Governance Review 2013-2014
Executive Standing Committee
Halifax Regional Municipality

Project Overview

1.   Origin

Motion of Halifax Regional Council of June 25, 2013:

That the Executive Standing Committee, supported by staff, is directed by Halifax Regional Council to undertake a review of Council's governance and committee structure and the terms of reference of Standing Committees to ensure the structure supports Council's priorities, to be completed by June 30, 2014 for submission to Regional Council.

During the Council discussion, it was agreed that the review should also include the number of external committees members of Regional Council are asked to serve on and whether those councillor appointments best serve the interests of HRM.

2.   Purpose

To review HRM's governance and committee structure, the Standing Committees' terms of reference and the appointments of Councillors to external committees leading to recommendations for improvements in HRM's overall governance system.

3.   Scope

The following items will be considered during the project work:
- Council processes (as currently set out in Administrative Order #1 and others as identified)
- Standing Committees – number, size, composition, and terms of reference
- Community Council processes
- Councillors' Appointments to external boards and committees
- Others relevant items which arise during the process of the project (with the approval of the Executive Standing Committee)

The following items will not be considered* during the project work:
- Changes to the Halifax Regional Charter or the Municipal Government Act
- The number of Councillors and the boundaries of their Districts
- Changes to the number of Community Councils

*Should it be necessary to look into issues related to any of these items, it is understood that Council does not have the power to change them. Provincial legislation changes will be required.

4.   Objective

"Governance is the structures, traditions, and processes of leadership and stewardship that:
- assign power;
- define roles, responsibilities, and relationships;
- govern communications with stakeholders; and
- ensure accountability (from which legitimacy is derived"[1]

This project will review the current HRM governance system and make recommendations to Regional Council through the Executive Standing Committee for any necessary changes, in particular
- Identify ways for Council to better define and deliver on its priorities
- Identify any issues, gaps and opportunities in the Standing Committee structure
- Review Administrative Order No. 1 to identify issues, gaps or opportunities to improve Council governance effectiveness
- Review the list of external boards and committees to which council makes appointments and identify issues or opportunities for changes in the number and type of appointments of elected officials

5.   Deliverables

The Project Team will produce the following documents for the Executive Standing Committee:
- A review of Administrative Order No. 1 – Procedures of Council with any preliminary recommendations for changes to support council effectiveness
- A review of the Standing Committees structure including mandates, terms of reference, and appointment process with any recommendations for changes
- A review of the External Board appointments and the appointment process with any recommendations for changes

6.   Methodology

The Project Manager assisted by the Project Team will:
- Consult all Councillors as part of the reviews of A.O.No. 1, the Standing Committees and the External Board appointment process.
- Review previous HRM work on governance issues, with emphasis on recent changes
- Review the governance processes in other relevant comparable Canadian municipalities with a view to better understanding good practices
- Consult relevant HRM staff
- Meet monthly with the Executive Standing Committee to review progress and discuss issues which arise during the course of the project

7.   Organization

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[1] Roy, J. (2007). *Business and Government in Canada*. University of Ottawa Press.

This is a Regional Council project. Recommendations arising from it will be made to Regional Council through the Executive Standing Committee.

Council Project Sponsor – Mayor as Chair of both the Executive Standing Committee and Council
        Responsibilities:
- Resolving any issues related to consultation with elected officials
- Ensuring that major risks are identified and managed

Administration Project Sponsor – Martin Ward, Acting Director Legal Services
        Responsibilities:
- Approving the requirements, timetable, resources and budget for staff input
- Authorizing funds/resources for the project (Internal or external)

Project Review Group – Executive Standing Committee
        Responsibilities:
- Approving the project plan
- Ensuring risks and opportunities are identified and managed appropriately
- Receiving and commenting on monthly project reports
- Receiving final draft reports and making recommendations to Regional Council

Project Team – Chris Bryant – Government Relations & External Affairs (Project Manager), Josh Bragg – Office of the Mayor, Cathy Mellett – Office of the Municipal Clerk, Sara Knight – Legal Services, and Cathie Barrington - Council Support Office and other staff as required.
        Responsibilities
- Preparing documentation and reports to Executive Standing Committee
- Adjusting the project plans as necessary to meet project deadlines and objectives
- Maintaining documentation related to the project work
- Identifying risks or issues to be resolved by the Team itself, by the Project Review Group, or, if necessary, by the Project Sponsors

8.   Timetable

The deadline for project completion is June 30, 2014. To meet that deadline, and to allow time for both the Executive Standing Committee and Regional Council to consider and, if necessary, modify recommendations, Executive Standing Committee will require the draft final report for its March 2014 meeting.

Built into the timetable (below) are monthly reports from the Project Manager to the Project Review Group, the Executive Standing Committee.

2013 – 09 – 23	- Executive Standing Committee endorses the Project Plan
2013 – 10 – 28	- Project Manager reports to Executive Standing Committee
2013 – 11 – 25	- Project Manager reports to Executive Standing Committee
2013 – 12 – 16	- Project Manager reports to Executive Standing Committee
2014 – 01 –	- Project Manager reports to Executive Standing Committee
2014 – 02 –	- Project Manager reports to Executive Standing Committee
2014 – 03 –	- Executive Standing Committee receives draft final Project Report

2014 – 04 –   - Executive Standing Committee makes recommendations to Regional Council
2014 – 06-30 –   - Project Complete

9.   Risks

There are at least three potential risks already identified:
- Availability of Councillors for consultation: Likelihood – Low. Impact – High. Mitigation: good communication to enable all Councillors to schedule time for consultation.
- Disagreements among Councillors about the issues, the opportunities and the recommendations proposed: Likelihood – Medium. Impact – Medium. Mitigation: Ensure all views are heard, recorded and reported so they can be resolved through standard council decision-making
- Disagreement between Councillors and External Bodies on the value of Councillors on External Boards: Likelihood – Medium. Impact – Medium. Mitigation: Good communication with external bodies so their views are known and understood even if not accepted.

10.   Budget

The costs of the project will primarily be the time of councillors or staff engaged in project related work. These costs will come out of existing budget allocations.

It may be necessary to hold a consultation with external stakeholders. It may also be useful to engage an outside consultant to participate in the reviews, especially of good practices in other municipalities. It is not expected that the costs of this work will exceed $20,000.

Project Background

1.   Philosophy

Regional Council has looked at this subject before. Halifax City Council also considered the issue. Circumstances change. Some issues that were considered and rejected previously may well become relevant again. Ways of doing things that Council have become comfortable with may no longer be appropriate. All participants in the project will have to keep open minds to both old and new ideas.

2.   Staff Role

At the same time the Council is looking at governance issues, a staff led Governance & Communications Outcome Team is looking at such governance issues as the management of multi-district facilities. While there may be some relationship between the work of the two groups, these are separate projects.

3.   Legal Requirements

The Halifax Regional Charter and the Municipal Government Act impose some requirements on HRM. This project will identify and meet all those requirements in any recommendations that come forward, If it seems necessary to seek changes to any of those requirements, it is understood that such changes cannot be unilaterally made by HRM. Even where the Province might agree that such changes are appropriate, they may not be possible in the time frame of this project.

DRAFT – September 12, 2013.