

**REGIONAL PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
February 18, 2009**

**PRESENT:** Mr. Fred Morley, Chair  
Ms. Cheryl Newcombe  
Mr. Paul Pettipas  
Mr. Robert Batherson  
Ms. Maija Warnock  
Ms. Margo Grant  
Councillor Peter Lund  
Councillor Gloria McCluskey

**ABSENT:** Deputy Mayor David Hendsbee, Vice-Chair (regrets)  
Ms. Bonnie Ryan (regrets)

**STAFF:** Mr. Roger Wells, Supervisor, Regional & Community Planning  
Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Fred Morley, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm in the Helen Creighton Room, Alderney Library, 60 Alderney Drive, Dartmouth.

**2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - January 21, 2009**

**MOVED by Mr. Robert Batherson, seconded by Councillor Gloria McCluskey that the minutes of January 21, 2009, as presented, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS**

**Additions:** 8.1 In Camera Item - Personnel Matter - Committee Membership

**MOVED BY Mr. Paul Pettipas, seconded by Ms. Cheryl Newcombe, that the order of business, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES - NONE**

**5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS**

**5.1 Marine Drive Valley and Canal Community Council - Secondary Planning Strategy for Beaver Bank**

Mr. Morley advised that a staff report had been drafted and should be available for the next meeting.

**5.2 Halifax Dartmouth Bridge Commission - Third Harbour Crossing**

Mr. Morley introduced Mr. Steve Snider, General Manager and CEO, and Mr. Jon Eppell, Bridge Engineer, from the Halifax Dartmouth Bridge Commission.

Mr. Snider and Mr. Eppell presented the results of a study that was completed in March 2008 and released in May of that year. Highlights of their presentation were:

- Although Mr. Snider was not recommending a third harbour crossing, he advised that the result of the Consultant's report indicated that HRM will need a third harbour crossing by 2016 - 2026. The Consultant based the results on consideration of projected current use into the future.
- Woodside has been recommended as the crossing location.
- Roads and bridges operating at 90% capacity is a good use of infrastructure.
- Congestion is not desirable as it leads to gridlock and more green house gases.
- Statistics show that the number of days the bridge exceeded 100,000 crossings was 170; there were 113 peak days where crossings reached

115,000.

- The study showed that (public) transit was critical.
- Options to alleviate congestion at the bridges include twinning the McKay Bridge which would involve various infrastructure improvements/expansion with the cost being comparable to a third harbour crossing. The expansion would have too high a social impact. The third harbour crossing would be less intrusive, in regard to infrastructure, than the twinning option.
- The Woodside bridge option has been conceptualized to be 2.1 km long with six lanes plus a bikelane and sidewalk on either side and would connect to the end of Robie Street on the Halifax side.
- The Woodside Tunnel option would involve a very steep grade on the Dartmouth side, 3.5 km length twin bores with two lanes each, no sidewalk or bikelane as they are not permitted in tunnels. The cost for infrastructure improvements around Mount Hope to Pleasant Street would be approximately \$1.4 billion.
- Concerns expressed during the study in regard to a third bridge include;
  - It would be a scar on the landscape,
  - It would block the view from Citadel Hill,
  - High vessels would have to pass underneath,
- A tunnel would not interfere with shipping until it reached the rail cut in the south end of Halifax.
- A reserve corridor for inclusion in planning documents has been suggested so that in future, if required, the land would be available.
- Transit service plays a crucial role as to when the infrastructure would be required.
- Bus rapid transit can be dovetailed into this project.
- The study referred to the Regional Joint Transit Committee, a Provincial Committee).
- Five (5) community sessions were hosted during the study.
- Highway demand supports a Highway 111 South.

Mr. Snider advised that the number of bridge crossings in 2008 reached 32.4 million; by 2033 the projected figure would be 45.0 million crossings. Fuel prices and the economic downturn had an impact on travel in 2008 which showed a reduction in the United States of 4 to 12% while the Halifax Dartmouth Bridge Commission reported traffic volumes have remained unchanged.

