

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES
BUDGET

April 27, 2011

PRESENT:

Mayor Peter Kelly
Councillors: Steve Streach
Barry Dalrymple
David Hendsbee
Lorelei Nicoll
Gloria McCluskey
Darren Fisher
Bill Karsten
Jackie Barkhouse
Mary Wile
Jerry Blumenthal
Dawn Sloane
Sue Uteck
Jennifer Watts
Russell Walker
Debbie Hum
Linda Mosher
Stephen Adams
Brad Johns
Robert Harvey
Tim Outhit
Peter Lund

REGRETS:

Councillors: Reg Rankin
Deputy Mayor Jim Smith

STAFF:

Mr. Richard Butts Chief Administrative Officer
Ms. Mary Ellen Donovan, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Sherryll Murphy, Acting Municipal Clerk
Ms. Jennifer Weagle, Legislative Assistant
Ms. Sheilagh Edmonds, Legislative Assistant

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	CALL TO ORDER.....	3
2.	APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - None	3
3.	BUDGET DELIBERATIONS.....	3
	CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE.....	3
	LEGAL SERVICES.....	4
	BUSINESS PLANNING & INFORMATION MANAGEMENT	4
	FINANCE.....	5
	HUMAN RESOURCES.....	5
	POLICE SERVICES	6
	FIRE SERVICES	6
4.	ADJOURNMENT	6

1. CALL TO ORDER

Councillor Johns called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - None

3. BUDGET DELIBERATIONS

Mr. Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer, reviewed the agenda and provided an overview of the budget process and presentation format.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

Mr. Butts presented an overview of the Chief Administrative Office proposed 2011/12 Budget and Business Plan, a copy of which is on file. Mr. Butts responded to questions from Council at this time.

Responding to questions from Councillors regarding the Greater Halifax Partnership and Destination Halifax, Mr. Butts advised that there is a review underway and a report is expected in June.

Councillor Wile entered the meeting at 10:15 p.m.

Councillor Mosher noted the need for support with Councillors' websites for greater consistency and communication with residents, and social media support for enhanced youth engagement.

Councillor Barkhouse entered the meeting at 10:35 p.m.

Councillor Outhit questioned the need to hire another full time employee for the communications department and encouraged the CAO to review the current communication staff complement.

Councillor Adams entered the meeting at 10:40 a.m.

Councillor Fisher requested further detail regarding the advertising, facility rental, vehicle expense and uniforms/clothing budget lines.

Responding to a question from Councillor Lund regarding the HRM Communications Policy, Mr. Butts advised that the current policy dates from 1997 and is being reviewed and updated.

LEGAL SERVICES

Ms. Mary Ellen Donovan, Director, Legal Services, presented an overview of the Legal Services proposed 2011/12 Budget and Business Plan, a copy of which is on file. Ms. Donovan responded to questions from Council at this time.

Responding to a question from Councillor Sloane regarding the status of the implementation of a Municipal Court, Ms. Donovan advised that she and the Police Chief have advocated strongly for a Municipal Court. Chief Frank Beazley, Halifax Regional Police, advised that the Board of Police Commissioners formed a committee to look at the creation of a Municipal Court, which will be meeting next week for the first time.

Councillor Sloane commented that building permit fees are often not collected from a property owner when a building infraction is discovered and that they should be collected retroactively. She inquired whether there were figures available on these lost fees. Ms. Donovan advised that she would look into these figures.

BUSINESS PLANNING & INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Mr. Brad Anguish, Director, Business Planning & Information Management, presented an overview of the Business Planning & Information Management proposed 2011/12 Budget and Business Plan, a copy of which is on file. Mr. Anguish responded to questions from Council at this time.

Councillor Uteck entered the meeting at 11:33 a.m.

Councillor McCluskey requested further detail regarding contract services used by BPIM. Staff advised they would bring back this information.

Councillor Streach commented that there are Community Groups interested in volunteering with Visitor Information Services within their communities, and he hopes that HRM can provide them with some logistical help.

Councillor Karsten noted that the Audit Committee had previously requested that the Auditor General look into "right-sizing" of ICT assets, and wanted to avoid duplication of this initiative listed in the BPIM business plan. Mr. Anguish advised he would look into this.

Councillor Nicoll inquired about possible communication synergies with the CAO's Corporate Communications department and the ICT department.

Councillor McCluskey noted the importance of providing the Port Authority with materials such as maps and promotional materials for cruise ship visitors.

The meeting adjourned at 12:26 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 1:10 p.m. with Mayor Kelly in the Chair.

FINANCE

Mr. Bruce Fisher, Acting Chief Financial Officer provided the budget presentation on Finance, including Fiscal Services and he responded to questions.

Councillor Streach made reference to the Sheet Harbour Streetscape Project and noted that an area rate was assigned to each property, and as a result there are some taxpayers who own several properties and are paying the area rate on each property. He suggested it would be fairer to apply the area rate to each taxpayer within the area, rather than on each property, so that residents who may own more than one property only pay the area rate once, rather than paying on each property.

Mr. Fisher advised that when staff come back to discuss area rates he would have information to address this concern, and that he would discuss it with Councillor Streach prior to doing so.

Councillor Uteck requested detailed information on budget line items 6099 and 6999.

Councillor Karsten requested detailed information on the line item 'Uniforms and Clothing' in the finance budget.

Councillor Outhit referred to the property tax figure of \$24.3 million and asked for a breakdown of how much of this money was 'new' e.g. new construction, first time homebuyers and how much relates to an increase for properties under the cap.

Council recessed at 2:19 p.m.

Council reconvened at 2:33 p.m.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Ms. Cathy Mullally, Director of Human Resources provided the budget presentation and responded to questions.

Councillor Hendsbee asked for staff to provide additional information on FTE's, i.e. how many are actual employees and how many are vacancies or positions yet to be determined.

Councillor Uteck asked for further detail on what is included in special projects across HRM business units.

POLICE SERVICES

Chief Frank Beazley presented the HRP budget and Supt. Darrell Beaton presented the RCMP budget and responded to questions.

MOVED by Councillor McCluskey, seconded by Councillor Karsten that the Identification Unit for Police Services and Police Negotiation Unit be put in the parking lot for consideration of inclusion in the Police budget. MOTION DEFEATED.

FIRE SERVICES

Chief Bill Mosher presented the budget for Fire Services and responded to questions.

Councillor Streach advised of a staffing issue at a fire station in his district which arose on the holiday Monday just past, and Mayor Kelly advised that the Chief would have a report for the Councillor on this matter tomorrow morning.

Councillor Uteck requested staff provide more detailed information on line item 6099.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:56 p.m.

Cathy J. Mellett
Municipal Clerk