

**HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MINUTES**

November 8, 2005

PRESENT:

Mayor Peter Kelly
Deputy Mayor Russell Walker
Councillors: Krista Snow
David Hendsbee
Harry McInroy
Gloria McCluskey
Andrew Younger
Bill Karsten
Becky Kent
Jim Smith
Mary Wile
Patrick Murphy
Dawn Sloane
Sheila Fougere
Debbie Hum
Stephen Adams
Brad Johns
Robert P. Harvey
Reg Rankin
Gary Meade

REGRETS:

Councillor Steve Streach
Sue Uteck
Linda Mosher
Len Goucher

STAFF:

Mr. Dan English, Acting Chief Administrative Officer
Ms. Mary Ellen Donovan, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Jan Gibson, Municipal Clerk
Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 1:39 p.m.

2. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES** - October 18 & 25, 2005

MOVED BY Councillor Hum, seconded by Councillor McCluskey that the minutes of October 18 & 25, 2005 be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. **SERVICE DELIVERY STANDARDS - FIRE & EMERGENCY**

This item was **deleted** from the agenda prior to the commencement of the Council session. A revised agenda was circulated at that time.

Council agreed to move Item 5. Presentation - Halifax Coalition Against Poverty forward at this time.

5. **PRESENTATION - HALIFAX COALITION AGAINST POVERTY**

- A Report on Homelessness in HRM - Portrait of Streets and Shelters II dated April 5, 2005 was before Council.
- A copy of the Presentation Report submitted by the Halifax Coalition Against Poverty and Angela Weal for the November 8, 2005 Committee of the Whole Session was before Council.
- A pamphlet entitled *Safe and Decent Affordable Housing* was circulated to Council.

Mayor Kelly invited the presenters to come forward at this time.

Ms. Angela Weal

Ms. Weal's comments were submitted in writing as part of the Presentation Report before Council. Speaking as a tenant, she explained the frustration with the current, very lengthy process in regard to having repairs made to a rental property. Ms. Weal suggested that tenants immediately begin paying rent In Trust to the Residential Tenancy Board once an order to repair is issued and that the tenant continue to pay rent In Trust to the Residential Tenancy Board until repairs are complete.

Ms. Eva Curry, Halifax Coalition Against Poverty (HCAP)

Ms. Curry's comments were submitted in writing as part of the Presentation Report before Council. She presented the following proposal on behalf of HCAP for Council's consideration:

1. That the City enforce all orders to repair arising from tenant complaints under By-law M-100 and Fire Services;
2. That Council take steps to ensure that improved enforcement of minimum standards set forth in By-Law M-100 does not result in displacement of tenants from affordable housing and that owners do not profit from repairs done by the City to bring properties into compliance by adding the following provisions to By-Law M-100:
 - That rent on any property or unit in a property that has been named in any order to comply with By-Law M-100 may not be raised before all ordered repairs are completed.
 - That rent may not be raised until the City has been repaid in full for all repairs made and any associated costs for properties where the owner has failed to comply with an order under By -Law M-100.
 - That repairs made to the properties are maintenance work and should not be considered renovations or improvements to the property.
 - Ensure that owners do not use such work as justification to raise the rent nor to profit from public expenditure for repairing their properties.

HCAP suggested the following to facilitate enforcement of the rental property maintenance standard:

1. Improved coordination between the Residential Tenancy Board, HRM By-Law Enforcement and Fire Departments. Once a tenant files a complaint, it is requested that all three departments automatically notify each other to begin the enforcement procedures in tandem.
2. Council is encouraged to work with the provincial legislation to implement a system whereby, if a property owner fails to comply with an order to repair, the tenant automatically pays rent In Trust to the Residential Tenancy Board until the repairs are complete. If the City makes the repairs, the City is to be paid from the In Trust account rather than placing a lien on the property.

The Mayor thanked Ms. Weal and Ms. Curry for their presentation.

Councillor Adams arrived at 2:00 pm.

Councillor McInroy commented that HRM should take the lead in working with the province to ensure required changes are made at both the provincial and municipal levels to provide a more efficient process.

Councillor Hum suggested the Department of Health and the Department of Environment be involved in the process with regard to any health issues.

Councillor Rankin requested staff clarify HRM's authority in regard to enforcement of By-Law M-100 and the enabling clauses as they relate to repairs to properties. Mr. Allan Waye, General Manager, Community Projects, Environmental Management Services, advised that By-Law M-100 will be revisited by HRM's Planning and Development Department with the intention of creating greater effectiveness and efficiency. Mr. Paul Dunphy, Director, Planning and Development, advised that Fire Services enforces By-Law M-100.

MOVED BY Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Sloane that the Committee of the Whole recommend Regional Council request that:

1. **Staff enter into consultation with the Tenancy Board, specifically relating to the collection of rent In Trust until repairs are done to code and By-law citation orders, regarding delinquent landlords who have shown resistance in being responsible landlords to their tenants.**
2. **Staff prepare a report regarding this matter, including concerns raised by presenters at the November 8, 2005 Committee of the Whole, to be returned to Council within three weeks.**

Mayor Kelly clarified that this matter has been referred to Regional Council as it may entail expenditures of Council.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. HOMELESSNESS REPORT

- An extract of the April 5, 2005 Regional Council minutes regarding Homelessness in HRM: Portrait of Streets and Shelters Volume II - Update on Homelessness Research and Housing Policy Development was before Council.
- An Information Report dated March 24, 2005 was before Council.

Mr. Barbara Nehiley, Senior Policy Analyst, Community/Regional Planning, Planning and Development Services, presented the report. Mr. Paul Dunphy, Director, Planning and Development was also in attendance to respond to questions.

Councillor Smith arrived at 2:19 pm.

Numerous Councillors expressed frustration with the lack of progress at the provincial and federal levels in addressing the issue of Homelessness. Concern was also expressed with the lack of addiction services and affordable housing.

Councillor Younger commented that the building of shelters treats the short term need but does not address the issue (cause) of poverty. He suggested that funding should go toward programs that will offer people the tools to move beyond poverty.

Councillor Kent arrived at 2:30 pm.

Ms. Nehiley responded to Councillor Murphy's concern regarding the lack of maintenance to the provincially owned/operated social housing units advising that staff will contact the Regional Housing Authority (RHA) and provide an update to Council.

MOVED BY Councillor Sloane, seconded by Councillor Rankin that Council strongly encourage the Federal and Provincial governments to continue funding current housing programs to reduce homelessness and further, that the Mayor arrange to meet with the Minister responsible for housing to provide and receive an update on this matter. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

This item is to go forward to Regional Council this evening.

5. PRESENTATION - HALIFAX COALITION AGAINST POVERTY

This item was dealt with earlier in the meeting. See page 3.

6. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Jan Gibson
Municipal Clerk