

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

December 4, 2012

PRESENT: Mayor Mike Savage
Deputy Mayor Reg Rankin
Councillors: David Hendsbee
Bill Karsten
Lorelei Nicoll
Gloria McCluskey
Darren Fisher
Waye Mason
Jennifer Watts
Linda Mosher
Russell Walker
Stephen Adams
Matt Whitman
Steve Craig
Tim Outhit

REGRETS: Councillors: Barry Dalrymple
Brad Johns

STAFF: Mr. Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. Martin Ward, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Cathy Mellett, Municipal Clerk
Ms. Jennifer Weagle, Legislative Assistant
Mr. Matt Godwin, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Savage called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m. December 4, 2012, World Trade & Convention Centre, Room 100.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – NONE

3. Strategic Priority Outcomes

A document titled Background Materials: Strategic Priority Outcomes, dated November 27, 2012 was before Council.

A staff report dated November 29, 2012 was circulated to Council.

A copy of the staff presentation was circulated to Council.

An email from Wendy McDonald dated December 2, 2012 was circulated to Council.

Mayor Savage addressed Council, noting that the election gave everyone an opportunity to discuss priorities with the community, and the meeting today is an opportunity for Council to discuss those priorities. Staff have also been working on preparing strategic outcomes, taking into account the citizen survey.

MOVED by Councillor Rankin, seconded by Councillor Nicoll that Halifax Regional Council:

- 1. Consider the Priority Outcomes as described in Attachment A of this report and approve as amended, and direct staff to develop the 2013/14 Budget and Business Plans in support of these priorities; and**
- 2. Direct staff to present the 2012/14 draft Budget and Business Plans to the Audit and Finance Standing Committee for review and discussion prior to consideration by Regional Council.**

Deputy Mayor Rankin discussed the motion, noting that the draft Budget and Business Plans will go to the Audit and Finance Standing Committees for review.

Councillor Hendsbee noted that he hopes all of Regional Council will be engaged through the Audit and Finance Standing Committee. He requested that staff ensure no other HRM Committees of Council are scheduled during the Audit and Finance meetings, to ensure all can attend, and that meeting appointments be sent to all of Council.

Councillor Walker noted that the Audit and Finance Standing Committee had agreed that all members of Council in attendance at these meetings will be able to participate, and pointed out that the meeting dates are in the presentation.

Mr. Greg Keefe, Chief Financial Officer and Director of Finance, noted that staff thought it prudent to wait for the new Council before starting the budget process. Mr. Keefe presented an overview of the Regional Council Priority Outcome Direction, including the following areas:

- Budget and Planning Process
- Fiscal Choices
- Budget Consultation Process and Schedule
- Strategy – Planning to Action
- Priority Outcome Setting

Councillor Mosher requested a copy of the citizen survey results.

Councillor Nicoll noted that the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee passed a motion to reintroduce an advisory committee on arts and culture.

Councillor Watts cautioned that when looking for efficiencies, the full impact of those efficiencies should first be explored, including impact on service and staff. Mr. Keefe explained that the process will be for business units to make presentations to the committee, reviewing what services are provided, the cost of those services, and identify any potential savings. Mr. Richard Butts, CAO, commented on the differentiation between efficiencies and program cuts.

Councillor Hendsbee commented on the state of deferred maintenance for municipally owned and operated facilities.

Councillor Adams indicated that he would like to see how the priorities align with the citizen survey results.

Councillor McCluskey discussed the importance of effectiveness of services, and how efficiencies may affect the users of a service. Mr. Keefe confirmed that services standards will need to be maintained.

Councillor Mason noted the need for consultation and collaboration to be maintained. He suggested that budgets be provided to members of Council at least two weeks prior to budget debate, to allow sufficient time to review. He also suggested bringing the budgets for specific areas to Standing Committees for feedback to Audit and Finance.

Committee of the Whole recessed at 11:44 a.m., reconvening at 1:07 p.m.

Mayor Savage invited Austin French, Manager, Planning and Infrastructure to speak to the HRM Regional Plan.

Mr. French provided a brief overview and gave an update on two major projects - the Regional Plan (RP+5) and the Centre Plan. Regional Council appointed the Community Design Advisory Committee to consider these plans. With respect to the Regional Plan,

after consultation, staff drafted a number of points for consideration and these will form the basis for Regional Plan policies, which will be subject to further consultation at a public hearing in June, 2013. Ultimately, the Regional Plan will return to Regional Council and staff are on track to meet targets.

