

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE MINUTES April 29, 1997

PRESENT:

Mayor Walter Fitzgerald
Deputy Mayor Jack Greenough
Councillors: Bill Dooks
Gordon R. Snow
Ron Cooper
Harry McInroy
Condo Sarto
Bruce Hetherington
Clint Schofield
John Cunningham
Jerry Blumenthal
Graham L. Downey
Larry Uteck
Russell Walker
Bill Stone
Ron Hanson
Stephen Adams
Barry Barnet
Bob Harvey
Peter Kelly
Reg Rankin
Jack Mitchell

ABSENT:

Councillors David Hendsbee (Regrets)
Howard Epstein (Regrets)

STAFF MEMBERS:

Mr. Dan English, Acting CAO
Mr. Larry Corrigan, Commissioner, Corporate Services
Ms. Valerie Spencer, Commissioner, Priority and Planning
Mr. Bruce Fisher, Budget Coordinator
Ms. Patti Halliday, Assistant Municipal Clerk

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Mayor Fitzgerald called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

1. CONTINUE 1997/98 CAPITAL BUDGET REVIEW

1.1 CAO and Priority and Policy Group

Ms. Valerie Spencer, Commissioner, Priority and Policy Group, reviewed the Priority and Policy Group's Capital Budget items.

With respect to the Regional Planning Program, Councillor Hetherington inquired if HRM has the staff to support the mapping and analysis capacity. Ms. Spencer replied HRM can rely, to some extent, on its own staff and data, but the mapping component requires information which none of the former units had as well as expertise and mapping capability beyond that of HRM. Also, software and specific expertise is sometimes required to help link systems, which HRM does not have. Councillor Hetherington expressed concern with the number of HRM employees on staff and noted nothing has come forward with respect to how to deal with specialized issues such as this.

Business Parks

Mr. Tom Rath, Manager, Business Parks, reviewed the three projects under the Business Parks Capital Budget section, totally \$393,000.

Mr. Rath recommended that Council defer the Transfer Station Demolition project, in the amount of \$235,000. The reasoning for this request is the likelihood that this project will not go forward in the next several months. Mr. Rath suggested that Council defer this now, and if the project comes back to life, staff would come back with a method to finance the removal of the transfer station other than through the Capital Budget. Mr. Rath stated it is hoped that by the time there is a firm announcement of this project, there will be a prospective buyer for the incinerator site. The money for the demolition would come from the sale of this site.

With respect to the HRM Business "For Sale" Signage project, Councillor Barnet inquired if these signs will be built in-house. Mr. Rath replied there would be a tender for this project, and, if it can be done as inexpensively, the work would be done in-house. Councillor Barnet expressed concern with purchasing a sign machine if the work cannot be done in-house.

Councillor Stone expressed concern with the lack of projects for the Bayers Lake Business Park, noting there was some ongoing work there, including a sidewalk extension from Lacewood Drive, underneath the overpass, and around the turn to the Price Club driveway. Councillor Stone stated this is a safety hazard, and if there is any additional money some consideration should be given to this project. Mr. Rath replied this sidewalk is included in the project of Priority Item #4. In response to a question from Councillor Stone regarding the readdressing of at least part of this project due to

the safety issue, Commissioner English replied he believes when the projects were reviewed by the Directors based on the criteria established, the safety aspects would have been discussed. Commissioner English noted staff are present today to address questions raised by Councillors at previous Capital Budget discussions, and an answer will be provided to Councillor Stone's question as well.

Councillor Schofield suggested money saved from the transfer station project should remain in District 9 to fund safety projects, such as a sidewalk for one side of Windmill Road through the business district, as it is very dangerous.

Councillor Hetherington suggested the Transfer Station project should be deleted and not deferred, and Mayor Fitzgerald agreed.

Councillor Hetherington expressed concern with commercial signs being placed on the back of HRM signs, in particular, the Burnside sign on the Bedford Highway. Mr. Rath replied these signs are in place due to a lease agreement with Ad Outdoor Signs. The Municipality receives about \$2500 per year in revenue from the lease of the backs of these signs. Councillor Hetherington stated he did not think commercial signs on municipal signs is appropriate, and the policy previously adopted by the former City of Dartmouth, should be re-examined.

Deputy Mayor Greenough noted many residents of Dartmouth, Cole Harbour, Eastern Passage, Sackville and Bedford utilize the transfer station quite extensively for such things as property clean-up, particularly in the spring and fall. He suggested an alternate site in Dartmouth be considered for this type of activity due to the convenience it provides the residents.

At this point in the meeting, Mr. Kulvinder Dhillon, Director, Engineering Services, provided a summary of answers to questions raised during the review of the Regional Operations section of the Operating Budget.

