

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES
JUNE 18, 1997

PRESENT:

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

Regrets

Councillors Larry Uteck
Howard Epstein
Russell Walker

STAFF MEMBERS:

Mr. Ken Meech, Chief Administrative Officer
Ms. Vi Carmichael, Municipal Clerk
Ms. Jane Nauss, Assistant Municipal Clerk

Mayor Fitzgerald called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

1. **PROPOSED 1997/98 OPERATING BUDGET**

The following Motion had been placed on the floor (but no vote was taken) during the June 16, 1997 Committee of the Whole Meeting:

MOVED by Councillor Hanson and Deputy Mayor Greenough to adopt the 1997/98 Operating Budget as recommended by the Ad Hoc Operating Budget Committee.

The following requests to amend the Main Motion were made on June 16, with it being noted that a formal Motion would be made at the appropriate time.

Councillor Harvey - to amend the proposed 1997/98 Operating Budget thereby allowing the Sackville Sports Stadium to *not* be area rated, but to be covered through a general rate, for one year.

Councillor Dooks - that rural issues and concerns be referred back to the Ad Hoc Budget Committee for review, to define cut services, and to determine how the rural areas can be taxed in a fair manner.

Councillor Harvey - that the urban adjustment to the rural area be set at 1¢ rather than ½ ¢.

Councillor Harvey - for schools located in the former Halifax County Municipality and Town of Bedford, supplementary funding be provided at the rate of 5¢.

Councillor Kelly - to withdraw the municipality's membership to the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities.

Councillor Stone addressed Council expressing concern with the School Board discretionary funding (for improved/additional programs), noting the funds appear to have been allocated to the rural areas rather than the municipality as a whole. Accordingly, the Councillor requested a listing of where the discretionary funds are being allocated. Further, the Councillor suggested a meeting take place between the Councillors of the former Cities of Halifax and Dartmouth to discuss this matter.

Councillor Hetherington took his place at the meeting at 10:10 a.m.

Councillor Blumenthal referenced Summer School and enquired how Halifax students would be affected. The Councillor suggested that the Community Councils should allocate funds to the schools.

Councillor Kelly took his place at the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

A brief discussion ensued between Deputy Mayor Greenough and Mr. Bruce Fisher,

Budget Co-ordinator, as to the dollar figure derived as a result of an increase in the weighting factor from 2.47 to 2.55. Mr. Fisher advised he would clarify the amount anticipated. Further, he would also clarify the Dartmouth commercial rate.

Deputy Mayor Greenough stressed he did not want the community to think this Operating Budget was being passed on the backs of businesses. Also, the Deputy Mayor stated that a reduction of 1¢ to the Budget equates to \$2 million; therefore, unless the Province agrees to cost share in the transition costs, it would be extremely difficult for Council to reduce this Budget further.

Councillor Snow stressed that the way of life in rural areas is different from that of downtown Halifax and as a result, each District cannot be treated fairly. Accordingly, the Councillor suggested the Operating Budget be adopted as recommended by the Ad Hoc Budget Committee.

Councillor Hendsbee expressed concern with the fact that student transportation will once again be an issue and that rationalization of same by the Regional School Board needs to be determined. Further, the Councillor suggested it was premature to adopt the Operating Budget until a line by line review of the tax rate is undertaken. Also, the Councillor suggested the assessment base information was faulty and the GIS system needs to be up and running.

Councillor Dooks stated it has been determined that the municipality has no responsibility for roads in District One. In response, Mr. Ken Meech, Chief Administrative Officer, advised this was correct and that it has been difficult to get the Province to accept its obligations under the DOT & PW Agreement.

Councillor Dooks suggested a representative from the Province be invited to meet with Council on the road responsibility issue. Further, he reiterated his suggestion that all rural concerns be reviewed.

Councillor Adams enquired if his suggestion for a flat rate of \$70 could be considered. In response, Mr. Corrigan stated that the Municipal Solicitor has advised this would not be a legal option under the HRM Act.

Councillor McInroy assumed his place at the meeting (11:00 a.m.).

Councillor Adams suggested staff illustrate for the public, costs for services received prior to amalgamation and the service exchange. Further, the Councillor suggested that the Mayor forward correspondence to Mr. Keith Colwell, MLA, Eastern Shore, requesting amendments to the Assessment Act as the current process reflects nothing accurate.

