

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

**HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MINUTES
March 25, 2003**

PRESENT:

Mayor Peter J. Kelly
Deputy Mayor Harry McInroy
Councillors: Stephen Streach
Gary Hines
Keith Colwell
Ron Cooper
Brian Warshick
Condo Sarto
Bruce Hetherington
Jim Smith
John Cunningham
Jerry S. Blumenthal
Dawn M. Sloane (2:20 p.m.)
Sue Uteck
Sheila Fougere (2:30 p.m.)
Russell Walker
Diana Whalen
Stephen D. Adams (4:05 p.m.)
Brad Johns
Robert P. Harvey
Len Goucher
Reg Rankin

REGRETS:

Councillors: Linda Mosher
Gary G. Meade

STAFF:

Mr. George McLellan, Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. Wayne Anstey, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Jan Gibson, Deputy Municipal Clerk
Ms. Patti Halliday, Legislative Assistant

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Mayor Kelly called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - FEBRUARY 18, 2003

MOVED by Councillor Warshick, seconded by Councillor Hetherington, that the minutes of February 18, 2003 be approved, as circulated. **MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

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

MOVED by Councillor Blumenthal, seconded by Councillor Hetherington, that the Order of Business be approved, as circulated. **MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. CONTINUATION BUDGET DELIBERATIONS - 2003/3004 PARKING LOT ITEMS

MOVED by Councillor Hetherington, seconded by Councillor Blumenthal, that it be recommended to Council that it hereby be resolved that:

- a) The Capital Budget in the amount of \$73,111,000 be approved; and,
- b) the Operating Budget in the amount of \$529,217,477 gross expenditures, \$423,903,700 non-departmental revenues, and \$105,313,777 departmental revenues be approved, which reflects all adjustments approved by Council to the Budget tabled on March 4, 2003, and further;
- c) that the general rates of taxation on commercial, machinery and equipment, and business occupancy be set at
 - (i) \$3.359 for the urban area;
 - (ii) \$3.359 for the suburban area; and
 - (iii) \$3.086 for the rural areaapplied to the full assessed value of the property.
- d) that the general rates of taxation on residential and resource property be set at
 - (i) \$1.315 for the urban area;
 - (ii) \$1.212 for the suburban area; and
 - (iii) \$1.205 for the rural areaapplied to the full assessed value of the property.

- e) That the boundary of the urban, suburban and rural areas is as delineated in the attached "Tax Structure Map" and the amendments as detailed in Maps A to E.
- f) that Supplementary Education shall be set at the rate of \$0.109 to the residential and resource assessment and set as \$0.278 to the commercial, machinery and equipment assessment including business occupancy of the former City of Halifax; and \$0.088 to the residential and resource assessment and \$0.224 to the commercial, machinery and equipment assessment including business occupancy of the former City of Dartmouth; and an area rate of \$0.040 to the residential, resource, commercial, machinery and equipment assessment including business occupancy of the former Town of Bedford and Halifax County. Total discretionary funding shall be set at \$20,846,200. That the dollar allocations for former City of Halifax equal \$12,295,000, former City of Dartmouth equal \$5,239,200 and the former County/Bedford equal \$3,312,000.
- g) that Fire Protection rates shall be set at \$0.084 for all commercial assessable property, including business occupancy; and at a rate of \$0.033 for all residential and resource property which is within 1,200 feet of a hydrant that is designed and operated for public fire protection purposes;
- h) that the final tax bills will become due on Tuesday, September 30, 2003.
- i) that the interest rate on the Special Reserve Funds, designated as requiring interest under Section 100(2) of the Municipal Government Act, be set at the rate of return on funds invested by HRM for the period April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004.
- j) that the interest rate on the Pollution Control Reserves be set at the rate of return on funds invested by HRM for the period April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004.
- k) that the interest rate on all reserves except for those identified in i) and j) will be set at the rate of return on funds invested by HRM for the period April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004.
- l) that the interest rate on trust funds will be set at the annual rate of return on specific investments held by the trusts.

