


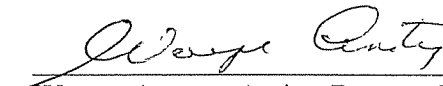
**Halifax Regional Council
Committee of the Whole
January 24, 2006**

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:



Dan English, Chief Administrative Officer



Wayne Anstey, Acting Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: January 18, 2005

SUBJECT: Council Focus Areas: Status Report

ORIGIN

Council identified 12 strategic focus areas it wished to discuss in terms of setting priorities. Eleven of these have now been debated at Committee-of-the-Whole sessions. This Status Report summarizes the discussion and direction provided by Council on these focus areas.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

Council endorse the directions respecting the Council Focus Areas as provided by Regional Council during the Committee-of-the-Whole sessions and as summarized in Attachment A, and instruct staff to prepare the 2006/7 Business Plan reflecting these directions to the extent possible.

BACKGROUND & DISCUSSION

At the October 11th Committee of the Whole, Council identified 12 strategic focus areas, which in essence form Council's Action Plan and that convey Council's commitment to residents to deal with these areas in a timely fashion. Council also expressed an interest in using these discussions to provide earlier input into the preparation of the 2006/7 budget and business plans. The purpose of this report is to ensure Council's directions have been accurately captured. The 12 strategic focus areas include:

Regional Planning	Youth
Infrastructure	By-law Enforcement
Public Safety	Taxation
Traffic Congestion	Transit
Community Relations	Community Recreation
Community Development	Economic Development

For each of the Council Focus areas, staff prepared a status report and suggested approach to further action. Discussion papers included a description of current initiatives, analysis of the issues, options for resolution, capacity and implications. Budget implications were to be determined based on the direction provided by Council on each focus area.

The goal of this initiative was to provide Council an opportunity to identify and articulate to staff the areas they were most concerned with. This has been a new process for Council and staff. It was stated at the beginning that these issues would not be resolved in one session - they tend to be long standing, ongoing issues. Some things could be done in the short term, others would take longer. It was also stated that funding would likely not be sufficient to address all of the areas identified by Council, and that staff would consider reallocation of resources, new partners, community responsibilities, balancing existing service requirements when developing subsequent business plans and budget, etc. Choices will have to be made, and some initiatives may have to be delayed to subsequent budgets. The Business Plan and Budget timeline has been somewhat delayed to allow for this initiative.

There is one Focus Area yet to be discussed by Council: Taxation. The Summary Report contains the direction sought as contained in the Taxation Council Focus Area presentation which Council received in the January 17, 2006 Council Package. This will be amended as determined by Council at the January 24, 2006 Committee-of-the-Whole.

Staff will be seriously considering the directions and comments made by Council as contained in the Summary in Attachment A. A presentation is being made to Council at the January 24th Committee-of-the-Whole on the fiscal framework where Council is being asked to provide staff with the tax revenue and tax rate assumptions around which they will prepare a draft budget. Staff will report back to Council on initiatives in support of the Council Focus Areas that may be accommodated in the 2006/7 business plans and budget.

As this is a new process, once the 2006/7 budget and business plan is approved by Council, staff will be seeking Council's feedback on the Council Focus Areas initiative, to determine if it is an approach Council would like to continue with, and if so, what changes in the process would make it more effective and efficient.

Next Steps

This summary will be finalized upon completion of the Council Focus Area discussion on Taxation. The directions from the Council Focus Areas will be incorporated into the business plans and 2006/7 budget. The Budget will be tabled with Council and Council will have sufficient opportunity to ensure the 2006/7 budget adequately reflects the intent provided through this initiative.

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.

ALTERNATIVES

None.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Council Focus Areas: Summary Report January 2006

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

Report Prepared by: _____
Betty MacDonald/Director Governance and Strategic Initiatives

Council Focus Areas
Summary Report January 2006

1. Regional Planning

General Comments October 18th, 2005 COW

- Councillors discussed the District Fact sheets, and agreed to discuss any issues with staff. Council directed staff to be able to provide answers to district specific questions at the Community Council sessions.
- Council asked staff to prepare a glossary of terms to be placed on the website.
- Council indicated their expectation that staff would be open to the issues that may come forward at the Community Council sessions. Staff assured Council that they would bring back to Council the results of the Community Council Sessions.

