

COMMUNITY DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

March 27, 2013

PRESENT: Ms. Dale Godsoe, Chair
Mr. Fred Morley, Vice Chair
Mr. Bill Book
Mr. Eric Burchill
Mr. Geoff LeBoutillier
Dr. Gaynor Watson-Creed
Ms. Joanne Macrae
Councillor Gloria McCluskey
Councillor Wayne Mason
Councillor Lorelei Nicoll
Councillor Jennifer Watts

REGRETS: Mr. Peter Moorhouse

STAFF: Mr. Austin French, Manager, Planning
Ms. Jane Fraser, Director, Planning and Infrastructure
Ms. Susan Corser, Project Co-ordinator
Ms. Sheilagh Edmonds, Legislative Assistant

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | |
|-------|---|---|
| 1. | CALL TO ORDER..... | 3 |
| 2. | APPROVAL OF MINUTES | 3 |
| 3. | APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS..... | 3 |
| 4. | BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES | 3 |
| 5. | CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS | 3 |
| 5.1 | Correspondence | 3 |
| 5.2 | Petitions..... | 3 |
| 5.3 | Presentations..... | 3 |
| 6. | REPORTS..... | 3 |
| 6.1 | Staff | 4 |
| 6.1.1 | Presentation – Business Location Study | 4 |
| 6.1.2 | Review of Draft Regional Plan | 5 |
| 7. | ADDED ITEMS | 7 |
| 9. | NEXT MEETING DATE | 8 |
| 10. | ADJOURNMENT | 8 |

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 11:40 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – February 18, 2013, February 25, 2013, and March 6, 2013

MOVED by Mr. LeBoutillier, seconded by Dr. Watson-Creed that the minutes of February 18, 2013, February 25, 2013, and March 6, 2013 be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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 after the agenda was published, several submissions were received and these would be noted under item 5.1, Correspondence.

MOVED by Mr. Burchill, seconded by Mr. Book that the agenda be approved as presented. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES: None

5. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS

5.1 Correspondence

Submissions were received from the following:

- Valerie Payne, President and CEO, Halifax Chamber of Commerce, dated March 25, 2013
- Jen Powley, Coordinator, OURHRM Alliance, dated March 26, 2013
- Dr. Hugh Millward, dated March 20, 2013
- Phil Pacey, Heritage Trust, dated March 19, 2013
- Kathleen J. Hall, William's Lake Conservation Company
- OURHRM Alliance, received in the Municipal Clerk's Office dated March 18, 2013

5.2 Petitions: None

5.3 Presentations: None

6. REPORTS

6.1 Staff

6.1.1 Presentation – Business Location Study

Mr. Andre MacNeil, Senior Financial Consultant, and Mr. Mark Butler, representing the Ecology Action Centre provided presentation to the Committee entitled Business Location Study, which looked at why HRM businesses chose to locate where they did. Mr. MacNeil explained that the Altus Group was hired by HRM to talk to business owners, managers and developers about the reasons for choosing the locations they did. When the study was completed the Strategic Urban Partnership created a sub-committee to review the findings.

Mr. MacNeil explained that the study will be used to identify potential effects on the Regional Centre development activity of infrastructure and service improvements, better development policies, and/or financial and tax incentives. And it will identify relevant tools in use by other cities, and best to improve the business climate in HRM.

Councillor Nicoll entered the meeting at 11:46 a.m.

Mr. MacNeil advised that the study was broken into two phases. Phase 1 dealt with identifying the factors influencing the location decisions of business owners and managers in HRM, particularly in the office and retail sectors and identifying the recent movement growth and/or decline in businesses in:

- Downtown Halifax
- Downtown Dartmouth
- Other parts of the Regional Centre

Phase II of the study dealt with:

- Relevant initiatives to address the important factors identified in Phase I and recommendations for further study.
- Recommendations on possible changes to commercial taxation that could lead to increased economic activity and vibrancy within the Regional Center, for further discussion by the SUP and used by the RP+5 Project.

Mr. MacNeil reviewed the key factors as to why office businesses and retail businesses located in the downtown and in the suburbs, and concluded that commercial tax is a factor in the decision-making when it comes to location, however, taxes are not a top factor in the decision. And that tax incentives may be part of a suite of initiatives within HRM's control. He advised that the Altus findings did not recommend using tax incentives to boost the downtown but rather they recommended providing residential tax incentives and create residential opportunities in the downtown, and the commercial businesses would then follow. In addition, the study recommended improving transportation and parking, and for increased investment in the downtown also.

The Chair thanked Mr. MacNeil and Mr. Butler for their presentation and a discussion ensued with Mr. MacNeil and Mr. Butler responding to questions.

Ms. Macrea entered the meeting at 12:38 p.m.

6.1.2 Review of Draft Regional Plan

The Chair addressed the Committee advising that at the last meeting, members expressed concern over the readiness of the Draft Regional Plan, and that many felt it needed more than just some minor revisions before it was ready to go out for public consultation. The Chair added that today she would like to go around the table, and have each Committee member present their view on what is missing in the Draft Plan. Prior to this she advised that Ms. Fraser, Director of Planning and Infrastructure would like to speak to the issue.

Ms. Fraser thanked the Committee members and staff for the hard work they've put in to this point. She added that she would like to have a discussion of what the large policy issues are and how the Committee and staff can move forward. She pointed out that the Draft Plan is focused on the 10 policy areas that Regional Council directed staff to look at, and that the Plan will be a document that provides policy direction, and not implementation; but it will be the document that will allow implementation to happen, and this will be done by another group.

