



**COMMUNITY DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
November 25, 2015**

PRESENT: Fred Morley Chair
Gaynor Watson-Creed
Dale Godsoe
Councillor Wayne Mason
Councillor Gloria McCluskey
Councillor Jennifer Watts
William Book

REGRETS: Joanne Macrae
Councillor Brad Johns
Peter Moorhouse
Eric Burchill

STAFF: Jacob Ritchie, Manager, Urban Design
Sherryl Murphy, Deputy Clerk
Elikem Tsamenyi, Legislative Support

The following does not represent a verbatim record of the proceedings of this meeting.

The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to Community Design Advisory Committee are available online: <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/CDACAgenda151125.php>

The meeting was called to order at 11:43 a.m. and the Committee adjourned at 1: 32 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 11:43 am.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – October, 25, 2015

MOVED by Councillor Watts seconded by **Councillor McCluskey** that the minutes of the Oct 25, 2015 meeting of the Community Design Advisory Committee are approved as distributed. **MOTION PUT AND PASSED**

3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS - NONE

MOVED by Councillor McCluskey, seconded by **Ms. Godsoe**, that the agenda be approved as distributed.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS-NONE

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS

6.1 Correspondence-None

6.2 Petitions-None

6.3 Presentation-None

7. REPORTS

7.1 Members:

7.1.1 School Review: Councillor Watts wanted to bring to everyone's attention, that there was going to be a review for five out of the six public schools within the North End area of Halifax on the evening of November 25th, 2015. The review will take a year to complete, with questions being asked about its connection to the Centre Plan. This review involves principals of all the schools and are required (per the provincial rules) to have some sort of public consultation/engagement within the process. The biggest concern with this is how it all fits into the Centre Plan and whether there has been any collaboration with HRSP on this issue. Mr. Ritchie noted that there has been some collaboration in terms of data sharing and discussions between HRM staff and HRSP. Even though the Planning Department has not been at these meetings consistently in the past, they will be present at these discussions in future. Mr. Ritchie also noted that there would be presentations to the School Board on the Centre Plan and Regional Plan on December 2nd. The presentation will also make them aware of other HRM plans, going forward. The aim is to deepen collaboration on all fronts.

7.1.2 Membership: Councillor Mason raised the issue of members who have been absent from CDAC meetings for more than five times, which may be an indication that they no longer want to serve on the committee. He therefore thought it would be appropriate to consider sending them off and showing the committee's appreciation for their time and service.

7.1.3 Heritage Properties: There have been proposals for the Heritage act currently in the amendments stage. This is a Provincial act that regulates all Heritage Properties. One of the big changes of the act relates to demolition. Currently, all requests for demolition are to go through the regional councils. If permission is granted, demolition is done right away, if denied, the developer has to wait for three years in order to go ahead with demolition. An amendment has been made to this legislation which

now includes all conservative districts, thereby taking away the added protection for these conservative districts. Thus, the HRM will no longer have context specific demolition procedures, but rather default to what everyone else is supposed to do, per this new act. The second big change is that a third condition has been added to the criteria for de-registering a Heritage property. This third criterion has to do with if a developer is experiencing financial hardship. This is not clearly defined in the act. All these changes have the potential for unintended consequences for preserving Heritage properties going forward. Thus, the new regulations may weaken the Regional Council's ability to protect conservative districts.

7.1.4 Shape Your City Portal: Mr. Ritchie gave an update on the shape your city portal. This site is now live and is used to solicit public input on ongoing projects/programs. Currently, residents are being invited to provide their view on the Centre Plan. The site provides an overview of the plan and gives readers a chance to provide comments and discussion points. Thus, the online forum is now up and running and is used to solicit views on what people think about the guiding principles of the Centre Plan and other projects.

7.2 STAFF

7.2.1 Density Bonusing Study: Report to CDAC

The following was before the Committee:

- A presentation entitled Density Bonusing Study

A study on density bonusing was presented to the committee by Mr. Ritchie. He briefly described Density bonusing as an increase in built area in exchange for public amenities. The advantages are numerous, and if done right, lead to an improvement upon the proper planning and design of neighbourhoods. Thus, having the right density makes for a complete community where people can walk or bike to work, with businesses flourishing due to the proximity density brings. It also promotes communities where active living becomes more viable.

