



**REGIONAL WATERSHEDS ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES
January 13, 2016**

PRESENT: Mr. Walter Regan, Chair
Ms. Kelly Schnare, Vice Chair
Ms. Meredith Clayden
Mr. Pierre Clement
Mr. Russell Dmytriw

REGRETS: Dr. Iain Taylor
Ms. Darlene Fenton

STAFF: Mr. Cameron Deacoff, Environmental Performance Officer
Ms. Shannon Miedema, Acting Manager Energy and Environment
Ms. Holly Richardson, Coordinator Parks and Open Space Policy
Mr. Andrew Reid, Legislative Assistant
Ms. Cailin MacDonald, Legislative Support

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

The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to the Regional Watersheds Advisory Board are available online: <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/rwab/160113rwab-agenda.php>

The meeting was called to order at 5:03 p.m. and adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Regan called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. in the Maxine Tynes Room, 2nd floor, Alderney Public Library, 60 Alderney Drive, Dartmouth.

ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Mr. Reid called for nominations for the position of Chair of the Regional Watershed Advisory Board.

MOVED by Mr. Clement, seconded by Mr. Dmytriw

THAT Mr. Regan be nominated Chair of the Regional Watershed Advisory Board.

Mr. Reid called three times for any further nominations and, hearing no further nominations, declared Mr. Regan as Chair of the Regional Watersheds Advisory Board for a one year term.

It was then MOVED by Mr. Regan, seconded by Mr. Dmytriw

THAT Ms. Schnare be nominated Vice Chair of the Regional Watershed Advisory Board.

Mr. Regan called three times for any further nominations and, hearing no further nominations, declared Ms. Schnare as Vice Chair of the Board for a one year term.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Clement inquired about the Board receiving the phosphorous modeling study from 2004. Mr. Deacoff and Mr. Reid confirmed it would be distributed electronically to the Board.

MOVED by Mr. Regan, seconded by Mr. Clement

THAT the minutes of December 9, 2015 be approved as circulated.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Mr. Reid suggested starting with item 9.1.2 in order to set up for the presentation of Item 9.1.1.

MOVED by Mr. Regan, seconded by Mr. Clement

THAT the agenda be approved as amended.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES – NONE

5. CALL FOR DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST – NONE

6. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – NONE

7. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS

7.1 Correspondence – None

7.2 Petitions – None

8. INFORMATION ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD – NONE

9. REPORTS/DISCUSSION

9.1.1 Staff Update – Energy and Environment

Mr. Regan invited Ms. Miedema to present a staff update on behalf of the department of Energy and Environment.

Ms. Miedema shared that the department has been undergoing a renewal and that Energy and Environment is now part of Planning and Development. She continued by sharing that the organizational structure has changed and that their team has gained a planner and that the position of energy specialist will soon be filled. As well, Ms. Miedema noted that she has been acting in Richard MacLellan's former position since May 2015.

Ms. Miedema commented that with the onset of the departmental renewal there has been a review of the department's priorities as well as processes and shared that the department will be moving toward evidence-based decision making in all aspects of planning.

Ms. Miedema acknowledged that the Board had not been actively engaged by the department as of late because new projects had not yet been undertaken. She continued by sharing that there are now upcoming projects for the Board to engage with. Ms. Miedema commented on a new research engagement project with Dalhousie University which will investigate the high levels of phosphorous found in Kearney and Paper Mill Lakes. She noted that this data may help inform policy updates to Bedford West related to municipal investigation on these exceedances. Ms. Miedema continued by stating that it was identified that there was not enough scientific data on these lakes to understand the effects and origins of phosphorous in order to move forward with recommendations.

Ms. Miedema shared that once the agreement with Dalhousie has been signed, a presentation on the agreement will be made to the Board at a future meeting. Mr. Deacoff shared that Mr. Rob Jamieson is the main university liaison on the project.

Ms. Miedema commented that the lakes are shifting their trophic level status and that signs indicate that the levels are moving from an oligotrophic to a mesotrophic status. She also noted that CBCL as well as Stantec have some reports publicly available for the Board to review in advance of Dalhousie's presentation.

Mr. Deacoff commented that the Board will be asked to provide input on this project. He continued by sharing that there is opportunity for the Board to share comments on project scope, priorities of investigation and other areas of interest. He continued that this will help further knowledge gathered so that staff can make informed decisions and recommendations based on the report. Mr. Deacoff commented that the Board will be engaged for the initial presentation in March and once the final report is completed. Mr. Regan suggested that the Board also be engaged sometime during the interim to review a draft version of the report.

Mr. Clement commented on the trophic level scenarios that had been impacting Russell Lake and asked whether staff hope to manage and define trophic levels in advance of development in other areas. Mr. Deacoff responded that the rules in place for Russell Lake are not the same as what is in place for the Paper Mill Lake watershed. He noted that for Bedford West some of the issues are the same as Russell Lake and commented that staff plans to develop broad policies to help assess future developments. Mr. Deacoff and the Board continued to discuss the implications and policies related to Development Agreements.

Mr. Regan inquired whether this study will be expanded to other watersheds. Ms. Miedema responded that this research project and agreement with Dalhousie specifically relates to the study of Kearney and Paper Mill Lakes.

