

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

November 29, 2005

PRESENT:

Mayor Peter Kelly
Deputy Mayor Russell Walker
Councillors: Krista Snow
David Hendsbee
Harry McInroy
Gloria McCluskey
Andrew Younger
Bill Karsten
Mary Wile
Patrick Murphy
Sue Uteck
Sheila Fougere
Debbie Hum
Linda Mosher
Robert P. Harvey
Len Goucher
Reg Rankin
Gary G. Meade

REGRETS:

Councillors: Steve Streach
Becky Kent
Jim Smith
Dawn M. Sloane
Stephen D. Adams
Brad Johns

STAFF:

Mr. Dan English, Chief Administrative Officer
Ms. Mary Ellen Donovan, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Jan Gibson, Municipal Clerk
Ms. Sheilagh Edmonds, Legislative Assistant
Ms. Julia Horncastle, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Deputy Mayor called the meeting to order at 9:13 a.m. and noted that a document was just distributed on the Councillors desks and indicates it is item number 5. He pointed out that it should actually be numbered 7.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - NONE

3. COUNCIL DIRECTION - 2006/07 BUSINESS PLANNING & BUDGETING PROCESS

C This matter had been deferred from a meeting of Committee of the Whole, held on November 22, 2005.

C A staff report dated November 8, 2005 regarding this matter was before Council.

MOVED by Councillor Karsten, seconded by Councillor Younger that Halifax Regional Council adopt the process to facilitate greater Council consultation (as noted in the attached budget timetable, including Council involvement in the various stages of the process) and direction in the 2006/07 Business Planning and Budgeting Process as describe in this report. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. INTRODUCTION - COUNCIL FOCUS AREA

Ms. Betty MacDonald, Director, Governance and Strategic Initiatives, addressed Council and provided background information on the 'Council Focus Area' discussions. She elaborated on how the process came about, the 12 focus areas to be discussed at Committee of the Whole, and the goals and objectives.

At 9:20 a.m. Councillor Patrick Murphy entered the meeting and took his seat in Council.

5. COUNCIL FOCUS AREA - INFRASTRUCTURE

C This matter had been deferred from a meeting of Committee of the Whole, held on November 22, 2005.

C An information report dated November 10, 2005 was before Council.

Ms. Betty MacDonald, Director, Governance and Strategic Initiatives advised that when staff reviewed the issues raised by Council at the workshops, almost every area of Capital was identified as important and, in particular streets and roads, sidewalks, transit, and recreation.

Ms. MacDonald explained some of the current initiatives underway and what needs to be done. In this regard, she noted that staff is developing an infrastructure plan, and is working on an asset management project; Regional Plan work is proceeding; and staff believe the development of a wastewater/stormwater plan is critical. Ms. MacDonald advised that one of the opportunities coming forward is anticipated funding, i.e. gas tax over five years; transit money; and MRIF over five years. She pointed out that, with regard to the transit funds, there is now some uncertainty because the Federal Government has fallen and an election is underway, and the legislation had not been approved beforehand.

Ms. MacDonald concluded her presentation by advising that staff is looking for direction from Council on whether it wants to discuss the reallocation of the capital budget. She noted that staff will continue to look for other sources of funding, and that staff believe Council needs to have a separate discussion on wastewater and stormwater; and staff is looking for direction on whether to continue with development of the Infrastructure Plan.

A discussion ensued with staff responding to questions. The following comments, questions, and actions were noted:

- C rural and suburban areas are having more difficulty in meeting demands of a growing population and need to acquire more parkland; supported putting more money in the budget for land acquisition, for playgrounds and parkland, and questioned why land banking has not been addressed. In response, Ms. MacDonald advised that staff will include this on the list for consideration.
- C Councillor McCluskey requested the list of projects that would be funded from gas tax funding.
- C hoped the long term strategy for asset management included consideration of cultural components.
- C the Municipality should rethink when it comes to disposing of properties it owns; e.g. the former County Rehab centre on Bissett Road is one such property, and should be retained for a future Common area.
- C concern expressed over the condition of the roads in the municipality; support the expansion of bus service and more bicycles, but did not support the number of increasing vehicles on our roads; concern about tying capital spending into regional planning and suggested this can be counter productive to Council.
- C In response to a question by Councillor Younger regarding the way the Province allocates infrastructure dollars, Ms. Jennifer Church, Co-ordinator, Intergovernmental Affairs explained that the Province of Nova Scotia allocates infrastructure differently than other Provinces, and that it uses a weighted formula.
- C A discussion ensued concerning the gas tax projects and whether or not Council approved a list of projects. Mr. English, CAO clarified that a list had been circulated earlier in the year but never approved by Council. He pointed out that this year the Municipality did not have to submit a list in advance, but will have to file a report in April advising how the funds were used. Mr. English added that funding for subsequent years will require Council submitting a list of projects in advance. Mr. English advised

that staff will provide a supplementary report to provide further clarification on this matter.

