

URBAN DESIGN TASK FORCE
MINUTES

November 7, 2007

PRESENT:

Ms. Dale Godsoe, Chair
Mr. Paul MacKinnon, Vice-Chair
Mr. Bill Hyde
Mr. Steven Terauds
Mr. Bernie Smith
Ms. Margot Young
Mr. Kendall Taylor
Mr. Frank Palermo
Mr. Paul Shakotko
Mr. David Garrett
Ms. Adriane Abbott
Mr. Kevin Riles
Councillor Jim Smith
Councillor Dawn Sloane
Councillor Mary Wile

REGRETS:

Ms. Linda Garber
Ms. Cathy Carmody

STAFF:

Mr. Andy Fillmore, Project Manager
Mr. Steve Higgins, Project Implementation Coordinator, Capital District
Ms. Jacqueline Hamilton, Manager, Capital District
Ms. Melody Campbell, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 11:40 AM.

Ms. Godsoe welcomed Ms. Courtney Taylor to the meeting. Ms. Taylor attended the meeting with Mr. Taylor as part of "Take your Daughter to Work Day".

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - October 3, 2007

Mr. Garrett advised he did attend the October 3rd meeting and needs to be listed as Present on the meeting minutes.

MOVED by Councillor Sloane, seconded by Mr. Shakotko, that the minutes of October 3, 2007, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Ms. Godsoe suggested a change of order in the items on the agenda.

MOVED by Councillor Wile, seconded by Councillor Sloane, 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 - NONE

6. NEW BUSINESS

6.1 Potential Presentations to External Interest Groups

Ms. Godsoe commended the Committee on the value of the work done so far on the project.

Ms. Godsoe provided a discussion on the importance of all of the meetings, how they developed into what the proposal has become and the need to work within the timelines presented to the Task Force.

Ms. Godsoe presented a brief overview of the background of the mandate of HRM by Design. The purpose of the meeting today is to make a decision on the proposal that will go forward to the Public Hearing to be held on November 28th. This meeting will enable the public to be heard. The public will could be involved in the implementation phase. The

decisions made by the UDTF today for the downtown is important in order to move forward.

Ms. Godsoe added that she as well as members of the Committee want a vibrant, beautiful city with a quality of life unsurpassed by most cities; built on strong neighbourhoods with a strong regional centre with a large population base.

6.2 Project Time Line Update

Mr. Higgins provided an updated Critical Path regarding timelines of the project. This is a very important meeting to prepare for the public hearing on November 28th. The December 5th debriefing meeting will also be essential to the process.

6.3 Discussion of Staff Report and Preferred Downtown Scenario

Mr. Fillmore presented the report on the Preferred Downtown Scenario. He added that these could be changed or simplified.

Mr. Shakotko asked for clarification regarding number of stories, is it 16-20 stories in appendix "C". Mr. Fillmore added that Appendix "C" should be 16-20 stories - not 12-16.

Mr. Palermo expressed concern that if United Gulf builds 27 stories in the downtown, the rest of the area will be accessed for 20 stories. Why is one developer able to build at that height and others will be unable to do so. Mr. Fillmore added that a 50 story development was proposed by a developer, but it did not go forward.

Mr. Shakotko inquired about an area for Class "A" office space. Mr. Fillmore added that Area 2 behind the twisted sisters development is a proposed area.

Mr. Fillmore explained The Stacy Management Matrix.

Mr. Palermo requested clarification on the historic district in regard to downtown. Will the historic district encompass the whole downtown or will it be certain districts. Mr. Fillmore clarified that there will be districts.

Mr. Garrett expressed concern with the 3,000,000 square feet of office space and where it will be located and where extra heights are located. Mr. Taylor echoed the same concerns. Taller buildings do not belong on the Waterfront. Ms. Godsoe and Mr. Fillmore clarified the office space requirements. There was a previous requirement of 1,000,000 square feet in the first three years, currently the requirement is 3,000,00 over 15 years.

Councillor Smith expressed concern on heritage preservation. He would also like to have more direction on the recommendations and clarification of the implementation process.

It was noted that these concerns will be addressed for the November 28th meeting..

Mr. Taylor advised that there are some issues that really need to be brought forward now, such as solar access, wind issues, and heat islands creating air temperatures. Buildings need air and room to breath and he does not see this in the plan, particularly in Area 2. Mr. Fillmore advised that many of these sustainability issues will be captured in the implementation phase.

Mr. Riley added that 950,000 square feet of office space was built between 1985 and 1989 in a five year period. The 300,000 square foot requirement has been made a requirement by persons with expertise. In reality, various building heights will be required to make this work in Area 2 and well as Area 3. Mr. Riley does not support Forum 4. He added that there should be more input from heritage groups, developers, and merchant groups in order to get additional input and ideas to resolve some outstanding issues. Also, the Cogswell Interchange is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Mr. Palermo advised that the preferred scenario is reasonable. The market is driving plans for the downtown, and this is not enough. Heritage needs to be addressed in order to have the best of both worlds. Additional issues that have to be of concern are sustainability and transportation. Mr. Palermo did not agree on another meeting with various groups, as too much input and break down of the proposal could cause polarization at this point. Mr. French agreed with these comments, adding that besides the market, another aspect is flexibility and variety which would be an effective way to introduce it to the public. Ms. Godsoe advised that transportation will be further addressed in the implementation phase.