Ms. Miedema commented that there are plans to look at watershed management as it fits in with the municipal mandate and to review objectives for reinstating a water quality program. She continued by stating that this would be a three year project taking a comprehensive look at what the municipality wants and why. She noted that moving the project forward is still dependent on receiving municipal funding as well as approval by the Committee of the Whole. Ms. Miedema continued that staff plans to engage the Board during this project.

Mr. Regan shared his concerns with conducting only partial watershed studies, recommending against this approach, if possible. Ms. Miedema acknowledged Mr. Regan's comments and shared that there are many questions that this study is looking to review.

Mr. Clement asked about the status of the modified version of the water quality sampling program that had launched. Mr. Deacoff responded that this program will help attain a more recent level of baseline water quality data and shared that the future of the program will depend on whether or not the new project is approved.

Mr. Clement inquired about the process for approving the budget. Mr. Deacoff and Ms. Miedema responded that council will approve the budget and that the project has full support of the department. Mr. Dmytriw inquired when the budget is normally approved. Mr. Deacoff responded that it is normally approved early to mid-April.

Mr. Regan asked whether or not there would be funds for stream gapping. Ms. Miedema shared that the project is still in early stages and that level of detail has not been considered, so there is possibility that it could be. Mr. Regan asked whether there would be funds for storm water treatment or storm water testing. Ms. Miedema questioned whether Halifax Water is responsible for this process. Mr. Deacoff clarified that Halifax Water does not conduct storm water testing. Mr. Clement remarked that as part of this project further integration and cross-communication between organizations would be beneficial. Ms. Miedema agreed with Mr. Clement's remarks.

Mr. Dmytriw echoed Mr. Regan's comments on stream gauging, noting that understanding the volume and timing of flow is useful information as related to ecological changes as well as planning outcomes. Mr. Clement noted that once one study is completed it can be modeled. The Board continued to discuss the value of stream gauging with staff.

Mr. Regan commented on the importance of floodplain mapping and shared that a full study should be conducted. Ms. Miedema agreed and shared that staff are looking into partnering with the province to receive federal funding for this kind of project. She also stated that the Sackville River floodplain study is currently underway. Mr. Dmytriw commented that it would be interesting to see this report at the Board level. Ms. Miedema responded that staff meets regularly with the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee and that it would be possible to have this presentation included on an upcoming RWAB agenda.

Mr. Dmytriw asked whether staff had a sense of when the storm water and lot grading bylaws would be ready. Mr. Deacoff remarked that he is uncertain of the new timelines since it was presented to Council. Mr. Regan commented regarding inviting staff to present at an upcoming RWAB meeting.

9.1.2 Green Network Plan Presentation

The following was before the Regional Watershed Advisory Board:

- A staff presentation dated January 12, 2016, re: Halifax Green Network, An Open Space & Greenbelting Priorities Plan for the Region

Mr. Regan invited Ms. Holly Richardson to present the Halifax Green Network plan to the Board.

During the presentation, Mr. Clement asked whether the public engagement activities received a lot of response. Ms. Richardson responded that the online interactive mapping activity was not as user-friendly as anticipated. She shared that over 9,000 written and individual comments were attained and they also held public engagement sessions in the community.

Mr. Regan inquired whether septic fields were studied. Mr. Deacoff responded that it was not a particular layer investigated on the map; however, he commented that generally locations are identifiable by inference because these types of services are located where settlements are.

Once finished presenting, Mr. Regan thanked Ms. Richardson for her presentation and invited the Board to share their questions and comments on the plan.

Mr. Clement inquired about the timeline for the project. Ms. Richardson responded that the project timeline is approximately 14 months.

Mr. Clement inquired whether this plan will help give guidance at a detailed level as it is framed as a layer between the regional plan and planners. Ms. Richardson shared that as a result of this plan she anticipates a secondary level of policy direction to be developed and priority resources to be identified. She also stated that next steps include evaluating these themes with a community lens.

Mr. Dmytriw commented on the proposed approach in identifying high value land and the municipality's role in managing the development of publicly owned lands and asked for clarification on what tools the municipality has to manage privately owned land. Ms. Richardson commented that under the Charter, the municipality has the ability to regulate lands that are environmentally significant as well as to rezone privately owned lands as parks. Mr. Dmytriw further asked that in areas under development pressure, is there a general understanding of privately versus publicly owned lands. Ms. Richardson responded that there are ongoing conversations related to particular areas to identify the lands' significance and whether it should be protected. Mr. Dmytriw commented that the value of this exercise is fundamental in understanding the background in order to make informed decisions when it comes to land protection. Mr. Clement echoed Mr. Dmytriw's comments.

Mr. Regan asked whether there were any Board members interested in attending the upcoming focus groups and it was noted that a couple of Board members are already attending on behalf of other organizations. Mr. Regan asked that Mr. Reid forward an invitation to the Board for consideration.

Mr. Clement commented that under the parks and recreation banner, the information on trails is poor and asked whether work is being done on this to identify trails. Ms. Richardson responded that work is being done and noted that there are significant gaps. She continued by sharing that staff has been working collaboratively with community organizations to identify and map trails, and to update their GIS data. She also acknowledged the difficulty of mapping informal trails.

The Board commended staff on a job well done and looked forward to supporting staff efforts.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – February 10, 2016

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

Cailin MacDonald
Legislative Support