



**SCHMIDTVILLE HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
STAKEHOLDER STEERING COMMITTEE
MINUTES
July 29, 2015**

PRESENT: Mr. William Breckenridge
Ms. Kristina Chapman
Mr. Larry Haiven
Mr. Benjamin LeBlanc
Ms. Beverly Miller
Ms. Janet Morris
Mr. Lyndon Watkins

REGRETS: Ms. Mary E. Donovan

STAFF: Mr. Seamus McGreal, Heritage Planner, Halifax Regional Municipality
Ms. Kimberly Cooke, Administrative Assistant, Adecco

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

Supporting documents and information items are available online:

<http://shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/schmidtville>.

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. and adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. in the Spencer House.

MEETING OVERVIEW

Mr. Seamus McGreal explained the meeting objectives which include a review of the background study and process to establish a Heritage Conservation District, a review of the draft online survey and community engagement strategy, appointment of chair and vice-chair and selection of the date for the first public meeting.

INTRODUCTIONS

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

Mr. Benjamin LeBlanc is supportive of the initiative to designate Schmidville as a Heritage Conservation District. He explained that he is here to listen to the community members as a representative of the Heritage Advisory Committee.

Ms. Kristina Chapman is a long term tenant in the neighbourhood. She would like to see the neighbourhood character preserved and supports the protection of historic properties. She is also concerned with new development in the area such as condos and apartment buildings and their impact on the area.

Mr. Larry Haven is a founding member of the Friends of Schmidville. He is glad that this project is underway after many years of asking for it. He hopes that many community voices are included in the process.

Ms. Janet Morris is a member of the Heritage Advisory Committee with an interest in the area. She is also a home owner of several heritage properties, one of which is just north of Schmidville. She is concerned with future development in this area to the north of Spring Garden Road. She mentioned that grant programs should support fire prevention measures such as firewalls in townhouses.

Mr. Lyndon Watkins has lived in Schmidville for over 40 years. He expresses his discontent with the pervious demolition of heritage houses in Schmidville to make way for parking south of Spring Garden Road. He is skeptical of the process that we are now getting engaged in. However, he is hopeful and wishes for success. He is not happy with the boundaries of Schmidville because they should extend to South Street and include the area to the north of Spring Garden Road. He wants to see a living and changing neighbourhood that respects the heritage character. The new building on Clyde Street does not reflect the Halifax context and similar buildings can be found anywhere. He fears that Schmidville will become a ghetto in the city with new development surrounding it and eventually it will be lost due to development pressure. He believes that the NSLC property could have a great impact on Schmidville and is concerned about the lack of commitment from the government as it pertains to the future of this property. Mr. Watkins is a dedicated home owner and resident of Schmidville and has witnessed the disappearance of heritage buildings in England and worries this will happen in Halifax.

Ms. Beverly Miller introduced herself as the representative of the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia. She was previously part of a similar process to establish a heritage area in St. John's, NL. She is very concerned

with current development trends in Halifax. She believes that developers are too frequently allowed to change zoning rules for their own benefit. She discussed the recent Regional Council motion expressing an interest in a temporary hold on new development within a proposed Heritage Conservation District boundary while a process is underway to establish the District. There was a previous moratorium on development when municipal planning strategies were under development. She is very positive about this project and believes that it has the potential to encourage employment and tourism.

Mr. William Breckenridge introduced himself as a fourth generation Schmidville resident whose family continues to love and invest in the neighbourhood. He expressed concern for the fire hazard of these houses. He discussed the difficulty of getting natural gas meters installed and believes that the municipality needs to consider the historic context of the houses when reviewing applications to install gas meters. He has given talks and lectures on the history of Schmidville and brought research and pictures to the meeting. He explained that the houses of Schmidville are all well-built and durable but foundations need attention. Their historic integrity is intact. As such, it is worthwhile to restore and invest in these buildings. Their value is irreplaceable. He believes people have access to more educational opportunities about the area. The new interpretive panels are a great opportunity to educate the public. People are always stopping to read them.