The Centre Plan is the second major project. Also known as HRM by Design, the Centre plan will be a new plan and by-law for HRM's regional centres (downtown Halifax and Dartmouth). At the end of the process in 2015, HRM expects to have a new, clear, predictable approval process. This is an outcome desired by both developers and the community.

Councillor McCluskey questioned staff on the urban growth targets.

Mr. French advised the Regional Plan has 25 year targets and in the first 5 years HRM did not meet the urban growth target. A considerable part of the review will be urban growth and the Centre plan is the most important component to this process. Mr. French further advised that the Regional Plan supports a balanced approach between urban, suburban and rural growth. The thrust of the program for greater growth will be the Centre Plan.

Councillor Outhit remarked that it will take more than the Centre Plan to develop the urban areas. He noted tools such as commercial tax reform, parking, tax incentives, and permit holidays. He expressed a concern that the budget process will already have been completed by the time the Regional Plan review is complete.

Mr. French noted that the plan review is and will continue to look at these items. He further emphasized that the centre plan is where financial incentives will also be considered.

Mr. Keefe, Director, Finance and ICT/CFO also noted staff will bring forward some ideas on commercial taxation at the December 19, 2012 meeting of the Audit and Finance Standing committee. He also stated staff will be developing a clear problem statement related to commercial taxation and development.

Councillor Outhit noted it is not unusual for municipalities to use tax incentives for development. Mr. Keefe conferred and noted staff are looking at other municipalities.

Deputy Mayor Rankin raised the issue of provincial jurisdiction and that the tools HRM requires will only be available with provincial intervention.

The CAO noted that legislative change requests relating to density bonusing and site plan approval are under consideration and could assist to increase development in the centre once implemented.

The CAO further explained that these first steps will be coming in the next few weeks. However, matters related to tax reform are long-term issues. These decisions are more likely to come in the next budget cycle rather than this one.

Mr. Keefe further advised that some changes may be possible in this cycle, but those which require provincial consideration will not be included in this fiscal year.

Councillor Watts noted there are a great deal of approved developments moving forward. The focus needs to be extended to making the urban core and peninsula affordable, livable and responsive to communities.

The CAO responded by noting that the Regional Plan speaks to many issues outside of just development and that no issues operate in isolation.

Mr. French responded that his office has held numerous rounds of consultations on the Centre Plan and there will be more to come.

Councillor Mosher raised a number of concerns related to the Strategic Priorities Outcomes report (see below). She also questioned the staff's recommendation to partner with the Greater Halifax Partnership (GHP) with respect to the development approval process.

Mr. Brad Anguish, Director of Community & Recreation Services, noted the GHP is only one of several bodies involved in engaging the business community on the process for these improvements. HRM will also be working with Halifax Water, the Province as well as the federal government, among others.

Councillor Mosher further suggested engaging the Urban Development Institute (UDI) and professional associations.

Mr. Anguish indicated that HRM has met with UDI and will continue to work with many stakeholders.

Councillor Nicoll drew the Committee's attention to Page 4 and asked about the closure of the Morris Lake Suburban growth centre.

Mr. French explained that following from the Regional Plan there was a process to develop these lands for growth, but in the midst of the process much of these lands were referred back to the Department of National Defense. The Russell Lake West area is proceeding, as is the planned Mount Hope Extension.

Councillor Karsten asked staff if the new transit service boundary is part of the Regional plan.

Mr. French noted that while the integration of the new transit plan and enhancing growth in the centre will be a part of the Regional Plan, transit growth will be brought forward separately.

Mr. Chris Bryant, Acting Managing Director, Government and External Affairs gave an update on the economic growth strategy and the relationship HRM has with the GHP, other governments and organizations to drive this plan. They are focusing on legislative changes; improving the business climate; attracting talent and building the city’s brand; making HRM a nice place to live and work; and maximizing opportunities.

Mr. Bryant further noted that HRM is comparable to leading cities and can be a growth engine. However, HRM will face challenges such as federal job cuts and the provincial reorganization of regional development.

Councillor Adams raised concerns that it is hard to measure the impact the GHP has had on the achievement of these goals.

Mr. Bryant notes that his office monitor`s the GHP`s contributions and Mayor Savage noted that the Partnership has provided HRM with the Halifax Index.

The CAO noted the Auditor General will report on the GHP in the new year.

Mr. Bryant assured that with the funding received by HRM, the province and the private sector they can maintain operations.

Councillor Nicoll noted that the Regional Plan is more than a planning document. The role HRM plays in economic development is key.

Mayor Savage at this point requested Council to offer its views on the Strategic Priorities Outcomes document and on its priorities more broadly. The following table(s) provides a point form summary of the discussion.