Mr. Dhillon responded to Councillor Stone's question raised earlier in the meeting regarding the sidewalk extension from Lacewood Drive to the Price Club driveway. Mr. Dhillon stated DOT is now analysing this area to see what kind of traffic lights and approach lanes are required. This will determine the scope of work for the project. HRM has tentatively agreed to cost share with the Province, pending Council's approval, once the scope of work is determined. With regards to the turn to the Price Club, Mr. Dhillon stated installing a sidewalk will create a drainage problem and will require curb, gutter and storm sewers. Councillor Stone stated the traffic lights were supposed to be a temporary situation, and he requested an update on who is dealing with this intersection, the progress to date and the projected time line. Mr. Dhillon gave a brief oral update and agreed to provide Councillor Stone will a report on this issue.

With respect to chip sealing, Councillor Barnet stated, in his opinion, it works to the Municipality's benefit to chip seal the gravel roads. Councillor Barnet also addressed Items D1 - D4, and D6 - D7, in the Regional Operations budget for building

maintenance and repair, which total \$815,000. Councillor Barnet stated this amount is for projects that will be identified in the future. He spoke to Commissioner McLellan about these items and chip sealing, and inquired if it would be possible to reduce the \$815,000 for miscellaneous maintenance to half that amount, and use the other half for street repair and capital improvements throughout HRM. Councillor Barnet also suggested a consultant be hired to assess the condition of these buildings. Commissioner McLellan had indicated to Councillor Barnet that he saw no problem with this. Mr. Dhillon confirmed this information.

(Councillor Adams arrived at this point in the meeting - 2:05 p.m.)

With respect to chip sealing, Mr. Dhillon noted part of the problem is that it has to be done every three years. He agreed with Councillor Barnet that it costs less to maintain a chip sealed road compared to a gravel road. Currently, there is no policy on how costs should be distributed for chip sealing, but staff can bring a report back to Council on this in the next three or four weeks.

Councillor Barnet stated he has a number of concerns with land acquisitions. He requested if it is possible to delete all the land acquisitions from the Capital Budget and deal with these on a quarterly basis. Mr. English replied that he discussed this with Mr. Corrigan earlier, and they are proposing to do just that. This will be addressed during Mr. Corrigan's presentation.

Councillor Dooks inquired about the request for a list of roads maintained by the Province and charged back to the Municipality. Mr. Dhillon replied staff is in the process of preparing this, and, hopefully, a report will be available shortly.

Councillor Cooper requested the consensus of Council to put the Montague Road sidewalk project in the Capital Budget rather than the Forest Hills Drive project, due to the safety factor. Council agreed with Councillor Cooper's request.

Councillor Schofield asked for an explanation of what happened to a project for traffic improvements on Ilsley Avenue and Wright Avenue as it was included in last year's budget. Mr. Dhillon replied, based on review of the need for the project in January of 1997, the decision was made to defer it.

Councillor Schofield stated he would like permission to negotiate with staff to exchange funds for the sidewalk project on Limardo Drive for two smaller projects in his District, at no further cost. Council agreed with his request.

With respect to Councillor Blumenthal's request to re-examine Albert Street for sidewalk renewal, Mr. Dhillon stated it is 80 percent defective. However, when the budget was prepared, the records indicated it was about 70 percent defective. If staff had this current information when preparing the budget submission, it would have been included. The estimated cost for this sidewalk is about \$50,000. Council agreed to bring this project back for further consideration, if there is any funding left over.

With respect to D131, Councillor Kelly stated he felt the amount being allocated was too high and expressed concern with projects being broadly scoped as to what the actual costs will be.

Councillor Kelly referenced a playground for Glen Moir School and noted the safety implications of the equipment which is in disrepair. The cost to replace this is about \$45,000. Mr. Blair Blakeney, Recreation and Leisure, replied this playground could be compared to numerous around the Region that are in the same condition. It was agreed to mark this item as one to revisit before the Capital Budget is approved.

Councillor Stone referenced Item #38, Page 7, Rockingham Elementary, and asked Mr. Blakeney if this has been examined. Mr. Blakeney replied staff has visited the site and this equipment is borderline and may need to be removed if it deteriorates further this year. Councillor Stone stated he would like to see this item revisited as well. Mayor Fitzgerald suggested Council should have a full report on playground equipment that is faulty, and any equipment that is determined to be unsafe should be removed.

Councillor Harvey inquired about Project #14, curb and gutter, and asked if the tender could include the first 100' around the corner of the Old Sackville Road to eliminate a problem that exists there. Mr. Dhillon replied staff will consider this.

