

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PROPOSED 1999/2000 BUDGET) MINUTES MARCH 2, 1999

PRESENT:

Deputy Mayor Larry Uteck
Councillors: Bill Dooks
Gordon R. Snow
David Hendsbee
Ron Cooper
Jack Greenough
Condo Sarto
Bruce Hetherington
Clint Schofield
John Cunningham
Jerry S. Blumenthal
Graham L. Downey
Sheila Fougere
Russell Walker
Stephen D. Adams (2:10 p.m.)
Barry Barnet
Robert P. Harvey
Peter J. Kelly
Reg Rankin
Jack Mitchell

ABSENT WITH
REGRETS:

His Worship Mayor Walter Fitzgerald
Councillor Harry McInroy
Councillor Bill Stone

STAFF MEMBERS:

Mr. George McLellan, A/Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. Wayne Anstey, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Karen Swim, Assistant Municipal Clerk

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	APPROVAL OF MINUTES	3
2A.	1999/2000 CAPITAL BUDGET	3
2B.	1999/2000 OPERATING BUDGET	5
3.	SUPPLEMENTARY EDUCATION FUNDING	6
3.1	Motion - Councillor Harvey	6
4.	ADJOURNMENT	8

The meeting was called to order at approximately 2:00 p.m. by Deputy Mayor Uteck.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED by Councillor Kelly, seconded by Councillor Hetherington that the Minutes from Committee of the Whole meetings held on Tuesday, January 26 and Monday, February 22, 1999 be approved as circulated with the following amendment to the February 22 Minutes: that para. 6 on p. 6 be amended to read *Elmwood Avenue*, not “Elwood.” THE MOTION WAS PUT AND PASSED.

2A. 1999/2000 CAPITAL BUDGET

The following documentation was submitted: -

- ! A document entitled *Taking Care of Business - Capital Budget Recommendations (1999/2000)* and dated March 2, 1999;
- ! A document entitled *Halifax Regional Council Capital Budget Debate - Parking Lot Items* and dated March 2, 1999;
- ! A document entitled *1999/00 Proposed Capital Budget (in 000's of \$) - Projects to be Delayed Until Future Years* (Revisions of March 2).

Mr. George McLellan, Acting Chief Administrative Officer, provided a brief overview of the above-noted documents and, in conjunction with other members of staff, responded to questions from various members of Council.

Councillor Barnet made reference to two projects relating to the former Sackville Landfill (namely, *Closure and Surface Water Control Study - Sackville Landfill* and *Sewage Treatment Plant Maintenance*) currently proposed for deferral. He noted that although these initiatives arose as a result of the Close-Out Implementation Study, they had been deferred for almost three years. The Councillor expressed concern that there was little information available as to what these projects entailed and whether their deferral will have negative implications for either the community or for the Provincial Department of the Environment.

In this same context, Councillor Barnet pointed out that it had been intended that a Close-Out Committee (consisting of area residents and HRM staff) would be established to oversee the completion of projects such as these. He expressed concern that the committee had not yet been formed and, as a consequence, could not provide expert advice as to whether the proposed deferral of the above-noted projects is appropriate.

Mr. Brian Smith, Director of Business Operations, advised that he would be submitting a written report in response to Councillor Barnett's concerns. In the interim, however, he noted that three staff members of the Waste Resources Section monitor the site very carefully and are therefore comfortable that the recommendation to defer these projects will have no negative implications.

Councillor Snow asked for clarification regarding staff's comments (as contained on p. 1 of the document entitled *Halifax Regional Council Capital Budget Debate*) pertaining to improvements proposed for that portion of Cobequid Road leading to the MacDonald's Sports Park.

Mr. Blair Blakeney, Regional Coordinator, Recreation Facilities, advised that the information to which the Councillor referred is in error, adding that the \$75,000 proposed for expenditure during the 1999/2000 fiscal year is actually intended to be used for base work on the Park's soccer field.

Councillor Snow made reference to the fact that there are a number of safety hazards relating to this roadway which, in his opinion, should be addressed before work commences on the soccer field. In this context, he commented on the narrowness of the road and problems with visibility, and strongly recommended that the money be spent on removing several large trees and eliminating some of the corners before a serious accident occurs.

Responding to a question from Deputy Mayor Uteck, Mr. Kulvinder Dhillon, Director of Engineering and Transportation Services, advised that, in his view, it would be more economical to undertake all of the proposed improvements to this roadway as one complete project. Mr. Dhillon added that it was his understanding a project of this magnitude would cost between \$250,000-\$300,000.

Following a brief discussion, the Councillor asked (and Mr. Dhillon agreed) that a small amount of money could be expended to remove certain key trees and to undertake some minor work on the road shoulders.

The Deputy Mayor suggested that if this work could be undertaken for, say \$4,000-5,000, it might well be accomplished as part of the regular Works budget for this area, rather than as a Capital Budget project.

Referring to the fact that no capital projects have been proposed for District 23 in the coming year's budget, Councillor Mitchell emphasized that he hoped the situation would be somewhat different for 2000/2001, particularly with respect to recreation projects.

Mr. McLellan assured the Councillor that District 23 had not been deliberately excluded, and added that he and his staff would be pleased to discuss potential projects for 2000/2001 with Councillor Mitchell.

Responding to a question from Councillor Hetherington, Mr. McLellan advised that the proposed Capital Budget for 1999/2000 (including the "parking lot" items and deferred projects) now stands at \$44.9 million.

MOVED by Councillor Hetherington, seconded by Councillor Hendsbee that the proposed Capital Budget for 1999/2000 (at an estimated \$44.9 million) be forwarded to the next regular meeting of Halifax Regional Council, scheduled for later in the day, for approval.

