



**OLD SOUTH SUBURB HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
STAKEHOLDER STEERING COMMITTEE
MINUTES
June 17, 2015**

PRESENT: Ms. Heather MacDonald
Ms. Pascale van der Leest
Ms. Elizabeth Pacey
Ms. Aurora Camaño
Ms. Kerry Gosse

REGRETS: Mr. Brian Vallis
Mr. John Lawen

STAFF: Mr. Seamus McGreal, Heritage Planner
Ms. Angela MacIsaac, Secretary II

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

Supporting documents and information items circulated to the Old South Suburb HCD Stakeholder Steering Committee are available online: <http://shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/old-south-suburb>.

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m. and adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m. in the Media Room, City Hall.

MEETING OVERVIEW

Mr. Seamus McGreal explained that this meeting is the first step in the community engagement phase of the project to designate the Old South Suburb as a Heritage Conservation District. He then presented the agenda for the meeting.

INTRODUCTIONS

Committee members introduced themselves and discussed some of their concerns and aspirations for the Old South Suburb Heritage Conservation District.

Ms. Pascale van der Leest discussed her experience working with Parks Canada and with global and international policy getting youth involved in heritage and nature. She explained that she was raised in the south end of Halifax near Dalhousie University and is excited about the proposed Heritage Conservation District in the Old South Suburb. She is happy to hear that the Committee will be involved in community engagement activities and with the walking tours in particular.

Ms. Heather MacDonald discussed her experience as a realtor with an office in the Old South Suburb. She is interested in urban density, getting more people living in the downtown, maintaining the heritage while keeping with modern day standards. She is excited to be part of the development of the Heritage Conservation District. She believes that building a connection to heritage while allowing for growth is important.

Ms. Kerry Gosse discussed her experience as an architect with Stantec representing the NS Association of Architects which owns a building in the Old South Suburb. She lived in the south end of Halifax and is interested in heritage preservation. She was a representative on a variety of downtown initiatives in St. John's Newfoundland relating to heritage areas including the Battery and Quidi Vidi. She has seen the issues that have come out of previous heritage initiatives so she is interested in providing insight into issues and problems that have arisen in these other areas.

Ms. Aurora Camaño discussed her background in archaeology. She completed a master's degree in Newcastle in the UK and would like to see heritage initiatives in Halifax that are similar to the heritage initiatives in Newcastle. She would like to see a balance between heritage conservation and new development while maintaining the integrity of the area.

Ms. Elizabeth Pacey explained that she is representing the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia with a mandate to preserve and save heritage buildings. It is the oldest provincial heritage group in Canada. Halifax is one of the most important heritage areas in Canada with important historic buildings to the province but also to the country of Canada. She is very concerned that new development will overwhelm and erase historic buildings.

Mr. Seamus McGreal explained that he is exciting for Halifax. There are many heritage initiatives underway exploring the potential for cultural landscapes and the establishment of two heritage conservation districts. The process to establish the Old South Suburb Heritage Conservation District can be used as a model for the establishment of future heritage conservation districts throughout the region.

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

Ms. Pascale van der Leest volunteered to serve as Committee Chair and Ms. Kerry Gosse volunteered as Vice-Chair of the Committee. Both were appointed by the Committee in the respective roles.

PRESENTATION: BACKGROUND STUDY AND ONLINE SURVEY

Mr. McGreal presented an overview of background study for the Old South Suburb. He explained that the reason for establishing heritage conservation measures in the Old South Suburb is based on its significance as identified in the Statement of Significance. The Barrington Street South area has witnessed the loss of many of its historic buildings which has resulted in several large empty spaces throughout the area. However, there is also a high concentration of registered and non-registered properties with heritage value in the area together with a continued pressure for development. Existing policy and regulations, pertaining to this area, are insufficient in protecting and conserving the heritage values and character defining elements of the district. Therefore, conservation measures are required to supplement and amend the existing legislation.

