

Chapter 8. Municipal Water Services, Utilities and Solid Waste – written submissions up to July 5, 2013

PROPOSED POLICY CHANGE	SUBMISSION	REF#	COMMUNITY FEEDBACK	STAFF RESPONSE (no response indicated means Staff believe the proposed Regional Plan addresses this adequately or has been previously addressed.)	CDAC Direction
8.2 Infrastructure Charges	Rhineland, A.		In light of our failure to meet even the more modest current growth targets I strongly support following the lead of other Canadian cities (e.g. Toronto and Victoria) and charging developers \$50,000-60,000 per suburban lot to help create incentives to build in the urban core.	The Halifax Charter only permits growth-related charges to be applied to the CCC program.	
	Plache, B.		I am also in support of focusing suburban growth on areas already serviced by sewer and water, as well as giving consideration to nearby infrastructure (schools, police and fire stations, shopping, services) to increase the use made of existing infrastructure, thereby reducing costs that would pile up if such infrastructures had to be put in place (and the cost would be borne by the general tax base, not by the new development). - Alternatively, charge the infrastructure cost to the new development.	The RMPS urban Settlement Designation and Service Boundary are HRM's primary growth management tools. The Halifax Charter only permits growth-related charges to be applied to the CCC program.	
8.7.1 Electrical and Telecommunication Lines (Underground Wiring)	Urban Development Institute		<u>Higher maintenance costs:</u> Expensive & time consuming esp. during winter months. Factors affecting service reliability.	Staff recommend a revised approach to Policy SU-23 which would require undergrounding of "secondary" services as a first step. Policy intent would also include "primary services in the future." HRM supports the concept of common trench design standard.	
			<u>Energy Savings and Tree Retention:</u> This is predominant in areas where trees provide cooling and is not really a deciding factor in HRM where we consume more resources to heat than cool. We do, however, support the increase of trees in HRM and feel there are many other ways to achieve this increase.		
			<u>Costing assumptions:</u> Costs of underground servicing are not accurate.		
			<u>Design consensus between utilities:</u> There does not appear to be an agreement in place between the various utilities. Without this agreement any cost estimation is flawed.		
			<u>Joint trench methodology saves 50%:</u> Gas service is still sporadic throughout HRM and electric heat pumps continue to dominate new construction. Based on these facts the full cost of the trenching and connection will fall on the provision of those services.		
			<u>Equating underground services with increase in property value and realty tax base:</u> The resulting benefit to HRM of an increased realty tax base due to the extra, unnecessary, and imposed costs forced upon new homeowners is not justification for underground wiring to be mandated.		

		<p><u>Aesthetic elements of underground wiring:</u> Photo examples of underground wiring show subdivisions which have not only underground wiring but also expensive light standards. Installing a typical “streetlight”, even if it has underground power running to it, would not result in much of an aesthetic improvement.</p>	
		<p><u>Impacts of mandatory underground wiring on housing affordability:</u> Increase in the cost to consumers.</p>	
Polycorp		<p>We are catering to a “luxury” market in our developments.</p>	
		<p>I am very concerned that HRM is increasing the cost of development to the point that the development engine is going to be strangled by development costs.</p>	
		<p>I am very concerned about the cumulative effect that the cost-increasing HRM development policies is having on housing affordability in general; and as a right-wing environmentalist, on green house gas emissions from long-range commuter traffic.</p>	
		<p><u>The assumption that underground services are maintenance free is false:</u> Throughout all discussions and analysis, it is assumed that underground services are completely trouble-free....which is clearly not accurate, and which some HRM staff know is not true. We (Polycorp) recently applied to HRM to install some ornamental street lighting adjacent to a new development and it was rejected because “those underground wired light fixtures are too expensive to maintain”, according to the street light department at HRM. This needs to be communicated internally within HRM as I should not need to be the one to communicate it from one HRM department to another.</p>	
		<p><u>The assumption that underground wiring will improve service in new subdivisions is false:</u> No evidence is provided to suggest that there are any service interruption problems in existing newer subdivisions that follow current industry practices for aerial based utility installation.</p>	
		<p><u>Costing Flawed:</u> the studies appear to systematically ignore the additional incremental costs for the provision of additional trenching from the street line to the house, the subsequent shifting of costs onto the house builder from the utility, and the extra electrical contractor costs at the house. Additional landscaping costs to camouflage URD boxes, pull-pits and pedestals have been completely ignored in all cases.</p>	
		<p>Design parameters not agreed/no consensus on design.</p>	
		<p><u>“Grasping at Straws” type analysis criteria:</u> any analysis that discusses “increasing the tax base” and “increasing property value” shows that the report writer is grasping at straws to find justification for the project. To say that HRM should implement underground wiring because it will increase property tax base and yield higher property values is simply absurd.</p>	

		<p><u>Costing and Impact on Affordability and Settlement patterns:</u> The introduction of a mandatory underground wiring practice will add another \$10,000 to \$15,000 plus 15% HST to the cost of a new home at a time when “housing affordability” is a hot topic amongst many, many people. Many people simply cannot afford incremental luxury costs like this and it will drive settlement into areas where there is not such a policy, on the fringes of HRM, and to adjoining counties.</p>		
		<p><u>Flawed approach by Staff:</u> The biggest problem in this entire exercise is the attitude and approach by staff. It is hard to believe that simplistic personal views are shaping and perpetuating this entire discussion.</p>		
		<p><u>Energy Savings and Tree Retention/Population analysis is flawed:</u> if HRM wants more trees within the street line, or close to it, there are other easier, more cost effective, ways to achieve this goal than using it as a justification for undergrounding of electrical and communication services.</p>		
Undergrounding		<p><u>Equating underground services with increase in property value and realty tax base:</u> I think it is important to clarify to HRM staff that there is a difference between “underground wiring” and “underground wiring plus expensive, ornate street lights (which require yet another separate trench).</p>		
	Heritage Gas	<p>Mandatory undergrounding should be considered cautiously until design, cost-sharing model, and maintenance procedures can be agreed to by all utilities</p>		
8.7 Utilities	Spryfield Residents Association	<p>pg. 91) 8.7 Utilities Whenever possible, antenna and telecommunication towers should be placed on top of buildings rather than on higher towers in natural areas.</p>		
8.6.3 Private Wells	Creighton, M.	<p>Page 91 Policy SU-22 This policy is strongly supported. It is suggested that the pre-amble be expanded to include all private wells, not just those in rural areas.</p> <p>It is recommended that policy SU-22 be expanded to include all private wells in any district of HRM</p>		

<p>8.6.2 On-site sewage disposal systems</p>	<p>Lund, P. (through NWCC)</p>	<p>Regarding policy SU-21: Halifax Water has no desire to take over a Wastewater Management District nor is there any legal means to make Halifax Water to take it over.</p> <p>Halifax Watershed Advisory Committee are going to be tasked with looking at criteria around storm water management and lot grading bylaws. HRM should get the Watershed board to be involved in what the status from the Wastewater management districts. SU -21 should be put in the hands of the Halifax Watershed Advisory Committee because it's all interrelated and it might be helpful for Community Council and Regional Council to have it reviewed by the Watershed advisory Committee and provide their comments to Community Councils and Regional Council in advance of the first reading of the Regional Plan in the fall.</p>		
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