

COMMUNITY DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

December 19, 2012

PRESENT: Dale Godsoe, Chair
Fred Morley, Vice-Chair
Eric Burchill
William Book
Joanne Macrae
Gaynor Watson-Creed
Councillor Waye Mason
Councillor Lorelei Nicoll
Councillor Jennifer Watts

REGRETS: Geoff Leboutillier
Peter Moorhouse
Councillor Gloria McCluskey

STAFF: Jane Fraser, Director, Planning and Infrastructure
Austin French, Manager, Planning
Susan Corser, Project Co-ordinator
Richard Harvey, Interim Project Manager
Kasia Tota, Community Developer
Leticia Smillie, Cultural Planner
Sherryl Murphy, Deputy Clerk

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. Halifax Hall, City Hall.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – None

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

There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

The Chair noted that there had been a number of requests to present to the Committee over the last months. The Committee had agreed earlier in the process that it was premature to hear presentations and deferred a decision on whether or not it was appropriate to receive presentations. The Chair indicated she would be bringing these requests back to the Committee for consideration at a future meeting.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Supplementary Information on Proposed Policy Direction and Consultation (deferred from December 12, 2012)

The Committee considered the previously distributed document entitled 'Theme 1: HRM is Sustainable (Supplementary) led by Susan Corser. The Committee began with an individual review of whether community feedback regarding proposed policies 1.12 to 1.20.15 was in/out of scope with the RP+5 review.

With regard to community feedback related to item 1.12.4, Ms. Corser advised that staff was recommending that the Committee not expand the scope of RP+5 to cover this comment as it is considered under another HRM policy set.

Councillor Watts expressed concern that when Council recently reviewed the draft priorities presented by staff, there was very little consideration of environmental and energy issues. She indicated that she was apprehensive if these concerns are not embedded in the Regional Plan they will disappear.

Ms. Fraser, Director, Planning and Infrastructure, noted that the budget planning process will focus on Business Unit deliverables. For example, Solar City is a deliverable for Planning and Infrastructure but is being considered as a priority within Environment and Energy rather than in Planning.

A brief discussion ensued with Mr. Morley pointing out that in all the presentations on reductions in energy usage land use planning creates much greater savings than do all the other smaller projects.

Mr. French, Manager of Planning, suggested that key to strides in the area of environment and energy is a good energy management plan, transit oriented suburban policies, urban density and rural cluster policies. He went on to note that urban density will allow for District Energy projects. He cautioned that the scope of RP+5 must be carefully managed and pointed out that he did not believe that any member of the Committee wanted the Regional Plan to be judged against a single plan. Specific program management is not a Regional Plan mandate.

The Committee agreed with staff that the community feedback relative to 1.12.4 was out of scope. Continuing with the review the Committee agreed with staff's recommendation regarding community feedback relative to 1.12.5; 1.12.6; 1.12.7; 1.13.7; 1.13.8; 1.13.9; 1.13.10; 1.13.11; 1.13.12; 1.13.13.

With regard to community feedback on 1.20.15 from HRM Alliance regarding greenbelting, Mr. French advised that staff is not advocating greenbelting as a regulatory feature but rather as good community design which will become part of the Regional Planning Program.

In response to a question from Mr. Burchill, Mr. French confirmed that in some instances that community planning would impact the service boundary (e.g. Port Wallis Master Plan) and also consider connectivity between green areas within and outside the Port Wallis area.

A discussion regarding the definition of greenbelting ensued with Mr. French indicating that using community design tool allows for growth and green belting. The direction from Council was to use negotiation including density transfer negotiations to allow for full site development (go taller/cluster type housing) and provide for larger open spaces in perpetuity.

During discussion note was made that a swap of land; allowing greater density on another property, and gaining land for a park on a development site; or a purchase/sale of land solution to ensure a park, are all options which should be considered.

Councillor Watts indicated that she was in favour of options and insisted that greenbelting not be whitewashed. She went on to note that HRM's intent with greenbelting must be very clear. An open space type of development on properties may not be what residents consider greenbelting.

Mr. French indicated that staff's position is borne from the fact that the Regional Plan has a good strong green plan as it exists. Staff will be mindful of the Committee's concerns in this area.