Mr. McGreal then presented the draft online survey which addresses the core issues facing the proposed Old South Suburb Heritage Conservation District. He explained that the survey will be published two week prior to the first public meeting. The Committee then discussed some of the core issues concerning the District and the survey in particular.

Ms. Pacey requested more time to review the survey before it is published. Mr. McGreal explained that Committee members can submit changes to the survey and that he will revise based on feedback and recirculate the survey to the Committee. Ms. Pacey suggested that materials should be available to promote the heritage value of the District as opposed to presenting difficult issues like demolition control early in the survey.

Ms. Gosse expressed concern that the survey may not get out to the people who live and work within the District itself. Ms. Gosse suggested that these are key stakeholders and a mail out to households in the area would be valuable. She suggested sending out a letter with a link to the survey and notice of the date of the public meeting. Ms. Gosse suggested that a public meeting date on Wednesday, July 15, would be more appropriate than Thursday, July 16, because more people are likely to attend on a Wednesday.

Ms. van der Leest suggested changing the order of the questions in the survey without overloading it with information. She also suggested that the mail out should include a link to the online survey, not the survey itself.

Ms. McGreal indicated that he will work with HRM Corporate Communications to promote the survey and public meeting.

PRESENTATION: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Mr. McGreal presented the draft Community Engagement Strategy. The Committee then discussed how its members will participate in community engagement activities throughout the process and at the Public Meeting in particular. Mr. McGreal will establish a format for the public meeting then communicate with members over email to explain how they can help facilitate the meeting. He explained that Committee members can likely take notes on flip chart during a breakout session and help people to participate in a “dotmocracy” activity in which participants vote on the future design of the District by placing dot stickers on six panels illustrating different design scenarios for the District.

Ms. Gosse suggested that visuals are very important to communicate ideas and the visuals in the survey ensure that it is not too text heavy. She explained that public notices did not get the desired input from the public in her previous experience with establishing heritage areas. However, a mail-out worked best to get the attention of people. There is a concern that you can go through an entire process without getting the right information or buy-in from the public if the engagement is not done right. She explained that the public meeting may not get the processes off to a good start if the right questions are not raised.

Ms. Pacey is very interested in the walking tours and suggested that a survey or feedback sheet could be completed by participants at a meet and greet after the tours. Mr. McGreal suggested that a brainstorming session may be more appropriate than individual surveys after the tours because it is more of an opportunity for people to share in a discussion about the area. Ms. Pacey suggested that discussing opinions about the future of the area will be ideal after walking and discussing the heritage of the area.

Ms. MacDonald commented that she was not engaged in the survey as it is now. The language or layout is not accessible to people who are not already knowledgeable of municipal policies and procedures. She suggested that the survey could be divided into two sections to make it shorter and more easily understood. Ms. Gosse added that the survey now reads as a City Hall document which might deter people.

Mr. McGreal explained that the survey will be redrafted to make the language more accessible and to tell a story about the importance of the place framing the questions to ask for opinions. Incentives, streetscape improvements and other positive features of a potential District will also be highlighted in the survey. Ms. MacDonald suggested that the sections relating to visual consistency in the District could be removed from the survey completely and the public meeting “dotmocracy” activity can be used to address this issue along with other more contentious issues. However, some contentious issues should be introduced in the survey, such as demolition control, to spark interest in the process and get people out to the public meeting for further discussion.

Ms. van der Leest suggested using the Central Library to hold the public meeting. Mr. McGreal had planned on using the Library for the meeting. Also, the public meeting should inform people that more community engagement activities will take place and there will be future opportunities to share opinions before any policy is drafted. The types of future engagement activities will also be discussed at the public meeting and in more detail at the second Stakeholder Committee meeting. Mr. McGreal explained that the Committee will also review a summary of the results of the public meeting and online survey at its second meeting.

SET DATE FOR PUBLIC MEETING #1

The Committee agreed to set the date for the first public meeting for Wednesday, July 15th, 2015.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Angela MacIsaac
Secretary II