

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES NOVEMBER 24, 1998

PRESENT:

Mayor Walter Fitzgerald
Deputy Mayor Larry C. Uteck
Councillors: Bill Dooks
Gordon R. Snow
David Hendsbee
Ron Cooper
Jack Greenough
Condo Sarto
Clint Schofield
John Cunningham
Jerry Blumenthal
Graham L. Downey
Sheila Fougere
Russell Walker
Bill Stone
Stephen D. Adams
Barry Barnet
Robert P. Harvey
Peter J. Kelly
Reg Rankin
Jack Mitchell

ABSENT:

Councillor Ron Hanson (Regrets)
Councillor Bruce Hetherington (Regrets)
Councillor Harry McInroy

STAFF MEMBERS:

Mr. Ken Meech, Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. Dan English Deputy CAO
Mr. George McLellan, Deputy CAO
Mr. Wayne Anstey, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Vi Carmichael, Municipal Clerk

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	APPROVAL OF MINUTES	3
2.	DEFICIT REDUCTION PROGRAM	3
	2.1 Police Services -- Current Service Levels	3
	2.2 Recreation Programming Budget Cuts	5
	2.3 Supplementary Education Funding	7
3.	ADJOURNMENT	7

The meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m. by His Worship Mayor Fitzgerald.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED by Councillor Blumenthal, seconded by Councillor Greenough that the Minutes of Committee of the Whole meetings held on November 10 and November 17, 1998 be approved as circulated. MOTION PASSED WITH UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

2. DEFICIT REDUCTION PROGRAM

2.1 Police Services -- Current Service Levels

- An Information Report, dated November 16, 1998 and entitled *Police Services Current Service Levels*, was submitted under the signature of David P. McKinnon, Chief of Police.

This matter had last been discussed during the November 10, 1998 meeting of Committee of the Whole Council.

Chief McKinnon provided a brief overview of his November 16 report and responded to questions from various members of Council.

Responding to a question from His Worship Mayor Fitzgerald, the Chief advised that, prior to amalgamation, a special unit consisting of 12 police officers had been proposed to be added to the strength of the former Halifax Police Department for the express purpose of monitoring proceedings at the Sheraton Casino. He went on to note, however, that Police Services have "stepped away" from providing that service, primarily because the facility has not attracted the volume of customers that had initially been anticipated and also because the Casino has not been contributing to the financing of this operation. Chief McKinnon advised that two intelligence officers from Police Services maintain contact with the Casino, and suggested that a reasonable business case could still be made for encouraging the Casino to share in the cost of these and other services.

Councillor Kelly advised that residents are extremely concerned about reported decreases in HRM's police strength, particularly given recent incidents in the Spryfield and Dartmouth areas and the increase in criminal activity in District 21. Noting that Police Services now appears to be in a "reactionary" mode rather than a proactive one as a result of decreases in sworn strength, the Councillor strongly recommended that the division be exempted from participation in the deficit reduction program.

Commenting on the concerns brought forward by Councillor Kelly, Chief McKinnon concurred that calls for police services have increased substantially over the past year, but emphasized that his division has still been able to maintain the same standard of

response that was in effect in 1997/98. The Chief went on to advise that efforts are being directed toward rationalizing the numerous programs provided by Police Services with a view to ensuring that existing manpower can adequately address current needs.

Responding to a question from Deputy Mayor Uteck, Chief McKinnon advised that, during the first five months of the 1999/2000 fiscal year, it is proposed that the number of sworn staff will exceed 403, owing primarily to monies saved from the retirement of 13 staff members which can subsequently be used for new hires. He concurred with the Deputy Mayor's suggestion that the present number of sworn staff (389) is a result of circumstances (e.g., retirements, long term disability, etc.), rather than of budgetary considerations.

Councillors Schofield and Blumenthal concurred with the concerns brought forward by Councillor Kelly, both indicating that, in their view, Police Services should not be expected to effect reductions in their service levels as a result of the deficit reduction program.

Responding to a question from Councillor Greenough, Chief McKinnon advised that, according to the latest year-to-date statistics circulated to members of the Police Commission, there has been a decrease in property crime (including break and enters); a slight increase in crimes of violence (e.g., assaults); and a decrease of approximately one percent in crime overall.

With reference to a question from Councillor Harvey, Chief McKinnon advised that, on the assumption that the contract with Ports Canada is worth approximately \$600,000 for a full year's service and that the average police cadet will earn roughly \$30,000 during his/her entry year, the Ports contract alone could provide HRM with an estimated 20 additional police officers.

Councillor Rankin made reference to HRM's police-to-population ratios, noting that in the Dartmouth-Halifax portion of the urban core, the ratio stands at approximately 1:500 while in those areas just outside (i.e., Cole Harbour and Sackville), the ratio is roughly 1:1000. The Councillor expressed concern with regard to the growing community of Beechville/Lakeside/Timberlea which constitutes yet another component of the urban core. He pointed out that the police-to-population ratio in this area has been estimated at only 1:1300, adding that response times are also considerably longer. Councillor Rankin emphasized that, because residents of District 22 are paying for a high level of police service, he will therefore be requesting that police presence in this area be increased to mirror that in other parts of the urban core.

