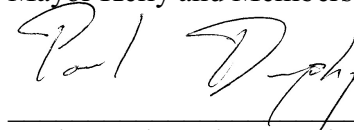


Item No. 3

**Halifax Regional Council
September 29, 2009
Committee of the Whole**

To: Mayor Kelly and Members of Regional Council

Submitted by:



Paul Dunphy, Director of Community Development

Date: September 14, 2009

Subject: Project 00953 - Wind Turbines: Project Update and Community Consultation

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

- On November 21, 2006, Regional Council initiated a planning process to prepare policy and land use regulations for the location and siting of the wind turbines in HRM.
- On January 23, 2007, an information report was tabled outlining the community consultation process for Phase 1 of the Wind Energy Project.
- On October 24, 2007, motion was passed by the Regional Planning Advisory Committee (RPAC) to begin community consultation for Phase II of the Wind Energy Project.
- On July 2, 2009, staff presented recommendations and proposed policy direction to the Energy and Underground Services Committee. Committee members requested additional community consultation.
- On July 15, 2009, staff presented recommendations to RPAC indicating an additional round of community consultation would be undertaken in the fall of 2009.

BACKGROUND and DISCUSSION

On November 21, 2006, Regional Council initiated a planning process for the purpose of creating policy and regulations for the siting of wind turbines in HRM. Phase One of the community consultation program commenced in January 2007. At the time of initiation of the HRM wind energy project, an unforeseen number of concurrent processes for wind energy were being initiated by the Province. These processes were in response to the growing demand for wind energy in Nova Scotia and while running independently of the HRM wind energy project, would significantly impact the siting of wind turbines in HRM. Staff are now preparing to take the proposed recommendations for the siting of wind turbines in HRM out for one final round of community consultation prior to bringing the matter forward to Regional Council for public hearing.

The following is a time line and review of the project milestones from initiation to present day and a brief description of the community consultation process staff are preparing to undertake prior to tabling the new policies for Council's consideration.

November 21, 2006

The Wind Energy project was initiated in response to the rapidly growing interest for wind energy projects in Nova Scotia. Factors that influenced the demand for this project included the following:

- an emphasis on renewable energy targets recently established by NSPI;
- the lack of consistent Municipal regulations for siting wind turbines in HRM;
- interest from private wind energy developers to expand capacity; and
- the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy requirement to address wind energy through the Community Energy Functional Plan.

HRM prepared a Wind Energy Master Plan which was used as the basis for community consultations and issues related to the siting of wind turbines in HRM.

January 2007 to April 2008

Early in 2007, the Province launched a series of interrelated projects to assist municipalities in adopting regulations for siting wind turbines. Three of these projects have had a direct impact on HRM's wind energy project. Those projects were:

- new Environmental Assessment Guidelines for Wind Turbines (May 07);
- new Nova Scotia Wind Atlas data (September 07); and
- Best Practices Guide and a Model Land Use By-law for Siting Wind Turbines in Nova Scotia (January 08).

These Provincial projects (which had not been initiated at the time of HRM's 2006 Wind Energy Master Plan) superseded the Master Plan's recommendations in the following areas:

- appropriate planning and development approval processes;
- wind turbine location suitability in HRM; and
- recommended standards for wind turbine siting.

The relationship between the Provincial processes and HRM's wind energy project would ultimately solidify over 2007/2008, prompting staff to engage in the 2nd phase of community consultation. A series of updates were also provided to the Regional Plan Advisory Committee and the Energy and Underground Services Committee. The intention was to provide information to these committees about the complexities of siting large and small scale wind turbines within potential proximity to areas of population and to provide an explanation as to staff direction.

July 2009

In July of 2009, staff presented the proposed policy direction to the Energy and Underground Services Committee and the Regional Planning Advisory Committee. Based on feedback received, it was agreed that additional community consultation was appropriate.

Community Consultation

Typically, one meeting per region is held for issues of Regional importance. This procedure has been established for other projects of Region-wide significance such as Capital Cost Contributions, Construction and Demolition sites and the Parkland Dedication review process. The first round of consultation on wind energy included nine separate community meetings (including three in the urban core and six in rural HRM), meetings at the watershed advisory committees and a meeting with the Burnside Business Association (attempts to meet with the Bayers Lake Business Association were unsuccessful).

For this round, staff intend to hold three public meetings, the purpose of which is to present the proposed regulations to the community and to receive feedback on the opportunities and issues related to the siting of wind turbines in the urban and rural areas of HRM. The three consultation meetings are proposed as follows:

Meeting Locations

- 1 meeting in the Bedford/Sackville area (Central Region)
- 1 meeting in the Dartmouth/Cole Harbour/Eastern Passage area (Eastern Region)
- 1 meeting in the Halifax /St. Margarets Bay (Western Region)

In addition, meetings are intended to be scheduled with the Greater Burnside Business Association and the Bayers Lake Business Association to discuss the opportunities and issues associated with accessory wind turbine development in the business parks.

The public meetings will be duly advertised, and invitations will be extended to all Community Councils, Planning Advisory Committees, and the Regional Plan Advisory Committee. Stakeholders will also be invited to these sessions to make comment. _____

It is anticipated that this round of community consultation will commence in October and run through November of 2009.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

None

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ATTACHMENTS

None

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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