Deputy Mayor Greenough assumed the Chair.

In closing, Councillor Adams suggested utilizing the 1997/98 assessment figures and using a lower tax rate divided amongst 105,000 households. In response, Mr. Fisher

advised he was not sure of the legalities involved with this suggestion.

Councillor Schofield expressed concern that Dartmouth will be losing services. He also expressed concern with the fact that the Regional School Board was entertaining the thought of reducing the required mileage for student transportation between home and school.

Councillor Cooper expressed concern, noting he would like a line by line review of the budget as requested by Councillor Hendsbee. Further, the Councillor suggested that Council was attempting to rush this Budget through the process. Councillor Cooper enquired as to when follow-up information would be provided as to changes to the Budget from its original form. In response, Mr. Meech advised the report from the Ad Hoc Committee identified the changes, however, he reminded Council that it is anticipated a process to review service delivery, involving the public, Council and staff, will commence between September and December of this year.

Councillor Cooper suggested that the Regional Operations Budget be elaborated upon. With respect to assessments, the Councillor suggested that the Province continue to do its job, based on market value, as this reflects where one lives.

Mayor Fitzgerald assumed the Chair.

At this point in the meeting, Mayor Fitzgerald introduced to Council, Mr. Edmund Morris, Chair, Halifax Foundation, and Mr. and Mrs. Surette, P.E.I., guest speakers attending a meeting of the Halifax Foundation.

Councillor Rankin suggested there had been a promise made by Council for public consultation on the tax structure. As the rural taxpayers are most concerned with the bottom line, Council must be able to rationalize the Budget.

Councillor Kelly expressed concern with the fact that the community of Bedford is losing all semblance of the identity it once had as his residents felt that services had declined. Particularly, the Councillor referenced closing of the storefront (he suggested that the former Fire Hall be utilized as a storefront), decline in Police Services, loss of Engineering and Planning Departments to Acadia School, Lower Sackville, and decline in park maintenance. The Councillor requested, prior to voting on the budget, additional information on changes reflective of service levels, was required.

In response, Mr. Larry Corrigan stated this was an extremely broad question due to the size of the Budget (thousands of items are affected). However, when the Budget is adopted, staff will consolidate the information and it will be easier to determine the changes.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Kelly if staff can determine levels of service District by District, Mr. Ken Meech advised this process would only contribute to parochialism.

Councillor Kelly reiterated his concern that the community of Bedford was not getting the same level of service as that prior to amalgamation and referenced a confidential report on the former Bedford Fire Station which had been distributed In Camera on June 17, 1997.

Councillor Blumenthal stated that **no** District is getting the same level of service as that prior to amalgamation.

In response to Councillor Kelly's concern on the utilization of the former Fire Hall as a storefront, Mr. Meech stated there is a listing of all facilities owned by the municipality being comprised. At the time of completion, it will be determined whether it will be feasible to keep the former Fire Hall. If not, perhaps other options for a storefront in Bedford could be reviewed, should Council so desire. In the meantime, staff will follow up on this issue with the Councillor.

Councillor Hendsbee stated he was in a position to support the Budget but not the tax structure. Further, the Councillor suggested that the deficit for the Sackville Sports Stadium should be covered through the urban tax rate. Also, it was suggested the Dartmouth North Community Centre should be supported through an urban tax rate and not through the Grants Committee.

Councillor Mitchell stated his residents had been contacting him with their concerns on the tax rate and are wondering what the municipality can do with regards to the assessment issue.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Hetherington as to what would happen to the area rates if the Operating Budget was adopted, Mr. Meech advised if Regional Council adopts the Operating Budget, the area rates would automatically be included, however, the matter of defining the area to be covered by an area rate, would be dealt with by the Community Councils.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Cooper respecting snow plowing on sidewalks, Mr. Bruce Fisher advised that staff would attempt to provide this information for the June 24 Council meeting. Mr. Meech advised that staff was assuming that snow plowing on sidewalks would not be provided through the general Operating Budget.

Councillor Sarto expressed concern that the Regional School Board was cancelling student transportation commencing 1997/98. The Councillor suggested an allocation from the supplementary funding cover this cost so the service can continue. Councillor Sarto requested a breakdown of the Regional School Board's supplementary funding for the June 24 Council meeting.