Councillor Walker concurred with comments put forward earlier in the discussion regarding the exemption of Police Services from the deficit reduction program, and suggested that Council should authorize the immediate hiring of additional police officers (to bring the number of sworn strength back up to 403), rather than wait until April 1, 1999 as is being proposed by Chief McKinnon.

A motion was proposed by Councillor Kelly; namely, that Council authorize the filling of 12 positions in Police Services (effective December 1, 1998) at an estimated cost of \$105,000.

The Chair ruled that Councillor Kelly's motion was out of order.

Councillor Greenough concurred with the Chair's ruling on the proposed motion, suggesting that the 1999/2000 budget review process would be a more appropriate forum in which to debate this matter.

Closing the debate, Councillor Schofield strongly recommended that, in light of expressed concerns about the current level of policing, the proposed \$175,000 reduction in this year's Police Services budget be rejected by Council.

2.2 Recreation Programming Budget Cuts

- An Information Report, dated November 5, 1998 and entitled *Recreation Programming Budget Cuts*, was submitted under the signature of Karen MacTavish, General Manager, Recreation Programming.
- A submission dated November 12, 1998 was also received from Ms. Kathleen Naylor, Program Manager, Embers & Youth Action Teams, Heartwood, RR#7, Bridgewater, NS, B4V 8J5.

Ms. MacTavish provided the Committee with a brief overview of the November 5 Information Report, emphasizing the criteria that were used to effect reductions in various of HRM's recreation programs. She emphasized, however, that, in many cases, staff were able to realign or reduce services to meet their targeted savings, rather than eliminate programs in their entirety.

4:40 p.m. -- Mayor Fitzgerald retires from the meeting with Deputy Mayor Uteck assuming the Chair.

Responding to a question from Councillor Cooper, Ms. MacTavish suggested that, given current fiscal restraints, alternate forms of service delivery will be identified to ensure the continuation of specific programs but at a reduced cost to the Municipality. In this context, she made reference to the concept of "community development," an approach which will allow HRM to reduce the direct delivery of recreation services by encouraging an enhanced level of community involvement in service provision. Ms. MacTavish noted that, as a part of its current restructuring process, the Recreation Division will be increasing its focus on the theme of "community development."

Councillor Cooper expressed concern that what he referred to as "a new direction" for the Recreation Department is being implemented prior to the 1999/2000 budget year and

without any consultation with members of Council as to what the impacts on their communities are likely to be. The Councillor therefore asked that a comprehensive report be prepared (in time for the 1999/2000 budget discussions), providing information as to the implications of this initiative on recreation programs in each of the districts in HRM.

With reference to a question from Councillor Cunningham, Ms. MacTavish noted that "volunteerism," as it relates to recreation program delivery, is one of the aspects of "community development" that she and her staff will be exploring over the next several weeks.

Responding to a question from Councillor Fougere, Ms. MacTavish advised that service levels at Centennial Pool will be reduced until March 31, 1999 with the majority of instructional programs being directed to other facilities. In addition, staff are working with the Aquatics Society to identify those recreational swims that could be offered under the terms of the management agreement currently being negotiated for Centennial Pool.

Councillor Fougere asked to be provided with the details of these arrangements as soon as they become available.

Councillor Downey expressed concern that programs are already being reduced at Centennial Pool. Referring to a discussion that took place during the November 10 meeting of Committee of the Whole, the Councillor indicated that it had been his understanding that no cuts would be implemented until a management agreement for this facility had been negotiated.

Ms. MacTavish made reference to an Information Report dated November 12, 1998 and submitted to the November 17 meeting of Halifax Regional Council in which various program reductions at Centennial Pool had been identified.

Councillor Downey referred to the fact that certain of Centennial Pool's programs are now being redirected to Needham Pool, pointing out that the Needham facility is in many ways inferior (in this context, the Councillor made reference to various seniors programs which he understood could only be offered at Centennial Pool). Councillor Downey went on to express concern regarding proposed reductions in the number of children's activities throughout HRM, suggesting that the business community should first be approached to see if they would be willing to sponsor certain of these programs.

In reference to the debate which took place during the November 17 meeting, Mr. Dan English, Deputy CAO, indicated that staff had been under the impression that, in addition to the negotiation of a management agreement for Centennial Pool, Councillors had concurred with the proposed reduction in programs at this facility for the time frame January - March 1999 (a cost-savings of approximately \$45,000). However, given the concerns raised during today's meeting regarding recreation swims, Mr. English advised that a staff report would be prepared for next week's meeting identifying any options that might be available as to their reinstatement during the January-March time frame.

As part of the report to be submitted for next week's meeting, Councillor Schofield asked that details be provided relating to the elimination of the wellness programs for Dartmouth North/East/West.

2.3 Supplementary Education Funding

This matter had been referred from an in camera meeting of Halifax Regional Council held earlier in the day.

Owing to the lateness of the hour, **it was MOVED by Councillor Greenough, seconded by Councillor Cunningham that this matter be deferred to a future meeting of Committee of the Whole. THE MOTION WAS PUT AND PASSED WITH UNANIMOUS CONSENT.**

3. ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Councillor Stone, seconded by Councillor Walker that the meeting be adjourned at approximately 5:15 p.m. MOTION PUT AND PASSED WITH UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Original Signed

Vi Carmichael
MUNICIPAL CLERK

*K