C data shows that Lower Sackville has the second worst streets in the Municipality; suggestion that more money is needed for streets, roads, and sidewalks and that this should be Council's project for 2006.

C In response to a question by Councillor Fougere as to whether playground projects could be tendered early so that the work could be done prior to the height of the season, Mr. English, CAO indicated that he did not foresee anything standing in the way of this approach. Councillor Hendsbee indicated he would second a motion regarding this matter if it were put forward.

C Councillor McCluskey referred to Councillor's Younger's comments concerning the Provincial formula for determining infrastructure funding and requested staff report back with details on the formula.

C suggestion that Council hold a separate discussion with regard to the allocation of the MRI funding.

C would like to see some of the funds from the gas tax go towards the upgrading of gravel streets.

At 10:26 p.m. Councillor Rankin entered the meeting.

At 10:27 p.m. Committee of the Whole recessed.

At 10:52 p.m. Committee of the Whole reconvened with the same members present including Mayor Kelly.

C Council should maintain streets, roads, and sidewalks as a priority.

In conclusion, Ms. MacDonald summarized the comments put forward in this discussion as follows: more funding in the capital budget for streets, roads and sidewalks; ensure funds are available for land acquisition; consideration of HRM buildings in relation to culture, and suggestion that staff pre-tender for parks and playgrounds.

With regard to the matter of pre-tendering for playground projects, the Chair noted that it had been suggested a motion be put forward and, he indicated that, if Council were in agreement, a motion should be put forward at this time.

MOVED by Councillor Fougere, seconded by Councillor Hendsbee that Regional Council approve the pre-tendering of playground capital projects to facilitate the advanced tendering of these projects. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

6. COUNCIL FOCUS AREA - TRAFFIC and TRANSIT

Mr. Mike Labrecque, Director of Transportation and Public Works addressed Council and introduced Mr. Paul McDaniel, advising that he was the new General Manager for Metro

Transit.

Using a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Labrecque addressed the Council Focus Area of Traffic and Transit. In his presentation, Mr. Labrecque advised that he was taking a longer term approach, noting that it is two to three years instead of one. He advised that with the 12% increase last year in funding for paving and assuming it stays way, he believes this will begin to turn the tide on the issues over time. He reviewed the outcomes and noted that he has taken a four year view, mainly because the funding level for the gas tax concludes in four years. In this regard, Mr. Labrecque pointed out that, for the first time, due to the cash flow situation, staff is in a position to make improvements to the road transportation network; metro transit; and are in a position to encourage alternative modes of transportation. Mr. Labrecque reviewed the assumptions staff used to develop an outline approach, and the factors influencing this on the traffic and transit side of things. Mr. Labrecque then reviewed the various transit and traffic issues that have to be done, the issues that need to be planned for, and other choices for consideration. He advised that the issues staff identified as 'must do' in transit investment total approximately \$56 million, with \$100 million in cash flow based on assumptions, and in traffic investment, the must do list totals approximately \$22 million, with a \$30 million cash flow based on assumptions.

Mr. Labrecque reviewed the recommended approach and then he, Mr. Kenny Silver, Manager, Transit Planning & Development; and Mr. Ken Reashor, Manager, Traffic Authority responded to questions of Council.

The following comments, questions, and actions were noted:

- C Mr. Labrecque advised that he would look in to the matter of why the portion of Beaverbank, which is in the urban core, does not get bus service, and report back to the Councillor Councillor Snow.
- C Mr. Labrecque advised that he would provide an information report on Mayor Kelly's question regarding whether staff were considering disposing of some buses.
- C it would be very worthwhile for Metro Transit staff to have ongoing dialogue with senior advocacy groups, and Councillor Murphy advised that he could provide a list for staff if they wished.
- C request for staff to make the appropriate arrangements so that the Shopper's Drug Mart at the corner of Almon and Robie Streets could sell bus tickets.
- C Concern expressed that with the expansion of transit service to the outlying areas since amalgamation, residents of District 15 are negatively impacted because buses are full by the time they reach the area, and many are bypassing the bus stops, leaving students trying to find a way to get to school and residents without a way to get to work.

RECESS

At 11:48 a.m. the meeting recessed.

The meeting reconvened at 1:30 p.m. with the following members of Council present: Mayor

Peter Kelly, Deputy Mayor Walker and Councillors Snow, Hendsbee, McInroy, McCluskey, Younger, Karsten, Wile, Murphy, Sloane, Uteck, Fougere, Hum, Mosher, Adams, Harvey, Goucher, Rankin and Meade.

