

Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee
March 6, 2014

TO: Chair and Members of Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed
Jane Fraser, Director, Planning & Infrastructure

DATE: February 17, 2014

SUBJECT: Mandate – Regional Watersheds Advisory Board

ORIGIN

Motion of the Regional Watersheds Advisory Board, January 8, 2014, and Environment Sustainable Standing Committee Item 7.3.1, February 6, 2014.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Terms of Reference for the Regional Watershed Advisory Board.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that there be no changes made to the Terms of Reference for the Regional Watershed Advisory Board.

BACKGROUND

On January 8, 2014, at the Regional Watersheds Advisory Board, the board discussed a desire to increase the mandate and authority from Regional Council. A number of potential activities were discussed until the following motion was approved.

The Regional Watersheds Advisory Board recommends that the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee:

1. Direct Staff to seek earlier input from Regional Watersheds Advisory Board with regard to watershed studies; and
2. Authorize the Regional Watersheds Advisory Board to review and comment on Regional Plan 206 Policy E-17 for consideration in future watershed studies.

DISCUSSION

Watershed Studies engagement with RWAB:

There are two current watershed studies in front of RWAB (Porters Lake and Tantallon), which were initiated under the previous governance framework including different community councils and watershed advisory boards. The Board has asked to be engaged earlier, in future watershed studies.

Staff will use the new RWAB as follows with respect to watershed studies:

- Review draft solicitation terms of reference for input prior to solicitation;
- Review consultants work mid-term; and
- Review final draft, prior to final study submission to staff for input (which staff will prepare the recommendation to the appropriate Community Council).

This will ensure that the board is aware of and can contribute their subject matter expertise to watersheds studies undertaken by the municipality, as per Regional Plan Policy E-17 (which has specific requirements for the study). Historically, prior to adoption of Regional Plan, the terms of reference for watershed studies were completed on an ad hoc basis and advised by the respective watershed advisory board. Now, with an explicit policy instruction in Regional Plan, the terms of reference are clear and consistent. The opportunity to engage with the RWAB at mid-term, and prior to finalization, will be helpful to both the professional consultant and staff finalizing the recommendations.

Regional Plan Policy E-17:

Following the Public Consultation for RP+5 (the review of Regional Plan), the policy has remained (with the exception it is now numbered E-23) as follows:

Watershed or sub-watershed studies concerning natural watercourses shall be carried out prior to undertaking secondary planning processes in areas where new or additional development could adversely affect watercourses within the watershed. The studies, where appropriate, shall be designed to:

- (a) recommend measures to protect and manage quantity and quality of groundwater resources;
- (b) recommend water quality objectives for key receiving watercourses in the study area;
- (c) determine the amount of development and maximum inputs that receiving lakes and rivers can assimilate without exceeding the water quality objectives recommended for the lakes and rivers within the watershed;
- (d) determine the parameters to be attained or retained to achieve marine water quality objectives;
- (e) identify sources of contamination within the watershed;
- (f) identify remedial measures to improve fresh and marine water quality;
- (g) identify any areas around watercourses where increased flow from development could cause flood damage to properties or environmental damage, and estimate the maximum increase in flow from the area to be developed that would not cause damage to the areas identified;
- (h) recommend strategies to adapt HRM's stormwater management guidelines to achieve the water quality objectives set out under the watershed study;
- (i) recommend methods to reduce and mitigate loss of permeable surfaces, native plants and native soils, groundwater recharge areas, and other important environmental functions within the watershed, and create methods to reduce cut and fill and overall grading of development sites;
- (j) identify and recommend measures to protect and manage natural corridors and critical habitats for terrestrial and aquatic species, including species at risk;
- (k) identify appropriate riparian buffers for the watershed;
- (l) identify areas that are suitable and not suitable for development within the watershed;
- (m) recommend potential regulatory controls and management strategies to achieve the desired objectives; and
- (n) recommend a monitoring plan to assess if the specific water quality objectives for the watershed are being met.

The policy is explicit and there has been substantial opportunity for public input and engagement on Regional Plan. Reviewing Regional Plan policy is not the mandate of Regional Watershed Advisory Board and Regional Council has established a clear governance framework with respect to the review.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no identified impacts to the 2014 / 2015 Operating or Project Budgets.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Watershed studies include a requirement for public consultation, typically including a public information meeting at project launch and a meeting to review the findings of the study prior to finalization.

Regional Plan policy revisions undergo a substantial public consultation process.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

ALTERNATIVES

Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee may recommend to Regional Council a variety of potential mandate changes. This is not recommended.

ATTACHMENTS

None

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/index.html> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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