The following Motion was put on the floor:

MOVED by Councillors Barnet and Harvey to amend the proposed 1997/98 Operating Budget thereby allowing the Sackville Sports Stadium to *not* be area rated, but to be covered through a general rate, for one year.

Councillor Hendsbee requested the Motion be amended to include the Dartmouth North Community Centre being supported in the urban general rate.

Mayor Fitzgerald advised he would not permit the amendment and it was subsequently withdrawn.

Mr. Meech advised that a definition of a "Major Facility" and a "Community Facility" needs to be determined and that he would discuss same with Community Services.

Councillor Stone stated he would like to see a business plan as to how the Sackville Sports Stadium was dealing with the deficit.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Another Motion was put on the floor.

MOVED by Councillors Dooks and Snow that rural issues and concerns be referred back to the Ad Hoc Budget Committee for review, to define service cuts, and to determine how the rural areas can be taxed in a fair manner.

As the Ad Hoc Budget Committee was no longer in place, Mayor Fitzgerald ruled this Motion Out of Order.

The following Motion was put on the floor:

MOVED by Councillors Hendsbee and Blumenthal to refer to a future Committee of the Whole, for discussion purposes only, a proposal for the rural areas to receive a tax credit for services not received. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Another Motion was put on the floor.

MOVED by Councillors Harvey and Dooks that the urban adjustment to the rural area be set at 1¢ rather than ½ ¢.

In speaking to the Motion, Councillor Cooper enquired what the effective tax rate would be for the residents. In response, Mr. Fisher advised it would be different from community to community.

MOTION DEFEATED.

Another Motion was put on the floor.

MOVED by Councillors Harvey and Adams that for schools located in the former Halifax County Municipality and Town of Bedford, supplementary funding be provided at the rate of 5¢.

No vote was taken on the Motion. Another Motion was put on the floor.

MOVED by Councillors Barnet and Adams to refer the matter of supplementary funding to be provided at the rate of 5¢ for the schools located in the former Halifax County Municipality and the Town of Bedford areas, be referred to the Community Councils for public participation.

Councillor Harvey stated there was not sufficient time to forward this matter to the Community Councils. Mr. Corrigan agreed, stating the tax rates have to be set as soon as possible.

A Motion to amend the aforementioned Motion was put on the floor.

MOVED by Councillors Harvey and Hendsbee to amend the Motion to replace “5¢” with “2¢.”

No vote was taken on the amendment. Another Motion was put on the floor.

MOVED by Councillors Barnet and Adams to refer the matter of supplementary funding to be provided at the rate of 5¢ for the schools located in the former Halifax County Municipality and the Town of Bedford areas, to the respective Councillors for a recommendation for the June 24 Regional Council meeting. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Councillor Schofield addressed the Dartmouth North Community Centre issue noting he would like the facility to be treated the same as the Sackville Sports Stadium. In response, Mr. Meech advised that Mr. English, Commissioner, Community Services, would address this matter during the June 24 Regional Council Meeting.

Another Motion was put on the floor.

MOVED by Councillors Kelly and Adams to withdraw the municipality’s membership to the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities.

In speaking to the Motion, Mr. Corrigan advised there are UNSM programs that would benefit the municipality.

No vote was taken on the Motion. Another Motion was put on the floor.

MOVED by Councillors Kelly and Adams to refer the matter of withdrawing the municipality’s membership to the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities, to staff, for a recommendation for the June 24 Regional Council meeting. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

A vote on the Main Motion, to adopt the 1997/98 Operating Budget was voted upon as

follows:

MOVED by Councillor Hanson and Deputy Mayor Greenough to adopt the 1997/98 Operating Budget as recommended by the Ad Hoc Operating Budget Committee.

In speaking to the Motion, Councillor Rankin suggested the preliminary Operating Budget document be provided to the public for review; therefore, a vote on the Main Motion should be deferred to July 8.

Another Motion was put on the floor.

MOVED by Councillors Rankin and Hendsbee to defer adoption of the 1997/98 Operating Budget to July 8. MOTION DEFEATED.

A vote on the Main Motion took place.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

2. **ADJOURNMENT**

MOVED by Councillors Blumenthal and Harvey to adjourn the meeting at 1:30 p.m. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Vi Carmichael
MUNICIPAL CLERK