Mr. Haiven asked if members had seen the video prepared by the Friends of Schmidville as another educational opportunity. If not, it is available on YouTube and via the Shape Your City website for Schmidville.

Mr. McGreal explained that a heritage incentives program for the proposed District will certainly place a high priority on any work on the foundation of historic buildings.

Mr. McGreal expressed his aspirations to complete successful projects for the Schmidville and Old South Suburb Heritage Conservation Districts on schedule so that these projects can be used as examples for the establishment of other potential Heritage Conservation Districts throughout the region. Heritage Conservation Districts and Cultural Landscapes are becoming more of a focus now across the country. It is a different and more comprehensive approach to recognizing and protecting our built heritage rather than registering individual heritage properties. He explained that both proposed Heritage Conservation Districts were initiated with unanimous support by Regional Council. He is concerned about community participation in the process since only a few members of the public participated in a recent community workshop for the Old South Suburb project. He expressed the importance of the public engaging early in the process to influence policy directions.

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

Mr. McGreal explained the roles and duties of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee. Larry Haiven and William Breckenridge agreed to put their names forward as Chair of the Committee. The Committee agreed to hold a vote and that the member not elect as Chair would be appointed as Vice-Chair. The Committee voted to elect Larry Haiven as Chair. It then appointed William Breckenridge as Vice-Chair.

PRESENTATION: BACKGROUND STUDY AND ONLINE SURVEY

Mr. McGreal presented an overview of the background study for Schmidville. He explained that the reason for establishing heritage conservation measures in Schmidville is based on its significance as identified in the Statement of Significance. Schmidville meets the criteria for consideration as a heritage conservation area. It expands an area that is larger than one block and includes a concentration of heritage buildings. It creates the atmosphere of a past era and acquaints the public with the buildings and sites of that era. As a result of these heritage values and the pressure for redevelopment around this

area, heritage conservation measures are justified. 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 Schmidville 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.

DISCUSSION

Mr. McGreal asked the committee members if they think that feedback from the survey will provide direction to a Heritage Conservation District plan.

Ms. Beverly Miller asked how respondents will know which properties are heritage significant and how grants will be awarded. Mr. McGreal explained that the map on the online survey identifies heritage significant properties. He explained that a financial incentives program will include scoring criteria so that higher priority items will receive grants over lower priority items if funds cannot support all projects.

Mr. Lyndon Watkins expressed some concerns about financial incentives and suggested that a long term loan program may be more appropriate than grants to property owners.

The Committee agreed that survey respondents should be asked if a long term municipal loan for heritage conservation work is desirable. Also, questions on the survey need clarification. The map should identify heritage significant properties more clearly.

Mr. Haiven related that if grants are provided to other Heritage Conservation Districts then they should apply to Schmidville as well. He would not want to see a loan program replace grants if other heritage districts are accessing grants. A consistent program should apply to all heritage districts and should employ tax remissions as well.

Mr. Breckenridge is concerned that a long-term loan to property owners may impact a property owner's financial plan as they need to factor in repayments.

Ms. Morris expressed some concern with increases in property tax assessments that would follow investments in heritage conservation work as part of a financial incentives program.

Ms. Beverly Miller asked how to resolve a possible issue with owners of registered heritage properties accessing both the existing financial incentives program and a new financial incentives program dedicated to Heritage Conservation Districts.

Mr. McGreal explained that this matter would have to be worked out in the details of the new program. He added that each Heritage Conservation District may include different financial incentives depending on the priorities of the Heritage Conservation District.

Mr. Breckenridge related that the different needs of commercial and residential property owners also need to be addressed in a financial incentives program.

Mr. Watkins explained that he would like to see financial incentives to help cover the costs of professional advice to property owners and developers. He believes such advice from heritage architects or engineers would be appropriate, especially when dealing with additions to heritage buildings.

