

**REGIONAL PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
April 15, 2009**

- PRESENT:** Mr. Fred Morley, Chair
Deputy Mayor David Hendsbee, Vice-Chair
Mr. Paul Pettipas
Mr. Robert Batherson
Ms. Margo Grant
Mr. Floyd Dykeman
Ms. Alison Baker
Ms. Carole Pelletier
Ms. Katherine Ruta
Councillor Peter Lund
Councillor Gloria McCluskey
- ABSENT:** Ms. Cheryl Newcombe (regrets)
Ms. Maija Warnock (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 3:03 pm in the Media Room, 1st Floor, City Hall, Halifax.

1.1 Welcome / Introduction of New Members

Mr. Morley welcomed all members. Each member provided a brief biography in relation to their interest in serving on the Regional Plan Advisory Committee.

Mr. Roger Wells, Supervisor, Regional and Community Planning, introduced the following staff who provided a brief explanation of their roles: Mr. Marcus Garnet, Senior Planner, Regional Planning, Community Development, Mr. Andy Fillmore, Project Manager, Urban Design, Community Development, and Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant, Municipal Clerk's Office.

Councillor Lund entered the meeting at 3:05 p.m.

Mr. Dykeman entered the meeting at 3:07 p.m.

1.2 Overview and Background

This item was dealt with later in the meeting. See page 5

1.3 Preliminary Team Building

This item was dealt with later in the meeting. See page 7.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - February 18, 2009

Revision: Add sentence to clarify that Mr. Steve Snider, Halifax Dartmouth Bridge Commission, was not recommending a third harbour crossing.

MOVED by Councillor McCluskey, seconded by Councillor Lund that the minutes of February 18, 2009, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Move: Item 7.1 to be dealt with first.
Item 5.1 to be dealt with prior to Item 1.2.

MOVED BY Mr. Robert Batherson, seconded by Councillor Gloria McCluskey, that the order of business, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES - NONE

The Committee agreed to deal with Item 7.1 at this time.

7.1 Regional Centre Urban Design Study - Downtown Halifax Urban Design Plan - Update

Mr. Andy Fillmore, HRM by Design, Project Manager circulated a Memorandum dated April 15, 2009 re: HRMbyDesign Heritage Program. He advised that HRMbyDesign was presented to Council and a public hearing date has been set for May 5, 2009.

The Memorandum provided a response to the six comments by Heritage Trust in regard to the HRMbyDesign plan. Mr. Fillmore also provided comment on the alternate plan for downtown Halifax submitted by the Heritage Trust

Concern was expressed by Committee members in regard to the position of the Ecology Action Centre (EAC) that HRM does have the authority to make green building initiatives (LEEDS) a condition of site plan approval. Staff clarified that HRM's legal department has advised that HRM does not have that authority under the HRM Charter. Staff continue to work with EAC re: the sustainable functional plan for design/building practices. EAC has the option of presenting to Council during the May public hearing process on the HRMbyDesign Plan.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Mr. Fillmore for the update.

The Committee agreed to deal with Item 5.1 at this time.

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS

5.1 Marine Drive Valley and Canal Community Council - Beaver Bank Visioning Exercise

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

Mr. Roger Wells, Senior Planner, presented the report which was a result of two motions from the Marine Drive, Valley and Canal Community Council. He explained that staff was prepared to meet with Community Groups in Beaver Bank as the community was interested in going forward on their own with a Visioning project. Staff presented the rationale for Beaver Bank not being part of the Community Visioning exercises at this time to the Beaver Bank community on April 1, 2009 with over 100 residents in attendance. The explanation, which was generally acknowledged and agreed with by the residents, was that Beaver Bank was not considered to be a growth area due to the traffic issues and that growth should not be encouraged in the area until those traffic issues were resolved. The audience was satisfied with staff's offer to assist with a community based visioning exercise.

Deputy Mayor Hendsbee advised that he was the Chair of the Marine Drive, Valley and Canal Community Council (MDVCCC). He suggested that a list indicating those areas that have completed their community visioning exercises as well as those in line for the

exercise should have been attached to the report. The next community will be the Upper Sackville area due to the new Interchange and Margesson Drive issue. The development issues in that area will have ramifications on the Beaver Bank area. He suggested that community designates from the Beaver Bank area monitor the Sackville exercise.

MOVED BY Councillor McCluskey, seconded by Mr. Paul Pettipas that the Regional Plan Advisory Committee recommend to Marine Drive Valley and Canal Community Council that they:

- 1. Defer consideration of a formal community visioning exercise and subsequent preparation of a Secondary Planning Strategy until the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy undergoes its 5 year review in 2011.**
- 2. Not consider additional growth management controls in the South Beaver Bank area at this time.**

Mr. Wells advised that it was extremely important for the Committee, staff and the Community of Beaver Bank to be aware of the ongoing Upper Sackville Visioning Exercise as the construction of the new Highway 101 interchange will have an affect on Beaver Bank. He noted that the desire is for Planning Staff to work together with the community prior to the completion of the roadway.