Councillor Schofield made reference to Lancaster Ridge in Dartmouth, noting that, approximately 5-6 years, the Department of Housing installed the first layer of paving. The Councillor advised that the Department had not lived up to its promise of returning to complete this project, and asked for clarification as to whether the Municipality is responsible for maintenance on this roadway in the interim.

Mr. Dhillon indicated that he would investigate the matter and report back to the Councillor.

Councillor Cooper made reference to a particularly bad turn on Cherry Brook Road, and asked to have a traffic sign (reducing speeds to approximately 20 kph) installed at this location.

Councillor Blumenthal referred to the service areas of Halifax's Hydrostone neighborhood, noting that he had been receiving numerous calls concerning damage to vehicles. He therefore requested that improvements be identified as a priority for District 11 in the coming year.

THE MOTION WAS PUT AND PASSED.

2B. 1999/2000 OPERATING BUDGET

IT WAS AGREED that the meeting of the Program and Services Review Committee, originally scheduled for Wednesday, March 3, would be cancelled; and that, instead, Regional Council (meeting as Committee of the Whole) would convene at 10:00 a.m. in the Council Chamber for the purposes of concluding the review of the 1999/2000 proposed Operating Budget.

3. SUPPLEMENTARY EDUCATION FUNDING

3.1 Motion - Councillor Harvey

This matter had last been discussed during a regular meeting of Halifax Regional Council held on February 2, 1999 at which time the following motion proposed by Councillor Harvey (seconded by Councillor Hendsbee) had been referred for debate to the budget review deliberations:

That Council maintain the supplementary funding levels for education in Halifax and Dartmouth, and increase the total supplementary funding paid to the School Board by a proportionate amount of County/Bedford funding, such proportionate County/Bedford funding to be phased in over ten (10) years.

Councillor Harvey advised that he was proposing this approach in the interests of equity and fairness across HRM's school system, emphasizing that the intent would be to collect the County and Bedford contribution in the form of an area rate (as opposed to including it as part of the general tax revenues).

MOVED by Councillor Harvey, seconded by Councillor Fougere that the total supplementary funding paid to the School Board by Dartmouth and Halifax be increased by a proportionate amount of County/Bedford funding, such proportionate County/Bedford funding to be phased in over ten (10) years.

Councillor Barnet expressed concern that, despite repeated requests to the School Board, information has not yet been provided as to how supplementary education funding is proposed to be spent. He pointed to the negative response received with regard to a recent survey undertaken in District 19, and emphasized that, until taxpayers can identify the advantages supplementary funding holds for their school children, they are extremely reluctant to agree to an additional tax. The Councillor suggested that a more appropriate approach for the Municipality to take would be to continue to encourage the Provincial Government to honor its commitment to a 90-10 percent funding formula for education.

Concurring with the concerns put forward by Councillor Barnet, Councillor Cooper suggested that this is an issue which demands input from all the communities involved (perhaps in the form of a plebescite), as well as a definitive answer from the School Board as to whether supplementary funding from all components of HRM would indeed result in equality across the Region.

Councillor Hendsbee voiced his support of the suggestions put forward by Councillors Barnet and Cooper, adding that, in his opinion, the matter of universal supplementary

funding should be an issue for the Year 2000 municipal election. The Councillor went on to strongly recommend that the School Board take a leading role in promoting the benefits of supplementary education funding, particularly from the perspective of identifying the additional programs such funding can provide.

Councillor Adams indicated that he too has concerns as to the School Board's allocation of the supplementary funding it currently receives from Halifax and Dartmouth, and asked whether these monies are, in fact, being spent on education programs or on capital improvements.

MOVED by Councillor Adams, seconded by Councillor Cooper that further discussion of this matter be deferred until additional information regarding the disposition of supplementary funding is received.

Councillor Dooks made reference to the differences in programs and equipment provided to students in the rural areas of the Municipality (as compared to those in the urban core), and suggested that the amount of supplementary funding suggested by Councillor Harvey's motion would hardly be sufficient to address these inequalities. The Councillor recommended that a more suitable approach would be to encourage the Province to commit to improving education programs and facilities in HRM's rural communities.

THE MOTION TO DEFER WAS PUT AND DEFEATED.

Councillor Blumenthal made reference to the fact that Council as a whole had committed to the concept of a balanced budget with no tax increases. He therefore expressed concern that a move toward establishing an additional tax for supplementary education funding in the former County of Halifax and Town of Bedford would place his colleagues from those areas in what he termed "a bad light" with their constituents, adding that, in his view, Council should instead continue to encourage the Province of Nova Scotia to honor its commitment to the education funding formula.

Councillor Hendsbee proposed that a joint committee (consisting of representatives from HRM, the Halifax Regional School Board and possibly the Department of Education) be established to consider how the intent of Councillor Harvey's motion might best be attained. Concurring with comments put forward by Councillor Dooks, Councillor Barnet agreed that an issue of this magnitude should not proceed without public input.

MOVED by Councillor Barnet that the proposal to impose a tax for supplementary education funding in the former County of Halifax and the Town of Bedford be forwarded for discussion to a joint meeting of the appropriate community councils.

There was no seconder for Councillor Barnet's motion.

THE ORIGINAL MOTION (i.e., to augment the supplementary funding now contributed by Dartmouth and Halifax by a proportionate amount from the former County and Bedford) WAS PUT AND DEFEATED.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Councillor Schofield, seconded by Councillor Greenough that the meeting be adjourned at approximately 4:00 p.m. THE MOTION WAS PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Karen F. Swim
ASST. MUNICIPAL CLERK**