Mr. George McLellan, Chief Administrative Officer, noted there were a couple of errors in the

budget document which Mr. Bruce Fisher reviewed. He noted that once the budget is approved by Council, a revised final document will be prepared and sent out.

Mr. Fisher circulated a document entitled *Technical Changes to 2003-2004 Budget*, dated March 25, 2003, which he reviewed for the benefit of the Committee.

(Councillor Sloane took her place at the meeting at 2:20 p.m.)

Councillor Colwell requested a breakdown of the urban, suburban and rural tax rates plus the area rates for last year for his area compared to this year's rates. Mr. Fisher indicated this information could be provided for all Councillors.

(Councillor Fougere took her place at 2:30 p.m.)

Councillor Harvey requested that Section (f) of the resolution, regarding supplementary education funding, be voted on separately.

Responding to a question of Councillor Sarto regarding capital items in the parking lot, Mr. Fisher stated washrooms for the Halifax Common and the foot bridge for the Dartmouth trail system are now included in the Capital Budget.

Councillor Blumenthal requested that Item #6 - Hydrostone Lighting be removed from the parking lot.

With respect to area rates, Mr. Fisher stated they will be coming back to Council in mid-April. He noted funding for fire protection and supplementary funding are included in the resolution currently before Council.

Councillor Johns expressed concerns with Station 11 - Patton Road and inquired if two firefighters could be added to the budget for this station. Chief Eddy responded that as part of the 2003/2004 business plan, which will be before Council in a few months, it is intended to have a very open discussion regarding standards of response. With respect to Station 11, Chief Eddy noted it was closed several years ago to address a serious structural problem. At the time, Station 10 - Millwood was staffed with two people. When the Patton Road station was closed, the two firefighters were moved to Station 10. From July 1997 to March 2003, Station 10 responded to 2364 calls. For the same period, Patton road responded to 425 calls.

Councillor Johns stated the Patton Road station was to be closed four to six weeks for repairs and it has now been two years. When it was initially closed, the idea of consolidation of the two stations was discussed, and it was determined it would be more fiscally responsible to

have the station repaired at \$150,000, however, the station is still not open. The Councillor stated a recent fire in the area had a nine minute response time, and in 1997, it was indicated that a 4 minute response time was the acceptable standard. Councillor Johns noted that since 1997 when the station was closed, there has been substantial growth in the area.

In response, Chief Eddy clarified the response time for the recent fire was approximately 8 minutes. With respect to Station 11, Chief Eddy noted HRM owns the building and had a responsibility to repair that asset. In terms of staffing, he stated it was felt that four firefighters at Millwood would offer the citizens the best value considering the number of calls received at that station compared to Patton Road.

With respect to an accessible boat lift, Councilor Uteck put forth the following motion:

MOVED by Councillor Uteck, seconded by Councillor Sloane, that \$30,000 from the Human Resources Operating Budget and \$30,000 from the Shared Services Operating Budget, be transferred into the Capital Budget for an accessible boat lift on the waterfront.

Councillor Uteck noted this has been a request since 1999, and it can make a huge difference in the quality of life for disabled persons.

Mr. McLellan noted staff is committed to look at the accessibility issue with regard to recreation land properties. He stated there is no intent not to deal with the accessible boat lift this year, but staff would prefer to deal with it in a broader approach on accessibility in recreation. Councillor Uteck responded that staff had three years to consider this, and there has never been a report back to Council. The Councillor stated she would like to leave the request in as it is vital with the upcoming tourist season and it could be promoted as part of the strategy for a Smart City.

Councillor Streach expressed concern without having a staff report regarding the effect this transfer of funds will have on the other departments.

Mr. McLellan confirmed that it is possible to transfer operating funds to the capital budget. He also noted that staff are sincere in dealing with issues of accessibility and will make it a priority to do a broad look with respect to accessibility in recreation before the summer and come back to Council within the next few months.