Councillor Rankin referenced Item #50, Page 34, Parks and Playgrounds, and stated the community is prepared to do some fundraising to get this project underway. He asked that this project be included as it has a modest price compared to its value.

In an unrelated item, Councillor Mitchell expressed concern with the amount of tape on the side of the road and in the bushes along the Bedford Highway and asked that it be brought to staff's attention.

Mr. Michael Spencer, Facilities Management, addressed the proposed demolition of buildings for the downtown parking facility, Project D24, \$220,000 in the Capital Budget. Fire and Police Services have received numerous calls regarding these vacant buildings. If these buildings are still in place next winter, they will create a major fire hazard. Staff is recommending that these buildings be taken down as soon as possible to reduce liability.

Councillor Barnet stated he did not believe the Municipality should pay to remove these buildings and suggested the proposals should be adjusted to include their removal. Commissioner English stated if the demolition of the properties is to be included, the price being offered to the Municipality will be lowered by a comparative amount. Councillors Downey and Stone spoke in favour of removing these buildings as soon as possible.

Councillor Adams requested a storm sewer project be considered for Auburn Avenue as there is a safety hazard due to ice on the pavement in the winter.

Mr. Blakeney clarified the split in the Parks and Grounds category between Parks and Natural Services and Recreation and Leisure Services. He then answered questions that were raised at earlier meetings regarding Recreation and Leisure Services.

Councillor Hetherington expressed concern with the overlap of three different coordinators in his District. He asked if Parks and Natural Services is now being aligned to show a better perspective of the Districts. Mr. Dhillon replied he will look into this.

Councillor Hetherington referenced Priority #21, Page 33, Morris Lake Watershed Management Study, noting that DND has verbally approved cost sharing of this project. He asked if \$15,000 could be put back into the Capital Budget, and that this be based on the other 50 percent being cost shared by DND. It was agreed to add this to the list for reconsideration.

In response to an inquiry from Councillor Cooper, Mr. Blakeney replied there were some questions raised previously that were very District specific, and staff will be responding to those Councillors individually.

Councillor Stone inquired about the Birch Cove walkway project noting there were numerous discussions regarding obtaining access to that area to make use of free fill. He inquired about the status of this project. Mr. Blakeney replied this project, like many others, is very viable, and the decision to add any projects is one that will be made by Council. Councillor Stone requested that this project be put on the list for consideration.

Councillor Dooks expressed concern about the capital projects approved for District 1 last year, and asked if the funding is still in place to move forward with these projects. Mr. Blakeney stated any project that is not on the deferral list is carried forward work in progress. Councillor Dooks referred to the Meagher's Grant ballfield project which was approved last year and requested the possibility of obtaining the \$30,000 cut from this year's budget for this project be considered.

Councillor McInroy referenced the Eastern Passage Field House project, Page 30, and requested Council's agreement with exchanging this project for another within his District at no additional cost.

Councillor Mitchell inquired about Project 91232, Page 40, Shad Bay beach project, \$9,000, which is being recommended for deferral and asked that this be reconsidered. Councillor Mitchell also asked for Council's support for \$24,000 for Stoney Beach.

Councillor Hetherington suggested reallocating the \$25,000 for the "For Sale" signage for the business parks to the ballfield project referenced by Councillor Dooks.

Commissioner English noted there are two additional Capital Budget items to be considered. The first is the personal body armour for Police Services, \$170,000. It was agreed to add this to the list to be discussed by Mr. Corrigan.

The second item is emergency repairs to the clock tower at Halifax City Hall. Mr. Spencer reviewed the report for Council. The report recommends that Council authorize \$500,000 to permit the repair work to be done.

Councillors Barnet and Cunningham expressed concern that the amount of \$500,000 may be excessive for this work and requested more details on this issue before making a decision.

(Councillor Walker arrived at this point in the meeting - 3:30 p.m.)

Councillor Uteck expressed concern that this issue was not raised over the last few years. Mayor Fitzgerald noted \$4-5 million had been spent repairing this building over the last ten years or so. The tower was not touched at that time due to the cost, however Council was aware of it. Mr. Spencer noted this item was in last year's budget but did not get high enough on the priority list.

Councillor Harvey suggested the possibility of having a clock installed in the tower should be considered at the same time these repairs are going ahead.

Councillor Stone suggested the clock tower project could be put out to the community for fund raising, corporate sponsorship, or, at the very least, a method of financing this project over a period of time should be explored.

It was agreed to add this item to the list of additions and deletions for consideration.

1.2 Completion of 1997/98 Capital Budget Review and Recommendation

This item was not addressed and will be carried over to the next Capital Budget meeting.

MOVED by Councillors Hetherington and Sarto that the meeting adjourn at 3:40 p.m. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Patti Halliday
Assistant Municipal Clerk