high to maintain. She questioned if the Municipality would have the ability to recoup the demolition cost upon sale of the surplus property. She agreed with previous speakers that the bike lanes needed better maintenance. She advised that she had been supportive of the Urban Forest Master plan, but has found that not everyone wants additional trees planted in their neighborhoods. She recommended that staff provide an information sheet to homeowners explaining the rationale for where trees will be planted. Councillor Mosher also raised concern about the installation of the natural gas lines and water lines. She felt that there needed to be some coordination of the projects so that it was less disruptive to the community.

Mr. Labrecque explained that, in most cases, demolition of surplus properties would be recouped through the sale of the property.

Mr. Hubley advised that there is an integration committee that works with various service providers to coordinate service installation and street repairs. He noted there is difficulty with working the natural gas industry as there installation is determined by market demand.

Councillor Adams advised that residents in his district have been very supportive of the increased planting of trees. He stated that he is supportive of bike lanes where they are appropriate. He asked if there was any statistics that would indicate how many people are using the bike lanes to get to work; or how many are using them for leisure. He felt that businesses were suffering because the bike lanes were removing parking spaces in front of the stores. He asked if there was consideration of having seasonal bike lanes, having them closed between the months of November and March. He also asked if there were any impact studies done on the local businesses.

Mr. Labrecque advised that staff would follow up and provide additional information on the evaluation of the Active Transportation program including bike lanes.

Councillor Craig reminded staff of the original motion in regard to crosswalk safety and noted that there needs to be a comprehensive crosswalk safety action plan submitted by staff to Council, including the recommendations by the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee.

Councillor Hendsbee suggested that the Active Transportation initiatives be considered for inclusion in an all-encompassing Regional Transportation tax regime, including the provincial 'blue route' projects. He asked what the status is on the provincial 50/50 cost share program for paving projects and if HRM would be participating. He also asked if the widening of Highway 7 between MacLauchlan and Montague Road would be included in the capital budget. He also noted that there is nothing in the proposed budget for weekly organic collection. Councillor Hendsbee also asked if there had been any discussion with the province about adjusting the service boundary for HRM to take over more streets in the Mineville and Lawrencetown area. He also requested that Council be provided with a list of surplus properties.

Mr. Labrecque advised that a list of surplus properties would be before Council before the fiscal year end. There had been no discussions with the province to date regarding the adjusting of the

service boundary. He further advised that a motion should be put forward if the Committee wished to have weekly green cart collection.

Mr. Hubley advised that the province had asked HRM to provide a list of roads to be considered for cost sharing, which is currently underway. He noted that further discussion would be held with Traffic and Right of Way services regarding widening portions of Highway 7.

Councillor Whitman suggested that the painting of lines on the roads needs to be reexamined as they do not last for very long. He advised that he had many complaints in the summer about the mowing of local fields and suggested there need to be better oversight on awarding the mowing contracts.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Mason to request a staff report for developing a year round standard for year round maintenance of bicycle lanes and funding implications in time for consideration of the 2014/2015 budget deliberations.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Labrecque advised that there are a variety of reasons why painted lines do not seem to last for a long period of time. He added that the paint quality issue is something that the industry is currently looking for a solution and staff could bring back a briefing note in regard to options regarding management of both street line painting and paint installed for street marking by service provider.

Councillor Outhit suggested that communication should be sent out to residents regarding potholes, as they seem to be around earlier this year.

Councillor Adams advised that a motion had already been passed by Regional Council on August 6, 2013, approving weekly green bin pick up for all residents in HRM for the months of July and August.

The Committee agreed that the 2014 - 2015 Budget include weekly organic collection as approved by Regional Council at the August 6, 2013 meeting.

Councillor McCluskey requested an update to the Portland Street and Alderney Intersection project.

Mr. Hubley advised that the Portland Street and Alderney Intersection is still being discussed with Halifax Water. He added that there will be work undertaken on the Canal Greenway project later in the year.

Councillor Craig requested that intersection paving projects include having all the crosswalk markings painted in the entire intersection. He asked that if there is work on specific crosswalk projects required in regard to the opening and closing of some schools in September 2014 and that money be allotted in the upcoming budget to meet those requirements. He noted that there is an issue at the Downsview and Walker Avenue intersection and its proximity to the Beaver Bank

connector. He noted that it is a cross jurisdictional issue with HRM and the province and requested that consideration be given to that project if a solution is found.

Councillor Watts requested a review of the Urban Forest Master Plan to see if there are additional funds needed to conduct the full roll out by 2015-2016. She noted that there is an increase in density around the peninsula, and recommended an increase to the amount of infrastructure being provided for source separation of garbage when residents are out walking.

In response to questions from the Deputy Mayor, Mr. Hubley stated that there is capacity within the season to increase the number of micro and thin overlays to roads should Council through the budget process allocate more funds.

4. Public Comments

Mr. Ben Buckwold, Halifax, advised that he was representing Bicycle Nova Scotia. He was pleased to hear the Committee discuss increasing the level of infrastructure for active transportation. He provided the following recommendations for the Committee to consider for the upcoming budget:

- Funding for Active Transportation roundabouts for North Park
- Increased funding for bike lane maintenance
- Funding for crosswalk safety improvements
- Winter sidewalk clearing

Mr. Tristan Cleveland, Halifax, advised that he was involved with the Ecology Action Centre (EAC) and Our HRM Alliance. He felt that there needed to be a comprehensive bike strategy that would encourage people to travel by bicycle and reduce the number of vehicles. He also supported the roundabouts at North Park. He encouraged the Committee to think of ways to sell itself as an active transportation city. Mr. Cleveland requested that Council make a firm commitment to construct a full comprehensive active transportation plan for all of HRM.

Ms. Janet Barlow, Halifax, stated that residents throughout the Regional Plan Review have strongly supported the idea of a comprehensive active transportation strategy. She also supported roundabouts in North Park. She felt that the Active Transportation plan needed to focus on doubling the number of pedestrians and cyclists. She requested that funding be put in place for implementing any of the recommendations from the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee. She said that the increased requests for increased number of sidewalk indicates that more residents wish to walk and bike more.

Mr. Norm Collins, Dartmouth, advised that he is a crosswalk safety advocate. He stated that the recommendations coming from the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee would require an increase in funding. He suggested that the Committee consider increasing the budget for crosswalk safety by \$400,000 as it would represent a dollar per resident of HRM. This increase could go towards reflective tape at crosswalks, pedestrian stop signs or awareness campaigns. He was discouraged to see a new 'Distractions Kill' campaign be launched without the consultation of the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee.

Deputy Mayor Fisher called three times for any other speakers, hearing none the public participation was closed.

Councillor Outhit stated that based on the public input regarding crosswalks, he wanted to see the budget be increased by \$100,000 in anticipation of any recommendations from the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee.

The Solicitor advised the Committee that Administrative Order One would prohibit Council from making a motion based on presentations during the public participation. He stated if there was a desire to increase the funding for crosswalks, a staff report would have to come before Council.

MOVED by Councillor Nicoll, seconded by Councillor McCluskey that the Committee of the Whole direct staff to prepare the 2014/2015 Transportation & Public Works Budget and Business Plan as proposed in the accompanying presentation, incorporating additional direction provided by motion of Committee of the Whole for inclusion in the proposed HRM 2014/2015 Budget and Business Plan documents.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

Cathy J. Mellett
Municipal Clerk