6. COUNCIL FOCUS AREA - TRAFFIC AND TRANSIT CONTINUED

At this time, discussion continued on Traffic and Transit with the following concerns and comments and suggestions were put forward:

- Where will the additional buses would be assigned,
- Staff review the use of articulated buses during off-peak hours,
- The cost and timeline for the Wright Avenue Extension in Burnside,
- What areas would be covered by the Clayton Park Metro Link,
- Concern was expressed with transit routes and waiting areas in the Bayers Lake Business Park.,
- Concern was expressed with the stopping distance from intersections which results in traffic congestion,
- Concern was expressed with the timing of the crosswalk lights at Dunbrack and Lacewood,
- The bus service to Hammonds Plains Road is not adequate to address the need,
- Would it be possible to have a pilot project starting in 2006 allowing for a bus detour, during lunch hour, down to Hammonds Plains,
- Concern was expressed that the Harbour Link was under "Other Choices" and does not seem to carry priority,
- Concern was expressed with the timeline for the Wright Avenue Extension,
- People are being left on the side of the road as a result of overcrowding on the buses crossing the Macdonald bridge,
- The Fast Ferry needs to be made a priority as there is overcrowding on the Rotary and roads leading into the city from both Bedford and Purcell's Cove.

MOVED by Councillor Mosher, seconded by Councillor Hendsbee, that Mayor Kelly send a letter to all three Federal leaders and describe the importance of the fast ferry requesting that it be made an infrastructure funding priority. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Councillor Hendsbee suggested the letter be copied to all candidates representing HRM with a list of priorities.

- Concern was expressed with the Beaver Bank/Windsor Junction Crossroad and the Beaver Bank Road traffic signal requirements,
- Rural transit has been identified in the 2008/09 budget for District 2 but in the interim a car pool area should be established,
- Concern was expressed with regard to how the "Must Do's" are looked at with respect to the Active Transportation Plan,

- There are a large number of people who walk and it was suggested staff look at intersection improvements from a pedestrian perspective as well as origin and destination issues such as where they live, work, go to school, etc,
- The Harbour Link be moved from “Other Choices” to the “Must Plan for” choices under transit options,
- The Bayers Road area be considered for a central station for the Metro Link,
- Correspondence to the Federal representatives include HRM’s overall infrastructure capital needs,
- Concern was expressed with the potential for increased traffic on Woodland Avenue, Victoria Road and Alderney Drive due to the development taking place in Burnside,
- There is no mention of inter modal transit for the urban areas which would mean smaller buses at a lesser price,
- Staff examine the site at the top of the new sewage treatment plant as a possible bus depot,
- Commuters are taking the parking areas in front of Halifax homes.

MOVED by Councillor McInroy, seconded by Councillor Karsten, that Council endorse the recommended approach as presented by staff:

- **Take care of current ridership - meet core service standards and improve facilities**
- **Continue to recapitalize fleet and technology**
- **Complete strategic transportation projects**
- **Optimize current transportation network (compliance program)**
- **Plan for the construction of the garage**
- **Plan for introduction of a rural Express Route in 07/08**
- **Pursue additional funding for Harbour Link**
- **Preserve funds for opportunity land purchases**
- The “Must Do” items under transit have to happen and HRM has to deal with “Go Time” technologies as they are outdated as well as adding to and extending service,
- There needs to be an assessment on traffic crossings at Bayers Road,
- Availability of transit service on weekends be examined,
- Some projects such as the Beaver Bank By-Pass are under “Other Choices” of the traffic options and problems in the Sackville area could be alleviated by an interchange.

RECESS

Council recessed at 3:10 p.m. and reconvened at 3:23 p.m.

- One element of the Regional Plan is to endorse centres such as Musquodoboit and Tantallon and one of the elements of this would be an express bus service,
- The Harbour Link would benefit the rotary in relieving traffic congestion and be an alternate means of transportation.

MOVED by Councillor Rankin, seconded by Councillor Goucher, that Council submit

a list of projects be included in the correspondence. **MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

MOVED by Councillor Mosher, seconded by Councillor Adams, that the Harbour Link be moved from “Other Choices” to the “Must Plan for” choices under transit options. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

- Concern was expressed that the Sambro Loop and areas of similar nature were not included in the areas to be covered by a rural express bus service,
- Parking for transit connections be examined as there are some locations where people pay a fee and others where they do not,
- A visitor bus pass be initiated,
- Concern was expressed that the Metro Link was listed under the heading “Other” and it was suggested that further discussion take place on this item during budget discussions.

At this time a vote was taken on the motion on the floor.

MOVED by Councillor McInroy, seconded by Councillor Karsten, that Council endorse the recommended approach as presented by staff:

- **Take care of current ridership - meet core service standards and improve facilities**
- **Continue to recapitalize fleet and technology**
- **Complete strategic transportation projects**
- **Optimize current transportation network (compliance program)**
- **Plan for the construction of the garage**
- **Plan for introduction of a rural Express Route in 07/08**
- **Pursue additional funding for Harbour Link**
- **Preserve funds for opportunity land purchases**

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

7. MUNICIPAL RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

Council agreed to defer this item to December 13, 2005.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

Jan Gibson
Municipal Clerk