A further discussion ensued with note being made that containment of development is one definition of greenbelting.

Councillor Watts requested information on all the development proposed/happening in HRM and in particular the smaller subdivisions being considered for the suburban/rural areas.

It was pointed out that Council has requested a staff report regarding greenbelting, which should come to this Committee for review prior to being forwarded to Council.

MOVED by Mr. Morley, seconded by Ms. Macrae that the Committee endorse the the staff recommendation on 1.20.15 to 1.20.20 and Additional Correspondence as presented in the document dated December 5, 2012 and entitled RP+5, Theme 1: HRM is SUSTAINABLE.

Mr. French indicated that when the Regional Plan is approved, it will contain a definition of green, brown and pavement and staff will begin to use greenbelting. He went on to explain that staff's opinion is that greenbelting is within communities rather than around HRM. He noted that the Urban Settlement Designation contains growth within the Plan. Given that the Plan contains a good control mechanism, staff's view of greenbelting is qualitative providing green space outside and inside rather than a belt of green around HRM in which no development occurs. The intent is that on site analysis will result in green belts, wedges, trails, corridors, etc. Mr. French indicated that staff envisions a system approach which includes the fundamentals of community design.

Mr. Book indicated that he did not believe that urban targets were not met because suburban and rural targets were exceeded, but rather that residents do not wish to or cannot afford to develop/live in the urban area. He went on to suggest that staff and the Committee need to turn their minds to incentives to urban living.

The Chair indicated that the concern is that development in suburban and rural areas not be incented and that tough containment is viewed as being required to ensure that urban targets are met.

Referring to outstanding issues, Councillor Watts asked if urban agriculture should be included in the RP+5 process.

Staff noted that small scale food production/community gardens are covered in the Regional Plan.

Councillor Watts asked if there was an opportunity to strengthen the existing policies with staff noting that this matter can be included on the policy recommendation checklist.

In response to a question from Mr. Morley regarding buffer zones for industrial and commercial zones, note was made that a staff report would be forthcoming on this matter.

5. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS

5.1 Correspondence - None

5.2 Petitions - None

5.3 Presentations - None

6. REPORTS

6.1 Staff

6.1.1 Culture and Heritage Properties (Supplementary Information)

A presentation entitled RP+5, Chapter 9, 'Placemaking through Culture' was distributed to the Committee.

Ms. Leticia Smilie, Cultural Planner, delivered the presentation as circulated. A copy of the presentation is on file.

Referring to the importance of culture and heritage, Mr. Book indicated he would not like to see policy which makes work in this area more difficult.

Councillor Mason asked if the community had been consulted with regard to the inclusion of this Chapter in the review. He stressed that the Cultural Liaison Committee should be established as soon as possible. He further noted that a future Cultural Plan should be more strategic and include an implementation plan.

Note was made that attention needs to be given to the establishment of Heritage Conservation Districts and a plan developed to ensure the necessary resources are available.

Mr. Morley suggested that staff should involve the Greater Halifax Arts Coalition as a partner in this process. He pointed out that the existing Cultural Plan is about heritage rather than the broad range of culture.

6.1.2 Centre Plan Project (incl. Centre Plan Phase 1)

A memo dated December 18, 2012 from Richard Harvey, Acting Urban Design Project Manager, was distributed to the Committee.

Mr. Harvey provided an overview of his memo. He outlined that there was a very strong indication that the Province was going to pass legislative amendments to the HRM Charter to allow for density bonusing and site plan approval in the fall sitting of the Legislature. However, this did not occur, with the amendments having been introduced but not passed. He stated that as a consequence of this, staff would be assessing how to best proceed with the Regional Centre Plan. He also highlighted possible issues with the legislation as it has been introduced. He responded to questions from members of the Committee. Mr. Harvey concluded by stating that if there are further questions, members should contact him.

6.2 Committee Members

6.2.1 Strategic Urban Partnership Meeting Update – Chair

The Chair provided a brief update of the most recent meeting of the Strategic Urban Partnership noting that the group had received presentations on affordable housing and the technical aspects of the Cogswell action plan.

7. ADDED ITEMS - None

8. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 16, 2012 in Halifax Hall, City Hall.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Sherryl Murphy
Deputy Clerk