

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
STANDING COMMITTEE

MINUTES

July 22, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Lorelei Nicoll, Chair
Councillor Darren Fisher
Councillor Jennifer Watts
Councillor Gloria McCluskey
Councillor Wayne Mason

REGRETS: Councillor Tim Outhit, Vice Chair

STAFF: Mr. Derk Slaunwhite, Solicitor, Legal Services
Mr. Mike Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Ms. Sheilagh Edmonds, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – June 13, 2013

Councillor Watts referred to the presentation from the Halifax International Airport Authority at the June 13, 2013 meeting and advised that she had raised several questions with regard to the impact of commercial and retail development at the airport. She requested that the minutes be revised to include her questions in this regard.

Councillor McCluskey referred to the HIAA presentation and questioned Councillor Watts as to whether she received information on the Community Consultative Committee that she had requested. Councillor Watts advised that she did not receive the information. She added that she did receive information on the Development Agreement she requested. The Chair asked that the information be distributed to all of the Committee members.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor McCluskey that approval of the June 13, 2013 minutes be deferred. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

Additions:

- 10.1 In Camera – Citizen Appointments to Special Arts and Culture Advisory Committee

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Mason that the agenda, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES/ DEFERRED ITEMS: None

5. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS: None

6. MATTERS REFERRED FROM REGINAL COUNCIL/OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES: None

7. REPORTS

7.1 Update: Economic Development and the Auditor General's Report

An information report dated July 4, 2013 was submitted.

**MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Watts that the Committee suspend the Rules of Order in order to hold an open discussion with staff.
MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

The Chair advised that today's discussion was a carry-over from the May meeting when staff engaged the Committee in discussion of economic development. She explained that the overall discussion was broken into five questions and at the May meeting the first question was discussed. Staff was in attendance to present and review the remaining four questions and receive the Committee's feedback.

Ms. Jennifer Church, Managing Director, Government Relations and External Affairs began the presentation by providing a brief background overview of the process staff were engaging in for a governance review and the review of the Auditor General report and its recommendations. She added that once the discussion is complete, staff will come back with a report outlining all the work done to date with respect to the governance review, the recommendations of the Auditor General, and the feedback of this Committee. Ms. Church noted that there will be time for further discussion by this committee to determine what to bring forward to Regional Council in terms of specific recommendations.

Ms. Maggie MacDonald, Senior Analyst, Economic Policy and Development addressed the Committee and provided further detail on the attachments to the submitted staff report.

Mr. Chris Bryant, Senior Advisor, Government Relations and External Affairs addressed the Committee and guided the discussion on the four remaining questions, as follows:

*How can HRM best support economic development?
Who should lead HRM's economic development activities?
How should HRM work with the other players in economic development?
How will HRM know if we are successful in our economic development work?*

Mr. Bryant began the discussion by pointing out that there are three ways things are done: we do them ourselves; we can make it easier for other people to do things; and collaboration with others. He advised that, in general, consideration should be given to the question of 'what things we should do ourselves' and 'are there things we should not be doing'.

A discussion ensued with the following comments being put forward by the Committee members:

- We haven't had a conversation with residents yet, about what they see as our direction in economic development; seems to be strong support for the concept of 'local' because there is more of a commitment to the community and the funds stay within the community—support a value added approach. Sense that residents would support a locally based economy and not always look for the big

project that we have no control over. Quality of life is important; be diverse as possible and attract people to stay; make the right linkages between universities and businesses; supportive of local businesses and engaging the public on the question of economic development. Have the check-in on an ongoing basis.

- Excited about the City's work in the arts community
- Alternative energy solutions – take some leadership on this, e.g. solar city.
- It is important to capture the rural area of the Municipality as a resource in economic development
- GHP could sample the top 10 companies as to what is working for them in economic development or not.
- We don't talk to businesses enough or fishermen, farmers or those that work in the lumber industry
- We need something that measures the performance of Destination Halifax.
- The business parks are a great asset and are not mentioned when it comes to economic development; the Municipality should be in discussion with the Federal government on the Shannon Park lands; have more discussion with the developers of the region on their views of economic development and make them feel part of the process.
- How can HRM lead discussion with the other levels of government in regard to partnering on economic development.
- How many people work on economic development in the Province vs the City; it was noted that the City provides over half of the Province's economic generation.
- Want to see economic generation grow but not at the cost of adding additional staff.
- We don't have benchmarks for the rural component of HRM and this has implications for the taxes they pay and the services they receive; we need to have a tight integrated leading economic development strategy for the municipal core, but feel the rural needs to be considered separately.
- In rural parts of the Municipality, have we looked at if our taxes are competitive with other rural municipalities;
- We have fallen down in the past in not acting immediately on or provide timelines when it comes to implementing a strategy; need clarity of what is expected of our agencies. If going to have a strategy make it an immediate driver.
- The need for collaboration with our partners when it comes to economic development but how do you find out you can collaborate without duplication. Who leads?
- There has never been discussion on minor efficiencies such as economic agencies sharing resources such as office space.
- Important to measure the social implications as well, in particular immigration support and work with African Nova Scotia and First Nations on Employment issues
- Importance of working with universities; important that we model great service delivery and service interaction at HRM because that is the tone we set in how we engage and support people;

- Working with directors and managers about economic development and providing information about how directors and managers are understanding their role in economic development .
- Interfacing with residents, i.e. are we engaging residents on their ideas of economic development.