Mr. Dave McCusker, Manager, Regional Transportation, Infrastructure and Asset Management, explained that the extension of Margesson Drive depends on the potential for development. If there is demand then staff would like to see the road built however care has to be taken in regard to which roads go ahead.

In response to Councillor Lund's inquiry as to who or what would initiate the development controls being lifted to permit further development, staff advised that once the traffic concerns were addressed and the routes completed the area would be open for more development and Developers would be aware of that or, the Developers may approach Council in regard to a particular development proposal. Staff also clarified that the matter would come to the Regional Plan Advisory Committee as it would mean an amendment to the Regional Plan.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Deputy Mayor Hendsbee and Mr. Paul Pettipas left the meeting at 4:04 p.m.

The Committee agreed to deal with Item 1.2 at this time.

1.2 Overview and Background

- A copy of the HRM Volunteer Guide to Boards and Committees was before the Committee for information purposes.

Mr. Garnet presented an overview of the Regional Plan. The Committee members commented that the presentation was very informative and should be used with Community Visioning Groups.

Councillor McCluskey left the meeting at 4:35 p.m.

Mr. Morley thanked staff for the Overview.

The following comments/concerns were raised during the ensuing discussion:

- There seem to be a lot of roadway design discussions but what about seaway and rail.

Mr. Garnet explained that HRM had been in discussions with CN Rail a few years ago. Rail travel would be a natural solution for joining many of the growth centres. The advantage over capitalizing on the waterways is that there would be no rent to pay versus the annual rent that would be required to utilize CN rail infrastructure.

- The needs of seniors has to be considered in regard to the smaller growth centres. When people get elderly they do not want to have to move from the community they have lived in for many years.

Mr. Wells noted that there were policies in place for zoning for “multi-unit dwellings” within a community that could include senior’s facilities but the language has to be carefully worded so as not to discriminate based on age. Most communities have indicated that they do not wish to have apartment buildings. .

Deputy Mayor Hendsbee re-entered the meeting at 4:50 p.m.

- Many of the visioning groups are now comprised of Seniors as they have the time to commit.
- In some communities the seniors are the only ones left as the younger ones have left for work opportunities.
- One concept being used in the USA is a Transit Ready Development where development is centered around the transit system.
- Having people live in the downtown is good but it is very expensive.

Mr. Garnet noted that there were incentives in the Regional Plan such as offering greater height or density in exchange for affordable housing units/family oriented units.

Mr. Wells noted that staff intend to investigate best practices from other municipalities to determine what option would work best in HRM in regard to affordable housing options.

- The idea of affordable housing is great but the desirability of living in the downtown pushes prices up. What type of regulatory instruments could be brought in to accommodate mixed communities and provide affordable housing; often NIMBY (not in my backyard) takes over. Most residents would

not like to see a single unit dwelling become a triplex etc. Care has to be taken not to eliminate or change zoning as people make investments and life style choices based on the current zoning.

Mr. Batherson requested an update from staff on the commuter rail and future rail use proposals. He noted that clarification in regard to the population density required to run a sustainable rail system and the actual costs from previous discussions with CN Rail in regard to utilizing their infrastructure would be pertinent information for the Committee to review. He noted that a lot of time and effort have been put into the Harbour Ferry project when there are also rail lines on both sides of the harbour that could be utilized. He expressed concern with the loss of the rail lines as the Chester Spur line is in danger of closing. If the infrastructure is not used it may be lost.

Mr. Garnet noted that the shift toward sustainable transportation may revive rail use discussions considering that the Halifax Dartmouth Bridge Commission has also expressed concern with the future potential requirement of a third harbour crossing.

Mr. Batherson noted that the Minister of Transport Canada had made an announcement concerning a review of freight rail service in Canada and suggested that the information may be of interest to the Committee/staff.

The Committee requested that staff provide the following information:

- Which area of Capital District is next in line for review, if not Dartmouth, when was that change made by Council.
- A copy/update of the Minister of Transportation's review of freight rail service in Canada as any review of freight rail has an implication on other rail uses.
- Rail to port issues - is HRM involved.
- Provide a status update on the Provincial Transportation Strategy.
- Cost information in regard to CN Rail and previous discussions with HRM re: the cost to run a Commuter Rail service (including rent charges). Also information on funding partners.
- A list of issues that will be forthcoming to the Committee in order for members to prepare/research the issues in advance of the meeting.
- An update on the recent local radio broadcast re: rail service and also a David Suzuki TV segment re: various developments across Canada - what works/what doesn't.

The Chair offered to meet with staff to assist in preparing the Committee's annual report to Regional Council.

The Committee agreed to deal with Item 1.3 at this time.

1.3 Preliminary Team Building

Mr. Morley suggested a short team building session, with a Facilitator, for a future meeting.

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS - NONE

7. REPORTS

7.1 Regional Centre Urban Design Study - Downtown Halifax Urban Design Plan - Update

This item was dealt with earlier in the meeting. See page 4.

8. ADDED ITEMS - NONE

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting is scheduled for May 20, 2009 - Helen Creighton Room, Dartmouth Public Library, 60 Alderney Drive, Dartmouth.

10. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

Chris Newson
Legislative Assistant