Ms. Godsoe requested members of the Committee speak to the proposal and recommend as to whether it is time for the public meeting to take place. The following comments were made by the Committee members:

Listed are the comments of the Task Force members as the Committee prepares to present the proposal to the public:

Mr. Shakotko advised he agrees with Mr. Palermo. Also the Rampart By-law needs refinement. He would like to go forward with the preferred scenario ensuring that issues such as transportation and sustainability are dealt with in the implementation phase.

Mr. Terauds agreed with the proposal. He added concern that height is becoming too large an issue. In reality all buildings do not require the height as determined in the scenario. He does not agree that more meetings need to take place. Consultants have developed the scenario, and they are experts in Urban Design.

Mr. Hyde added that the preferred downtown scenario is an improvement. He stressed that

the issues such as transportation and sustainability really need to be addressed during implementation.

Mr. Palermo added that the building story heights should be transferred to feet measurements. Creativity is required in order to have a vibrant community. Although he has some reservations, it is a reasonable plan.

Ms. Young addressed the diagram, noting that the blocks as shown are not conducive to actual city blocks. The diagram should be more detailed as to how the area will look. Areas to be addressed in the future are, transportation and sustainability (wind tunnels, solar). Performance standards must be developed in order to make it work. She agrees with the preferred scenario and is ready to move forward.

Mr. Smith agreed with Ms. Young. It is now the job of Halifax by Design to promote the scenario in a positive light, ensure stakeholders are communicated the positive and keep them aware of the amount of work that the project entailed. It will require compromises all around. It will be up to Halifax By Design to positively presell the plan.

Mr. Taylor added that the science and sustainability has to be discussed. The younger generation is much more environmentally conscious, so it is our job to ensure that buildings and plans are environmentally sustainable for the future. The diagram needs better scale and density graphics before the November 28th meeting.

Ms. Abbott is in favour of Plan C. She also agrees that there are issues that have to be determined in the implementation phase. The Cogswell interchange plan has to work, we cannot afford to exchange one bad plan for another. She does not agree that further meetings need to be held. She agrees with Mr. Smith that the presell has to be done. A mix of modern and heritage would be beneficial by creating a diverse downtown.

Mr. Garrett discussed Lower Water Street, indicating that the area should have lower height buildings and should be designed differently. He prefers 16 story to 20 story buildings. He agreed with Mr. Smith's comments on the presell and communication of the plan. Development and heritage issues need to be addressed through communication. Sustainability needs to be addressed.

Mr. Shakotko added the issues of height and heritage are centre in discussion, but there are other criteria that needs to be met. Once this plan is put forward, additional issues will come forward. Quality and quantity needs to be discussed further. It is time to go forward to the public with the proposal.

Councillor Smith agreed to go forward with the plan. A number of issues still have to be addressed, noting that open space will have to be discussed as the project moves forward.

Councillor Wile agreed with many of the comments that have already been brought forward. The Cogswell Interchange and transportation issues are concerns. Halterm and downtown traffic has to be discussed, especially with the anticipated growth in the downtown. She looks forward to nice, exciting buildings in the area. Well built, exciting buildings will add vibrancy to the City.

Councillor Sloane added that quality of life is essential. Buildings being developed in the city have to be good quality. She is concerned about sustainability as an issue. The diagrams need to be improved to show different grades and heights. The Cogswell interchange project needs to go forward in order to connect the communities. This is ready to go to the public. Good communication is required in order to get the plan moving forward.

Ms. Godsoe thanked the Committee for their great feedback. Many of the issues as the project moves forward are sustainability, transportation, heritage, good buildings. She added that Lower Water Street may have to be considered as a unique area. As the plan moves forward, communication is essential as well as presenting the amount of work and visioning that has made this project possible. The project will be judged in twenty plus years as to its success.

Mr. Fillmore thanked everyone for their comments. Changes will be made to the diagrams, as requested, before the public meeting. Communication meetings are being held in consultation with boards and committees to communicate the plan. Advertising will start for the November 28th meeting.

6.4 Date and Format of Upcoming Public Meetings

Ms. Godsoe informed the UDTF on dates of upcoming meetings.

7. CORRESPONDENCE PETITIONS AND DELEGATIONS

Ms. Godsoe informed the Committee that Ms. Carmody and Ms. Garber were unable to attend the meeting but have forwarded their comments in writing. The comments were distributed to the Task Force.

Correspondence was also received from the public as noted below. The correspondence from the listed members of the public was distributed to the UDTF.

Nancy Conrad
Philip Pacey
Judith Fingard
Hugh Pullen

Valerie Payne
Hugh Pullen
Peggy Cameron
Alan Ruffman

Ms. Godsoe added that all public input is appreciated and welcome.

8. ADDED ITEMS - NONE

9. NEXT REGULAR MEETING DATE

The next regular meeting is scheduled for December 5, 2007.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:38 pm.

Melody Campbell
Legislative Assistant