In response to a comment by Councillor Watts, Mr. Mike Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer clarified that the Council's focus areas approved in the Business Plan, and which staff are going forward with are transportation, economic development, healthy communities, and governance. He added that there are 236 deliverables in the business plan this year; and staff review them each month. As the business plan is shaped going forward for 2014/15, Council will be brought into that process as staff set up for the 2014/15 year.

The Chair questioned if it would be helpful to engage Council in those monthly reviews. In response, Mr. Labrecque advised that staff report quarterly on the funds and there may be an opportunity to report on the deliverables. He added that he would take this away for further consideration.

The Committee then continued its discussion, providing the following feedback:

- The Auditor General's report states that most capital expenditures are economic development activities because funds spent enhance infrastructure, and if the primary purpose is that then HRM should have economic development outcomes in terms of measureable growth.
- We don't regard the sporting groups of the area in terms of economic development.
- Consideration should be given to staffing a position of Chief Development officer in the Mayor's Office.
- Students and retention of students needs to be considered--stop out-migrations; provide internships; build on the work the universities have done.
- Need to improve the speed at which permits are approved and the 'can do' attitude of government – find ways and policy
- Have economic development policy that is very clear – timelines, process and what Council is to vote on.
- A big piece of this issue is that the other levels of government don't think of community planning on a holistic level. We need to engage the other levels of government and show leadership in community planning.
- There needs to be confidence in the economy and confidence in HRM's ability when it comes to economic development.

In concluding the discussion the Chair advised that it would be helpful to have an 'asset map that would identify the resources over HRM. She also referred to page 8 of the report, and noted that there were three bulleted items under the category of Other Arrangements and advised that she felt it would add value if these configurations were examined in detail.

Mr. Bryant thanked the Committee members for the input and discussion and advised that staff will be bringing back a comprehensive paper for the September meeting which will capture the essence of these discussions.

At 2:50 p.m. Councillor Mason retired from the meeting.

8. COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

8.1 Councillor Watts – School Review Process

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Fisher that the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee requests Regional Council approve HRM participation in the School Review Process by having the Mayor send a letter on behalf of Regional Council, outlining the mutual interest HRM and the HRSB has in community planning and Regional Plan growth targets, as well as our interactions related to funding, a multi-year capital planning process and surplus school disposal.

Councillor Watts explained she was bringing this forward because the Province is carrying out a school review process and the municipality has an opportunity to advise the province that it is interested being involved in the process. She indicated there was some urgency to this issue because the deadline for submissions was July 31, 2013. Councillor Watts added that, if approved, a letter from the Mayor would state the Municipality's broad areas of interest in this issue and, in the fall the Province will be releasing a Discussion Paper and the Municipality will have an opportunity to provide more detailed input if Councils wishes to do so.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

8.2 Councillor Watts – Presentation Request – Provincial Housing Strategy

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor McCluskey that the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee schedule a presentation by a representative from the Province on their Affordable Housing Strategy for sometime in the fall.

Councillor Watts indicated that she felt it would be beneficial for the Committee to hear a presentation from a representative from the Province on the direction of the provincial affordable housing strategy. She requested that, if the approved, the Clerk's Office ensure other members of Council are invited to attend the presentation.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

8.3 Councillor Watts – Request for Staff Report – Affordable Housing

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor McCluskey that the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing request a staff report on current HRM initiatives and programs that promote affordable housing and other potential initiatives within HRM’s mandate that could support affordable housing.

This motion is in keeping with Regional Council’s June 25, 2013 motion regarding the powers of Standing Committees to request reports within their mandate; specifically, Clauses 3.1 (Oversight of HRM’s Regional Plan and Regional Planning Initiatives) and 3.4 (Active interest in the Agencies & Initiatives that support Community & Economic Development throughout HRM) of the Standing Committee’s Term of Reference.

Councillor Watts requested that if possible the report dovetail the presentation from the Province.

In response to a question of clarification from the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Councillor Watts advised that she was looking for an update from staff on what is currently being done; what staff are hearing as a result of the Regional Plan review process, and identifying things that staff have learned as well.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

9. ADDED ITEMS:

10. IN CAMERA:

MOVED by Councillor McCluskey, seconded by Councillor Watts that the Committee convene In Camera. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE – August 8, 2013

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned 3:06 p.m.

Sheilagh Edmonds
Legislative Assistant