

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MINUTES

November 7, 2006

PRESENT:

Mayor Peter J. Kelly
Deputy Mayor Russell Walker
Councillors: Steve Streach
Krista Snow
David Hendsbee
Gloria McCluskey
Andrew Younger
Bill Karsten
Becky Kent
Jim Smith
Mary Wile
Patrick Murphy
Dawn Sloane
Sue Uteck
Sheila Fougere
Debbie Hum
Linda Mosher
Stephen Adams
Brad Johns
Robert Harvey
Gary Martin
Reg Rankin
Gary Meade

ABSENT:

Councillor Harry McInroy

STAFF:

Ms. Geri Kaiser, Deputy 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

Mayor Kelly called the meeting to order at 2:10 p.m.

Councillor Streach introduced Mr. Brad Smith, Vice President, Business Development, Greater Halifax Partnership, who introduced Ms. Sigrúín Björk Jakobsdóttir, a member of the visiting contingent from the Akureyri Region, Iceland. Ms. Björk Jakobsdóttir thanked Regional Council for the hospitality they have received and presented Mayor Kelly with a book on the Akureyri Region of Iceland.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - None

3. SUPPLEMENTARY FUNDING JOINT WORKING GROUP REPORT

- An extract from the draft Committee of the Whole minutes of October 24, 2006 was before Council.
- An extract from the Committee of the Whole minutes of October 10, 2006 was before Council.
- A Supplementary Funding Joint Working Group Report dated October 3, 2006 was before Council.
- A copy of the PowerPoint Presentation on the Supplementary Funding Joint Working Group Report dated October 10, 2006 was before Council.
- A letter dated October 6, 2006 to Mayor Kelly from Mr. Gary O'Hara, Chair, Halifax Regional School Board was before Council.
- A copy of the document "Our Community Supports an Enhanced Education for our Students" from the Halifax Regional School Board was before Council.
- An extract of the Committee of the Whole minutes dated May 30, 2006 was before Council.
- A copy of the Powerpoint presentation of May 2006 was before Council.
- The Executive Summary of the Supplementary Funding Joint Working Group Report was before Council.

The following motion, deferred from the October 24, 2006 Committee of the Whole session, was before Council for consideration:

MOVED by Councillor Rankin, seconded by Councillor Uteck that Regional Council withhold support for the recommendations of the Supplementary Education Joint Working Group, and confirm that education is a Provincial responsibility and should

be funded through Provincial fiscal capacity, not through property taxation.

The following comments/concerns were raised during the ensuing discussion on the above motion:

- Councillors spoke in support of the motion indicating that Supplementary Funding is necessary. However, an increase to the taxpayer is not acceptable as residents are commenting that they cannot pay more taxes.
- Councillors spoke against the motion on the floor indicating that the recommendations of the Supplementary Education Joint Working Group have not been debated by Council and it is the staff recommendation that is before Council.
- Handing over control for the collection of taxes to an outside body, in this instance the Halifax Regional School Board, is not recommended.
- Concern was expressed regarding the inequity in Supplemental Funding across HRM. The public has commented that they support Supplementary Education Funding but that the current form is inequitable. The motion on the floor does not mean much without the support of the public.
- Voting for the motion on the floor would leave HRM with the status quo in regard to Supplementary Funding and would perpetuate the inequity. The maximum cap of 10% was intended for further discussion as numerous alternatives were reviewed and this was the best option to put forward at the time.
- The Hogg Report outlines the responsibilities of the province in regard to education. The municipality indicated that it would support Arts and Music education through Supplementary Funding. The HRM property tax bill clearly shows the Supplementary Funding amount separate from the Arts and Music amount. The tax payer does not understand Supplementary Funding.
- A thorough search of the minutes of the former City of Halifax, Dartmouth and the former school board, has no mention of a mandate for the Supplementary Education Funding program.
- The suggested maximum 10% cap would provide a total of \$34 million dollars equalling \$615.00 per student across the municipality. Introduction of a maximum cap would cause an increase in taxes to some areas and a reduction in taxes for other areas.
- Numerous Councillors indicated that they would not support a higher area rate/taxation for their residents.
- The public should be made aware that the province did not and would not participate with the Supplementary Education Joint Working Group.
- If the province provided the \$1,000.00 per student as it should, the Supplementary Education Funding would not have to be increased.

Councillor Adams, in reference to the survey results, expressed concern with the competence intervals for the 18-34 year olds as it is his understanding that for statistical significance the intervals must be below 99. He requested that the competence intervals be explained in the text. Also, the 35-54 year olds were not mentioned in the preamble and he would like to see that information. He also expressed concern with the wording of the survey as the respondents were not given an option (such as police, fire or recreation) other than supplementary education and were not informed that it is a special tax.

A vote was now taken on the motion on the floor as follows: **MOVED by Councillor Rankin, seconded by Councillor Uteck that Regional Council withhold support for the recommendations of the Supplementary Education Joint Working Group, and confirm that education is a Provincial responsibility and should be funded through Provincial fiscal capacity, not through property taxation. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

MOVED BY Deputy Mayor Walker, seconded by Councillor Younger that Halifax Regional Council request a staff report outlining options for a blended rate and dropping the present boundaries across HRM and that consideration be given to CSAP and how schools across the municipality approach fund-raising.

Councillor Rankin suggested that staff consider the appropriateness of a blended rate and dropping the current boundaries.

Councillor Wile suggested that CSAP be considered in the preparation of this report.

Councillor Streach added that it is important to consider the differences for each area school as some schools, in Middle Musquodoboit for example, fund-raise to support their local art and music programs.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED BY Councillor Karsten that Regional Council request that the Supplementary Funding Joint Working Group Committee consider reconvening to work toward a resolution. Having no seconder, the **MOTION WAS LOST.**

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:25 p.m.

Jan Gibson
Municipal Clerk