Councillor Mosher	
Priorities	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A North / South corridor - Trails - Public safety - Quality of Life crimes - Consider waiving permit fees to encourage development and shorten approval timeframe - Vegetation and the Urban Forest Master Plan; green-belting - District Energy and Alternative Energy. - Transportation - Sidewalk snow removal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refer back to the “public survey data” and the priority pillars identified there: Transit, Public Safety, Environment, Economy and Downtown. - A focus on youth with respect to crime is important, but public safety is not adequately addressed in this document. Residents do not feel safe in HRM – refocus on the Mayor’s Task Force. - With respect to development, we’re not revitalizing downtown. - Development can lead to advances in other areas, such as the construction of cultural venues.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bayer's Road widening is not a step forward as it constrains local communities – encourage use of public transportation to reduce congestion. - CPED has approved a motion with regard to establishment of an Arts and Culture Committee
<p>Themes: Public safety; development; environment; urban forest; transit; economy and downtown development; transportation</p>	

Councillor Watts	
Priorities	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environment and Sustainability (i.e. protection of natural assets, efficiency and renewal energy projects, climate change and its impacts, such as storm-water management) - During similar discussions in the past HRM used two filters: Environmental sustainability and accessibility - Affordable Housing, specifically related to families and the use of more creative, collaborative options to address this concern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Audit and Finance Standing Committee should consider the process for the outsourcing of HRM jobs – ensure any processes are transparent. - How is HRM going to make use of the budget surplus? - Efficiency and Renewal Energy projects should be part of the economic and jobs strategy. - Engage the community in responsible, downtown densification - Use a collaborative model to address affordable housing issues and consider HRM-owned land in the process for developing affordable housing. - Council requires information on the impact of efficiencies/cuts to services and the public.
<p>Themes: Environment and sustainability; accessibility; renewal energy; affordable housing; children and youth</p>	

Councillor Outhit	
Priorities	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Budget Process – Request feedback from the public - Public Transit – Ridership growth; create transit hubs - Communication – More information about what Council and HRM does for resident - Governance: Halifax Water with respect to storm water; Traffic Services review; community council empowerment - Cohesive Multi-modal transportation solutions to transportation issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The budget process should be more interactive and provide innovative options for residents to get involved. - Downtown revitalization is related to public transit. - Grand Parade newsletter is a good start; there should be an FAQ section on the work of Council. - Council needs more authority on traffic issues. We need more consideration of rail and ferry modes of transportation. - Better alignment is needed between the Strategic Urban Partnership with the Greater Halifax Partnership.

Themes: Public Transit; public communication; budget process; governance

Councillor Mason	
Priorities	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Downtown business development – Economic Strategy. - Street-scaping (i.e. Queen and South Park Streets) - A multi-year road service plan (reduce asphalt use for repairs) - HRM Arts Advisory Council (cultural affairs budget; funding for museums and galleries; subscribe to Creative City Network of Canada) - Green-beltting; Blue Mountain / Birch Cove - Transit and Transportation (HOV lanes, priority signalling and designated right-of-way) - Public Safety (Mayor’s Task Force on Violence) - Healthy Communities – Affordable Housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Likes the pacing of the budget discussions, more consultation with public which needs to be enshrined (polling, public meetings, and surveying) if not for this budget, then next. - Detail line by line budget be delivered at least two weeks before discussion - Budgets of related BUs to Standing Committees in January/February timeframe - A higher state of good repair is need downtown. - HRM should have a near-term benchmark for meeting the national average for arts funding. - The document was too short on public safety. - With respect to affordable housing, there are a number of possible options: Land-banking model; define the problem; formalize relationship with community services.
<p>Themes: Downtown business development; street-scaping; road service; arts; natural asset management; transit and transportation; public safety; affordable housing</p>	

Councillor McCluskey	
Priorities	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public and stakeholder consultation with respect to planning - Use of the former Dartmouth City Hall as a museum - Affordable Housing – Making land available for Rent-to-Buy options - Public Safety - at-risk-youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The document does not make clear the stakeholder/public consultation process with respect to planning. - This document is short on at-risk-youth – we need to be doing more to ensure young people have a sense of belonging to something positive.
<p>Themes: Planning consultation; culture and heritage; affordable housing; public safety</p>	

Deputy Mayor Rankin	
Priorities	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transit (investment in corridors and technology). Reduce demand for more roads - Downtown growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We need to ensure we have the greatest return on investment with respect to transit. - Affordable housing isn’t just about social housing; it’s about acquiring revenue from