A transportation demand management review indicates that a bridge or tunnel option would be very expensive costing approximately \$1.1 to \$1.4 billion dollars not including the land. The Halifax Dartmouth Bridge Commission could work with HRM to reduce the number of vehicles traveling across the bridges, or; hold the volume to current levels. Fuel and global warming issues can no longer be ignored, therefore; commuters have to be encouraged to change their travel habits and move away from their cars. Options for consideration include:

- High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes - lanes restricted to vehicles with three (3) or more persons.

- Peak Period Tolling - peak period time in Halifax/Dartmouth is 7:00 - 9:00 a.m.
- Encourage active transportation options such as walking, cycling and public transit to reduce capacity issues on bridges/roads.
- One Way Tolling - some toll booths would be removed. Commuters would pay on one side only which would alleviate the congestion at the toll booths. The introduction of the MACPASS has assisted with congestion issues at the toll booths and is seeing an average of 70% use by commuters.
- Area wide charging - a charge applied to select vehicles (traveling from certain distances).
- Toll Areas - a toll charged to enter a certain area.

HRM requires a transportation system that will keep people moving. The Halifax Dartmouth Bridge Commission/HRM need to be innovative in order to assist commuters in changing their method of travel.

Mr. Snider and Mr. Eppel responded to comments/concerns of the Committees as follows:

- Both Halifax/Dartmouth bridges are paid for but there is \$57 million owing due to capital expenditures and maintenance that totaled over \$104 million.
- Eliminating toll booths for one way tolling would cut the equipment required in half so there would be cost savings but based on the lane configurations congestion may not necessarily be reduced at the toll booths.
- The bridge system, including the roads/ramps, is maxed out; all improvements that could be made have been done.
- The study was based on the Regional Plan and how transportation would take place in regard to employment and settlement patterns.
- Maintenance costs for a tunnel would be higher than those for a bridge due to the requirement for a high speed fan system in the tunnels; washing down the tunnels; plowing/salting entrances/exits and lights that would be on 24/7.
- The tunnel approaches would be too steep for a train.
- The south end railcut and bridge/tunnel options are not dependent on one another.
- Traffic appears to be higher on the bridges this year - capacity is around 95%.
- The \$1.4 billion estimated cost for a bridge/tunnel and the related infrastructure required would be better spent investing in public transit.
- The Joint Transportation Committee is preparing a report, the time frame for completion/distribution is not known at this time. The Regional Plan Advisory Committee inquired whether they could have some input into that report. Mr. Snider offered to look into that request as the Joint Transportation Committee is a provincial body with representatives from the Halifax Dartmouth Bridge Commission, Greater Halifax Partnership, Metro Chamber of Commerce as well as a representative from HRM.

The Regional Plan Advisory Committee members commented that in order to move commuters out of their vehicles, efforts have to be made to make it easier for them to get from Point A to Point B.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the presenters for their information.

**5.3 Annual Report to Regional Council**

Item deferred to the March meeting as staff were in the process of drafting the report.

**6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS**

**6.1 Correspondence - None**

**6.2 Petitions - None**

**6.3 Delegations**

**6.3.1 Heritage Trust**

- A handout was circulated to the Committee at this time.

Mr. Phil Pacey and Mr. Peter Delefes, Representatives of the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia, presented comment on the HRMbyDesign plan and distributed a suggested alternative to that plan. They expressed concern that the proposed HRMbyDesign plan would infringe upon the four pillars of democracy in planning such as public input, the public's right to notification, information and to appeal. A further concern was in regard to the loss of building height controls in the historic downtown.

Mr. Pacey and Mr. Delefes commented that the inference to public input slowing the process was incorrect. A staff report indicated delays were due to staffing issues and the development application processing methods. Referencing the Executive Summary to the Turner Drake report, they noted that there was no pent-up demand for office space in the downtown. The cost of land in the downtown was prohibitive, therefore; businesses were moving to business parks, a more economical option and one that could also accommodate parking for staff. The Turner Drake report noted that historic buildings lend a unique character to the downtown.