Councillor Hetherington proposed to amend the resolution, if Councillor Uteck agreed to withdraw her motion regarding the accessible boat ramp, to add the washrooms for the Halifax Common, the foot bridge for the Dartmouth trail system, and the accessible boat lift, for a total Capital Budget of \$73,396,000. Councillor Uteck agreed to withdraw her motion. However, Councillor Blumenthal, the Seconder of the resolution, did not agree stating he

would prefer to see something put towards accessible playgrounds rather than a boat ramp.

Councillor Uteck's motion was **withdrawn**, and the main resolution was back on the floor.

Ms. MacLennan noted the parking lot recommendation list which recommended the washrooms and foot bridge would have to be added to the Capital Budget figure. She noted the \$60,000 for the boat ramp could be added to the Capital Budget but it would need a funding source.

Councillor Cunningham noted there are a shortage of boat ramps on the waterfront, and the whole situation has to be looked at in general to determine the best location. Councillor Uteck stated the location does not matter as long as there is an accessible boat ramp somewhere in HRM.

MOVED by Councillor Hetherington, seconded by Councillor Smith, that the resolution be amended to change the Capital Budget figure to \$73,396,000 to include Items 2 & 3 of the parking lot (the washrooms and the foot bridge) and an accessible boat lift on the waterfront in HRM.

Following a further debate, it was agreed to vote on the three projects included in the amendment separately.

MOVED by Councillor Hetherington, seconded by Councillor Smith, that the resolution be amended to include the washrooms for the Halifax Common. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Councillor Hetherington, seconded by Councillor Smith, that the resolution be amended to include the foot bridge for the Dartmouth trail system. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Councillor Hetherington, seconded by Councillor Smith, that the resolution be amended to include an accessible boat ramp on the waterfront in HRM. MOTION PUT AND DEFEATED.

The main motion, as amended, now read as follows:

MOVED by Councillor Hetherington, seconded by Councillor Blumenthal, that it be recommended to Council that it hereby be resolved that:

- a) The Capital Budget in the amount of \$73,336,000 be approved; and,

- b) the Operating Budget in the amount of \$529,217,477 gross expenditures, \$423,903,700 non-departmental revenues, and \$105,313,777 departmental revenues be approved, which reflects all adjustments approved by Council to the Budget tabled on March 4, 2003, and further;

- c) that the general rates of taxation on commercial, machinery and equipment, and business occupancy be set at
 - (i) \$3.359 for the urban area;
 - (ii) \$3.359 for the suburban area; and
 - (iii) \$3.086 for the rural areaapplied to the full assessed value of the property.

- d) that the general rates of taxation on residential and resource property be set at
 - (i) \$1.315 for the urban area;
 - (ii) \$1.212 for the suburban area; and
 - (iii) \$1.205 for the rural areaapplied to the full assessed value of the property.

- e) That the boundary of the urban, suburban and rural areas is as delineated in the attached "Tax Structure Map" and the amendments as detailed in Maps A to E.

- f) that Supplementary Education shall be set at the rate of \$0.109 to the residential and resource assessment and set as \$0.278 to the commercial, machinery and equipment assessment including business occupancy of the former City of Halifax; and \$0.088 to the residential and resource assessment and \$0.224 to the commercial, machinery and equipment assessment including business occupancy of the former City of Dartmouth; and an area rate of \$0.040 to the residential, resource, commercial, machinery and equipment assessment including business occupancy of the former Town of Bedford and Halifax County. Total discretionary funding shall be set at \$20,846,200. That the dollar allocations for former City of Halifax equal \$12,295,000, former City of Dartmouth equal \$5,239,200 and the former County/Bedford equal \$3,312,000.