Mr. McGreal related that once the area becomes a Heritage Conservation District, properties of heritage significance within the District will be eligible to apply for grants from existing provincial programs. These programs already include grants for conservation work and for professional advice.

Ms. Beverly Millers questions the need to ask survey respondents whether or not they want to see a financial incentives program.

Mr. McGreal explained that this question is a way of sharing information with the public and to let them know that financial incentives are a possibility with an established Heritage Conservation District.

Mr. Haiven suggested that the question is a way to build consensus in the community. He would like more explanation in the Map to distinguish between the proposed Heritage Conservation District boundaries and the boundaries of the original Schmidville planned area so as not to confuse respondents.

Ms. Kristina Chapman mentioned that switching the dotted with the solid to solve this problem.

Mr. Breckenridge questioned the importance of removing and undergrounding utility poles since this infrastructure has been around so long that it is part of the community's history. He also suggested that the question in the online survey be reframed so that respondents will understand it better.

Ms. Miller asked if Schmidville already has enough density then there is no reason to encourage further density in this area. Mr. McGreal explained that most of Schmidville is under the R-2A zone which allows older properties to construct large rear additions with up to 14 units in total on the property. The question for the heritage district plan is how to manage this potential development at the rear to preserve heritage character without taking away too much development potential.

Mr. Benjamin LeBlanc suggested giving some context on what is currently allowed for rear additions in Schmidville before raising the question on rear additions in the online survey.

Mr. Haiven asked if the online survey should raise the question about demolition and how it can be allowed without approval from the municipality after three years. He suggested that such a measure could destroy Schmidville. Mr. LeBlanc responded that the question will reveal what people want and that it is part of the Committee's responsibility to determine how the community feels about demolition.

Mr. LeBlanc asked if current rules for the demolition of registered heritage properties will fall under new demolition rules in the heritage district plan.

Mr. McGreal explained that Section 18 of the Heritage Property Act is waived in a Heritage Conservation District. This means that if the heritage district plan is silent on demolition then demolition will require municipal approval. Demolition cannot proceed under Section 18 which allows property owners to demolish registered heritage properties without municipal approval after three years from the date they had applied for the demolition. However, the heritage district plan cannot be silent on demolition. It will need a demolition policy. This policy can include different processes for different types of properties such as registered heritage property, heritage significant property that is not registered, and new construction.

Ms. Miller maintained that she does not want to see a two-tiered system where certain types of heritage buildings, such as registered heritage properties, are favoured over other types of heritage buildings, such as non-registered properties that have heritage significance.

Mr. Breckenridge suggested that each house is unique should be observed individually when making decisions that impact it.

Mr. LeBlanc stated that respondents to the online survey should have a section where they can provide a written response. Mr. Breckenridge suggested that respondents to the online survey should be asked what they would like to learn and know more about the area. Mr. McGreal suggested that the comment box at the end of the online survey be used for this purpose.

Ms. Miller mentioned that the meeting date should be scheduled for a time when people will attend and that it should be promoted appropriately. She asked what the community's main concerns will be.

Mr. Breckenridge explained that building materials and restrictions on building height and use will be concerns. Building materials are getting better and can be made to look like original materials. People should be able to make improvements and additions to their property.

Mr. McGreal suggested that the Committee adopt the community engagement strategy at its next meeting. He then discussed the community engagement tools and techniques identified in the strategy. Some tools such as the district signage and online portal have already been initiated. People have been engaging with these tools. There will be other opportunities for community engagement after the public meeting including walking tours and stakeholder meetings.

Mr. Haiven suggested that the video on Schmidtville be screened at the public meeting. The Committee agreed that the video should be screened at that time.

SET DATE FOR PUBLIC MEETING #1

The Committee voted to set the date of the first public meeting for Wednesday, September 9th, 2015. It agreed that a backup meeting date be set for Thursday, September 10th, 2015.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Kimberly Cooke
Administrative Assistant