Mr. Pacey expressed concern that, contrary to the objectives of the recently adopted Regional Plan to maintain historic heritage, policies CH-1 and CH-2 would no longer apply under the proposed HRMbyDesign plan. He suggested that all heritage buildings be protected by a heritage conservation district including height limits to protect the views of George's Island inside and outside the view planes, and; higher height limits be permitted beyond the rampart from Citadel Hill. A further concern with building heights would be protection from the wind.

Mr. Pacey and Mr. Delefes commended the open space design standards in the proposed HRMbyDesign plan.

Mr. Pacey and Mr. Delefes responded to comments/concerns of the Regional Plan Advisory Committee as follows:

- The proposed HRMbyDesign's *Design and Review Committee* would not be the same as others across Canada as it would be the first in the country to have decision making powers whereas most would be advisory bodies; a more appropriate role. Although there would be a recourse to appeal decisions of the advisory body, limited to those who own property downtown or within 30 metres of the downtown, the downtown area of HRM is of interest to many people and they should be permitted to comment.
- Of the 126 registered heritage properties, 88 would be placed under HRM Heritage Protection; the remainders would have some level of protection. Twenty-six (26) of the eighty-eight (88) registered heritage properties would be in the Barrington Street preservation area, an area that is currently protected by height levels and policy CH-1. Policy CH-1 states that any change to a heritage property has to be "not noticeable", however; the new policy would permit total interior renovation. Concern was expressed that for the 62 properties in other heritage conservation districts, a time lapse would occur between the adoption of HRMbyDesign and height limits which could enable someone with a proposal to obtain site plan approval which could last forever as a site plan approval cannot be extinguished. ,
- The 38 buildings that are currently outside the proposed Heritage Corridor District should be incorporated into the Heritage Corridor districts. Someone could also obtain a demolition permit for those properties not in the Heritage Corridor and build a new 70' building.
- The provisions for pedestrians and encouraged retail at ground level are positive aspects of the proposed HRMbyDesign plan. Upon review of HRMbyDesign documents 80-90% of it is already in the Municipal Planning Strategies. The items that are not being carried over are of concern such as the policy for finger piers at the waterfront which is not protected in HRMbyDesign.

In response to the Regional Plan Advisory Committee's request for clarification, Mr. Austin French, Manager, Planning Services, explained that the proposed Site Plan Review Committee would be unique in that the recommendations would be made to staff not to Council and would then become part of the staff report to Council. An appeal of a Council decision to the Supreme Court could still be made by any aggrieved person, however; an appeal would only be expected if a process step was missed.

In response to Mr. Morley, Mr. Pacey advised that he had done public consultation in the form of listening to comments and reading letters received by the Urban Design Task Force which indicated that people have concerns with heights and loss of views.

Mr. Andy Fillmore, Project Manager, Urban Design, Capital District, responded to the Heritage Trust comments that the community has indicated that they want forward architecture with a mix of heritage. A strong heritage plan is being presented as part of HRMbyDesign. In regard to the four pillars of democracy, he noted that:

1. Notification: Provincial legislation requires a 30 metre notification radius. This radius may be increased to whatever distance Council desires. The radius for downtown includes everyone within the downtown plan study area

plus 30 metre if the property is on the boundary. Notice is placed in the newspaper which is accessible to all.

2. Information/Public Input: There are no major changes in regard to availability of information. The application process remains. Public input will be deeply entrenched early in the process at the pre-application stage which will provide hands-on community comment and input before the ink is dry. The public hearing process will also remain.
3. Appeal: The only change in regard to appeals is that instead of appealing to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board, the appeal would go to Regional Council. The Developer would still have the option to appeal to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board and anyone could appeal to the Supreme Court.