- g) that Fire Protection rates shall be set at \$0.084 for all commercial assessable property, including business occupancy; and at a rate of \$0.033 for all residential and resource property which is within 1,200 feet of a hydrant that is designed and operated for public fire protection purposes;

- h) that the final tax bills will become due on Tuesday, September 30, 2003.
- i) that the interest rate on the Special Reserve Funds, designated as requiring interest under Section 100(2) of the Municipal Government Act, be set at the rate of return on funds invested by HRM for the period April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004.
- j) that the interest rate on the Pollution Control Reserves be set at the rate of return on funds invested by HRM for the period April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004.
- k) that the interest rate on all reserves except for those identified in i) and j) will be set at the rate of return on funds invested by HRM for the period April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004.
- l) that the interest rate on trust funds will be set at the annual rate of return on specific investments held by the trusts.

Councillor Harvey expressed concern with Section (f) of the resolution regarding supplementary education funding, which he noted does not contain the \$933,000 of supplementary funding for which a business case was presented by the School Board last week. The Councillor stated by eliminating this funding some of the existing programs will be lost due to increases related to providing those programs. Councillor Harvey requested that Council accept the School Board's business case and and restore the \$933,000 of supplementary education funding.

MOVED by Councillor Harvey, seconded by Councillor Walker, that the resolution be amended to increase supplementary education funding by \$933,000.

Following a brief debate, the vote was taken on the amendment.

MOTION PUT AND DEFEATED.

Councillor Warshick requested that a report be brought back to Council some time in the next year regarding the \$2.5 million spent by HRM on advertising and the possibility of coordinating this through an outside agency or an independent department within HRM.

Councillor Colwell raised questions regarding recreation centres, management agreements and the suburban tax rate. Mr. Fisher provided a brief response and indicated he would speak further on these issues directly with the Councillor.

With respect to dry hydrants, Councillor Colwell requested that North Preston, in particular, be examined as a potential location. Chief Eddy responded that he would ensure that this is addressed.

Councillor Smith requested information regarding how much it would cost the average taxpayer this year for the percentage of lift that HRM did not take.

Councillor Johns raised further questions to Chief Eddy regarding response times and the Patton Road station.

Responding to a question of Councillor Johns regarding reopening the Patton Road station, Mr. McLellan stated staff would have to go back and examine the running costs of the station when it was open for some indication as to what the costs would be. With regard to the closing of that station, Mr. McLellan noted this was discussed by Council at some length at the time and Fire Services did nothing untoward or unexplained with respect to that closure. Councillor Johns stated his concern was that it was closed in 2001 due to structural problems and mould, and press releases and information to Council indicated it would be repaired and reopened. Therefore, there was a feeling in the community that it would be reopened.

(Mayor Kelly left the meeting at 4 p.m., and Deputy Mayor McInroy assumed the Chair.)

MOVED by Councillor Johns, seconded by Councillor Walker, that Council direct Fire Services to reinstate two firefighters at Station 11 as it was previous to being closed for renovations. MOTION PUT AND DEFEATED.

(Councillor Adams took his place at the meeting at 4:05 p.m.)

Following some further debate, Item (f) of the resolution was extracted and voted on separately as earlier requested by Councillor Harvey.

MOVED by Councillor Hetherington, seconded by Councillor Blumenthal, that it be recommended to Council that it hereby be resolved:

- b) that Supplementary Education shall be set at the rate of \$0.109 to the residential and resource assessment and set as \$0.278 to the commercial, machinery and equipment assessment including business occupancy of the former City of Halifax; and \$0.088 to the residential and resource assessment and \$0.224 to the commercial, machinery and equipment assessment including business occupancy of the former City of Dartmouth; and an area rate of \$0.040 to the residential, resource, commercial, machinery and equipment assessment including business occupancy of the former Town of**

Bedford and Halifax County. Total discretionary funding shall be set at \$20,846,200. That the dollar allocations for former City of Halifax equal \$12,295,000, former City of Dartmouth equal \$5,239,200 and the former County/Bedford equal \$3,312,000. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

The vote was then taken on the overall remaining resolution.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

Jan Gibson
Deputy Municipal Clerk