This study was aimed at finding answers to four fundamental questions; 1. Does density bonusing as a planning tool provides the best value to the municipality; 2. What lessons can we learn from other cities' successes and challenges with density bonusing; 3. How can the tool be improved to achieve the best value? and 4. How can density bonusing be expanded and implemented within the Centre Plan.

Thus, density bonusing study helps set the stage for the Centre Plan while informing updates to the Downtown plan. Mr. Ritchie notes that this particular report is more than a background study and could be considered as making policy recommendations. Density Bonusing specifically therefore helps inform some components of the Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy including; identification of issues, policies, implementation plans, communications and modernization plans. The unique strategy with this study is that, the consultants dug into a number of cities' policies and came up with salient points of reference to guide their recommendations for HRM.

According to Mr. Ritchie, ever since the program was introduced, 24 development projects have been reviewed by the Design Review Committee, with 13 projects eligible to receive added height (density) in exchange for public benefit. Five of the 13 projects eligible for a height (density) increase were for façade improvements, renovations or small additions and so did not require a bonus zoning agreement. Of the remaining nine projects eligible for a height (density) increase, only one project (Citadel Inn) did not apply to achieve the extra height. This according to Mr. Ritchie implies that HRM has set its density heights quite right.

Additionally, there are a number of existing projects under review currently, including the Halifax Central Library, TD Bank on Barrington, Mary Ann on Queen Street, amongst others, with a number of anticipated benefits to the municipality. In total, 2 projects will facilitate the enhancement or protection of heritage

resources, 2 more projects will provide public parking facilities, 2 other projects will provide publicly accessible spaces or amenities and 4 projects will provide exemplary sustainable building practices.

The report made a number of recommendations that fall under Culture, Capacity, and Communication (a culture of being able to talk about development performance is important), Density Bonusing System Approach – Downtown Plan Area and Centre Plan(keep the system in the downtown area with a flat rate and raise the heights a bit in some areas), Streamlining the System Approvals (when done right, this will be a standard for all future development), Choosing Public Benefits- What Public Benefits are Achievable (Recognising those benefits that can be achievable with future trends in mind), and Setting Base Densities properly/right.

Questions about how little the benefits from density bonusing have been so far, were raised by Councillors McCluskey and Watts, to which Mr. Ritchie responded that in the six years of the program, there have been some added benefits (as enumerated above), and so it can only get better as time goes on. There have also been increases in taxes to the city as a result of increased density.

Councillor Watts wondered if all these recommendations would be incorporated into the larger discussions around the Centre Plan. She raised the issues about family friendly housing for instance and hoped such issues are incorporated into the bigger discussions. In response, Mr. Ritchie noted that these issues and recommendations can be incorporated into the Centre Plan in consultation with the communities involved. He believes that this study, including others like it, will become part of the work plan that staff can work with going forward.

Councillor McCluskey on her part believes that residents would be looking for greater benefits from these big buildings. She also raised the issue of having some type of affordable housing within the density bonusing (which according to her has not been raised in the discussions). Mr. Ritchie noted that this was still part of the plan in other areas except in the Downtown area. However, this is still an option in the downtown area. Mr. Ritchie also indicated that density bonusing might not be the best tool for providing affordable housing. According to him, the best tool would be inclusionary zoning.. Councillor McCluskey also wondered if nursing homes (in need of extra spaces) would be able to expand on their buildings with this project. Mr. Ritchie noted there are conversations currently on-going with some nursing homes and once that becomes an issue, it will be incorporated into the plan.

Ms Watson-Creed praised the report and believes it will be absolutely useful for individuals interested in development and planning issues in the Municipality. Ms Godsoe wondered if the benefits to density bonusing and the entire report can be made available to the public even before it is approved. Mr. Ritchie believes this can be done so as to make remove any ambiguities in relation to development within the municipality.

8. ADDED ITEMS

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Community Design Advisory Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, December 16, 2015, from 11:30 – 1:30 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 1:32 pm

Elikem Tsamenyi
Legislative Support