Mr. Fillmore noted that other cities, such as New York City, have governance structures that are able to feed enormous amounts of funding toward heritage protection in their downtown and do not have to “find” the economic means to do so. In Halifax, the money base is often not there due to the code upgrades required etc. The HRMbyDesign plan includes a number of options for consideration such as grants (capital grants etc.).

In regard to concerns with diversion from existing policies, Mr. Fillmore noted that the Regional Plan Advisory Committee and the Urban Design Task Force exist to change the existing policy. The intent of policies CH-1 and CH-2 are being achieved through other means under the mandate. He also noted/clarified the following:

- Demand for Office Space: It is not staff’s assumption that there is high demand for more office space although they aspire to have more space available.
- Height Limits: The former School Board building (property) on Brunswick Street is under Band A and limited to a maximum height of 75’. There are no “as of right” heights, however; there are triggers for when you would change to a Development Agreement process, for example, the Roy Building on Barrington Street would have a trigger of 40’ in height; under HRMbyDesign it could be 60’.
- Wind Protection: the proposal is for a built form framework; tall slender buildings on bases that would allow more sunlight on street and provide a wind baffling effect where the wind would swirl out to avoid/reduce the impact at ground level.
- Turner Drake report: Mr. Turner placed a disclaimer in the report indicating that he was the owner of a number of heritage properties.
- The shelf life of a site plan is one (1) year. There is also a one year delay for a demolition permit which is, theoretically, a separate process.
- Heritage properties outside HRMbyDesign do have protection but would not be eligible for the height bonus unless the heritage was maintained. The Heritage Functional Plan is working with the planning department for a demolition delay.
- There is no policy to protect Finger piers.
- A plan monitoring will be in process to check the progress and make meaningful amendments as required.



Councillor McCluskey left the meeting at 4:45 p.m.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Mr. Pacey and Mr. Delefes for their presentation.

**7. REPORTS**

**7.1 HRMbyDesign - Regional Centre Urban Design Study - Downtown Halifax Urban Design Plan**

- A staff report dated February 4, 2009 was before the Committee.

Mr. Morley, Chair, welcomed the following visiting members of the Urban Design Task Force; Ms. Dale Godsoe, Chair and Mr. Paul McKinnon, Vice-Chair.

Ms. Godsoe, Chair, Urban Design Task Force, advised that the Urban Design Task Force had overwhelmingly approved the recommendations before the Committee at their meeting held earlier that day. She noted that over forty (40) formal meetings were held by the Urban Design Task Force with an additional 35 to 40 informal meetings.

Mr. Andy Fillmore, Project Manager, Urban Design, presented the report.

Mr. Luc Ouellet, Planner, reviewed the four proposed amendments to the Regional Plan.

Following the ensuing discussion on the matter, the Regional Plan Advisory Committee noted that they would not be including recommendation 3 of the staff report in their motion as it was more a matter for the Urban Design Task Force. If requested, the Regional Plan Advisory Committee would provide comment on the Urban Design Task Force report in regard to the future of that group.

Mr. Morley, on behalf of the Regional Plan Advisory Committee, thanked staff, Ms. Godsoe and Mr. McKinnon, for their presentation and comments.

**MOVED BY Mr. Robert Batherson, seconded by Councillor Peter Lund that the Regional Plan Advisory Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council:**

- 1. Give First Reading to the proposed amendments to the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy as provided in Attachment "B-1" of the staff report dated February 4, 2009 and schedule a Public Hearing.**
- 2. Approve the proposed amendments to the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy as provided in Attachment "B-1" of the staff report dated February 4, 2009.**

**MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**8. ADDED ITEMS**

**8.1 PERSONNEL MATTER - Committee Membership**

**MOVED BY Mr. Robert Batherson, seconded by Mr. Paul Pettipas that the Committee move In Camera at this time (5:00 p.m.). MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

The regular meeting recessed at 5:00 p.m.

The regular meeting reconvened at 5:26 p.m.

**9. NEXT MEETING DATE - March 18, 2009**

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

Chris Newson  
Legislative Assistant