Council Direction: December 6, 2005 Regional Council Meeting

- Council approved the tabling of Draft #2 of the Regional Plan
- Council approved a public review period ending January 31, 2006
- Council instructed the Regional Planning Review Committee to consider all written public submissions made through this review period and submit a final report to Council on February 22, 2006 for final debate and First Reading.

2. Infrastructure

General Comments November 29, 2005

- rural and suburban areas are growing, requiring land for parks, playgrounds
- capacity for strategic land acquisition required
- long term strategy for asset management needs to consider cultural components
- HRM needs to take care of its own facilities
- decisions to dispose of property should consider future needs
- concerns about general state of HRM roads, sidewalks, upgrading of gravel streets, bikeways, business parks, parks & playgrounds, sewers

Council Direction November 29, 2005

- Council approved the pre-tendering of playground and recreation capital projects to facilitate the advanced tendering of these projects
- Council accepted direction sought
 - reallocation of capital budget to include more for streets, roads, sidewalks, land acquisitions
 - consideration of HRM buildings in relation to culture
 - Proceed with Regional Plan, Asset management, consideration of alternative funding
 - separate discussion required on stormwater/wastewater
 - Continue with development of infrastructure Plan

3. & 4 Traffic and Transit

General Comments November 28, 2005

- Concerns expressed about HRM's ability to meet existing service standards, areas not receiving transit services, service for seniors, locations for bus ticket sales, current services where buses are full, week-end service, parking at transit connections, visitor passes, U-pass, transit shelters
- Transportation concerns were raised about Wright Avenue Extension, stopping distance from intersections, timing of crosswalk lights, Beaver Bank/Windsor Junction Crossroad, intersection improvements required for pedestrians, Woodland Avenue/Victoria Road/Alderney Drive
- Support for Harbour Link, rural transit service, alternative modes of transportation

Council Direction November 29, 2005

- Mayor Kelly send a letter to all Federal leaders and candidates regarding the importance of the Harbour Link and requesting it be made an infrastructure funding priority
- Council made Harbour Link a "Must plan for" choice under transit options, with the understanding that all "must plan for" initiatives must be achieved.
- Council endorsed the recommended approach as presented
 - take care of current ridership, meet core service standards, improve facilities
 - continue to recapitalize fleet and technology
 - complete strategic transportation projects
 - optimize current transportation network (compliance program)
 - plan for the construction of a garage
 - plan for the introduction of a rural express route in 07/08
 - pursue additional funding for Harbour Link
 - preserve funds for opportunity land purchases
- Council requested a report on the impact of keeping all busses on the road.

5. Youth

General Comments

- Concerns expressed about volunteer burnout, access to facilities and programs for youth
- suggestions around youth engagement, leadership
- suggestions regarding partnership opportunities, drawing on programs and facilities offered by others
- need to benchmark and measure progress towards goals

General Direction December 6, 2005

- Council accepted the Direction Sought
 - Continue the development of HRM Youth Strategy
 - Increase research and policy capacity
 - Continue with service delivery integration

- Continue with Outdoor Facility Master Plan
- Consider supplementary funding: consult with Councillors meeting with School Board representatives on this issue
- Consider new resources/realign existing resources
- Continue with partnership development and maintenance

6. By-Law

General Comments

- status quo unacceptable
- concerns with noise, nuisance, vacant buildings, snow/ice, dangerous and unsightly, animal control, blasting, land use, litter, dumping
- concerns with repeat offenders, punitive measures/penalties
- suggestions regarding stewardship, education
- suggestions regarding a municipal court
- need clarity on who to call, when - need for expanded service hours

Council Direction December 13, 2005

- Council approved a service level review in conjunction with a more detailed analysis of the data available regarding requests for service