A round-table discussion was held with the Committee members providing their comments/concerns with the Draft Plan as follows:

Mr. Book advised that he felt the document in this first draft has clarified the policies. He made reference to the submission by Dr. Millward, noting that he had been a member of the Committee which worked on the original Plan, and advised that Mr. Millward had provided good input, which was meaningful, but did not delve into fine details.

Mr. Morley suggested that some of the language and tone used in the Draft Plan should be more positive. He cited '*restraining growth*' as one example of language that should be turned around to be more positive. Mr. Morley also pointed out that when there were any amendments proposed to the original Regional Plan, the Regional Plan Committee had a check list which would provide the Committee the information on implications of the amendment. So when any amendment was recommended, the Regional Plan Committee and, subsequently, Regional Council would have a full understanding of the implications of the change. He suggested that the Draft Plan should also have something similar to this former checklist. Mr. Morley advised that he also felt more work needed to be done around the measurement side of things. Lastly, Mr. Morley noted there were areas in the document that contained factual errors.

Councillor Watts advised that she did not think the document was where it should be in terms of larger policy. She added that there are specific thing she would like to see in

the document and in her past experience, if it is not embedded in the Plan, it won't get done. She cited her concern with the Draft Plan was in regard to energy issues—corporate and community; transportation; and housing.

Councillor McCluskey advised that she found the original Regional Plan document to be too wordy. She noted that the Plan will affect everyone directly or indirectly and suggested that the longer it takes to get this Draft Plan approved, more things may happen which the Municipality will have no control over. With regard to implementing incentives, she advised that it was important to find out if they will work before proceeding with them. Councillor McCluskey expressed concern that the Draft Plan did not make any reference to the Metro Transit Ferries.

Ms. Macrae indicated that she found the overall language and tone of the document was a bit broad and in some cases it could create more confusion than provide clarity.

Mr. Burchill explained that in reviewing the Draft Plan he did not get a sense that it will produce the change he thinks is required. He added that he doesn't think it is aligned with the original objectives and that his suggestion was for staff to be more bold in the language they use in the Draft. In particular, he referred to the impact of growth boundaries, transportation, and settlement patterns.

Mr. Book noted that at the very outset, the Committee talked about definitions and that whatever terms were to be in the Plan, there needed to be consistency with these terms throughout the Plan.

Councillor Mason advised that his main issue with the Draft Plan was also with the language, and that he felt the language and tone in the document needs to be more bold and challenging. He also pointed out that the website needs to be updated to outline the process for the public.

Dr. Watson-Creed advised that her concerns were with regard to the content of the document that impacts on health, and secondly, with the coherence of the document. She explained that she felt the Committee discussed bolder directions but these were not reflected in the Plan. For example, she noted that there were areas which went from 'will' to 'may consider'. She also suggested that there is a need to tighten up the language required that will clearly articulate to the public the policy statement and how it will be attained. With regard to specific chapters that require strengthening she advised that Environment, Housing, and Energy need further work. Dr. Watson-Creed also made reference to the comment on Healthy Communities in Chapter 3 and suggested that this should be turned into an introductory statement or removed.

Mr. LeBoutillier referred to the submitted letter from Dr. Millword and advised that there is a fundamental misunderstanding of what a Greenbelt is and the power that Greenbelting can have. He added that in the document Greenbelting has to 'have teeth', but that it isn't there yet.

Ms. Godsoe stepped down from the Chair to provide her comments. She advised that she did not think there was enough alignment across the Plan on strengthening the Regional Centre and that she didn't feel the chapters worked across the Plan coherently.

Ms. Fraser addressed the Committee and advised that the discussion has been very helpful for her in determining the issues. She added that the common themes she heard were:

- with a 25 year plan, there is a need to hear how it will be achieved;
- issues with the transportation chapter;
- the document needs to use more positive, but bold and visionary language.

Ms. Fraser explained that there is a lot of stakeholder consultation yet to be done, and staff will look at providing clarity on the website. With regard to Metrics, and the process around the workplan she advised that staff is working on this but the reason it is not in the document at this time is that it will change and that it will be appended to staff report when it goes to Regional Council. Ms. Fraser advised that she would like an opportunity to take all this information away and think it through and then come back to the Committee at the next meeting.

Mr. French expressed concern about hearing a comment that a check-list was needed with the document. He explained that the fact sheets staff prepared were designed around the idea of a check-list, and staff thought this was satisfactory. With regard to comments on using words in the document such as, 'shall' and 'may', he noted that staff was conscious of those words when writing the document because, legally, there are implications for the Municipality in using those words.

Councillor Watts indicated that before the document goes out for public consultation, all Councillors need to have an understanding of the process.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Mason that the Community Design Advisory Committee provide an update to the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee on the current process for RP+5. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

A discussion ensued as to the Committee's next step. Ms. Fraser explained that staff needs clearer articulation of what the Committee feels is missing from the Draft Plan and once they have an understanding of what the gaps are, staff will then see whether they are in scope or not. She added that Regional Council has provided direction on the policy issues and this is what staff is required to follow. She advised that it would be helpful if at the next meeting, each Committee member had a clear articulation of what they see is missing in the document. Ms. Fraser point out that the Committee can then have a full discussion and by way of a motion provide clear direction to staff.

7. ADDED ITEMS: None

9. NEXT MEETING DATE – April 3, 2013

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2:02 p.m.

Sheilagh Edmonds
Legislative Assistant