7. Community Recreation

General comments

- Suggestions of partnerships with community groups, Department of Health Promotions, Boys & Girls clubs, alternative programming
- Suggestions regarding more staff at playgrounds, more active programs, sport tourism, tax changes, acquisition of property, accessible playgrounds
- Concerns about affordability and access to programs, small number of volunteers, security, playground maintenance, support to community groups, new developments, amount of capital investment
- Need to work with School Board regarding access to schools, suggestion of take over of school facilities
- Issues around management agreements, procurement

Council Direction January 10, 2006

- Council approved direction to staff to open discussion with the School Board in regard to improved access to schools for recreation purposes and that staff also discuss ways to improve entrance access to existing schools

8. Public Safety Policing

General Comments

- Suggestions regarding auxiliary members, tools such as photo radar, red light cameras, increasing efficiency, crime prevention
- Concerns around the Justice system, support for community and school programs, social issues, link to recreation
- Concerns with determining adequacy of police resources, effective outcomes

Council Direction January 10, 2006

- Council request the Board of Police Commissioners review HRM policing services with a view to developing an effective long-term police resourcing strategy
- Council request the Board of Police Commissioners to assess the impact of any changes to the service delivery model of policing resulting from upcoming negotiations of the Provincial Police Contract
- Council initiate dialogue with the three orders of government to determine roles and responsibilities for national, provincial and municipal policing
- Request the Board of Police Commissioners report to Council regarding the need for increased police resources and police funding to ensure an effective level of policing which meets public expectations and which addresses the complex environment of the police service delivery model.

Public Safety: Fire

General Comments

- concerns about volunteer capacity, recruitment, implications of 24 hour service, adding career firefighters to areas served by volunteers
- Concerns about stations, equipment, pandemic
- need to identify strategic property acquisition
- need for community consultation
- need to lobby for federal dollars in support of emergency preparedness

9. Economic Development

General Comments

- Suggestions about links to Destination Halifax, Nova Scotia Business Inc.
- Comments with respect to the oversight function of the economic strategy: include business people, can't be political, use existing structures, Council input
- Need collective involvement of three levels of government, GHP, HRDA, better collaboration
- Concerns around funding, business park infrastructure
- Suggestions about benchmarking competitiveness, increasing economic diversity, duplication, community economic development in urban areas, urban/rural
- support for high speed internet in all of HRM

Council Direction January 17, 2005

- Council approved the formation of a joint group of representatives of the GHP and HRDA and HRM staff to develop an economic strategy implementation plan. The plan will reflect the Guiding Principles as contained in the presentation, and will be reflected in the service agreements of the respective organizations.
- Council approved the next steps:
 - tripartite (federal, provincial, municipal) discussion with GHP, RDA
 - Joint business plans, budgets
 - new service agreements March 2006

- economic strategy implementation plan and structure April 2006

10. Community Development

General Comments

- Suggestions regarding community pride, community economic development, HRM's 10th anniversary, community leadership, community partnerships, youth engagement, community signage, learning from our own experience
- Concerns about support for volunteers, tax structure, community owned facilities, HRM facilities

Council Direction January 17, 2006

- Council accepted the report and endorsed staff moving forward with the following direction:
 - pursue coordinated service delivery opportunities
 - provide resources to stabilize volunteer/community groups that operate programs, services and facilities on HRM's behalf
 - review and restructure support to community events and cultural initiatives

11. Community Relations

General Comments

- Concerns about communication - most significant issue
- Suggestions around accessing information, keeping things simple, technology, community newspapers,
- Concerns around 311, disconnects between what citizens hear and what they see, difficulties in engaging people,
- Suggestions around visioning - pilot good idea, keep it simple, criteria, learn from others, involve Council, standards

Council Direction January 17, 2006

- Council endorsed the approach as contained in the report to improve community engagement, including the draft engagement model, the draft community visioning program and the establishment of a central repository of information.
- Council endorsed the next steps:
 - develop the pilot vision project
 - identify pilot visioning communities
 - seek Council approval of communities
 - begin implementation
 - draft engagement model

12. Taxation

Council Direction being sought January 24, 2006

- work with Province on issues
- start tax consultations in Spring 2006 (including tax boundaries, LICs, CCCs)
- continue with commercial taxation benchmarking and analysis (Fall 2006)
- continue approach on BOT elimination, starting with 2006/7 budget