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affordable housing - Crime and poverty reduction 	<p>other levels of government to address this issue. This issue is related to poverty and crime reduction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many of our priorities align with the citizen survey.
<p>Themes: Transit; downtown growth; affordable housing; crime; poverty reduction</p>	

Councillor Walker	
Priorities	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fiscal prudence. - Lower taxes. - Sidewalks and snow removal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transit and Good-State-of-Repair should be better detailed and quantified. - Maintain sidewalk and snow removal at the general rate.
<p>Themes: Fiscal management; taxes; sidewalk maintenance</p>	

Councillor Karsten	
Priorities	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State of Good Repair – Annual supplementary funding - Mount Hope extension - Public safety – Return to the Roundtable on Violence - Long-term Area Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider the Mayor’s campaign foci. These align with the items being raised today. - The previous Council implemented a number of important infrastructure projects and this priority area for Council should continue. - Not enough emphasis on public safety – youth emphasis is a good start.
<p>Themes: State-of-Good-Repair; infrastructure; public safety</p>	

Councillor Fisher	
Priorities	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transit: Ridership vs. Coverage dichotomy - Transportation – streamline the corridor planning - Revenue opportunities from good vacancy management - Urban Forest Master Plan - Recreation and Arena Strategy - Main Street planning and street-scaping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invite Jarrett Walker to speak to transit in HRM. Further consider smart car technology and wifi on buses. - Consider selling more vacant land to the public – this will grow the tax-base. - Costs for pool and ice rental should not vary to the extent they do between venues. Further, bookings and transactions should be done online through one portal. - Main Street planning and street-scaping – this is taking too long. In addition, the Canal-Greenway project requires funding.
<p>Themes: Transit; transportation; vacancy management; green space; recreation; street-scaping</p>	

Councillor Hendsbee	
Priorities	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development: Community visioning support should be restored - Secondary suites in HRM a good policy - Speed up development approvals. - Transit Strategy – Service Boundaries; active transportation - Land-Use: Use of municipal industrial lands; condo land-lease simplification - Solid Waste - Fire Services – Volunteers in rural areas - State of deferred maintenance - Multi-year Capital Plan Update 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With respect to secondary suites, staff should be careful to consider other issues, such as waste management and car space. - How do we incorporate rural communities into active transportation discussions? - Following the five-year review of the Regional Plan, this should remain the guiding principle and not be led into “paralysis by analysis”. - - - Looking forward to the report on the community-based feeder system. - May be a need to realign capital plan
<p>Themes: Development; transit; land-use; solid waste; fire services; transportation;</p>	

Councillor Nicoll	
Priorities	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HRM’s role in economic development vis a vis the province - HRM Succession Plan - Development / Planning – Need to consider HRM human resources - Infrastructure - Traffic – Mount Hope Connector - Recreation and Youth-at-Risk - Accessibility and sustainability – “Complete Streets” - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The HRM Succession plan has not managed vacancy effectively. - More money should be going to concrete vs. asphalt. - Supports Fare-box technology. - Recreation and public safety are complementary, not mutually exclusive. - We need implementation plans, not just documents capturing ideas.
<p>Themes: Land-use; development and planning; infrastructure; traffic; recreation and public safety; accessibility; public safety</p>	

Councillor Craig	
Priorities	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State-of-Good-Repair - Transit / Traffic - Halifax Water and infrastructure - Climate change and environmental management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supports the budget schedule and process. - State-of-Good-Repair should be an HRM standard for managing assets. - Halifax Water should report directly to the CAO.
<p>Themes: Infrastructure; transit; traffic; Water; climate change; supports priorities identified earlier</p>	

Councillor Whitman	
Priorities	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HRM Alliance is an important initiative - Public Safety – Youth at Risk - Infrastructure – Hammonds Plains Road 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public safety includes crosswalk safety.
<p>Themes: Public Safety; youth; infrastructure; roads; supports priorities identified earlier</p>	

Mayor Savage	
Priorities	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic Development: Planning; investing in downtown, the centre and corridors; rural economic development - Healthy Communities: Safe streets; energy efficiency and affordable housing - Transportation: Active transportation; long-range plan integration - Governance: Opening up the budget process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider the 2012 campaign platform; this is still relevant and aligns with the goals of staff and Councillors. - Encourage private sector growth in Halifax; consider social enterprise especially. - Arts and culture are a priority and economic drivers. - HRM must work toward its growth targets. - He supports re-engaging on the Mayor’s Task Force.
<p>Themes: Economic Development; private-sector growth; healthy communities; safe streets; energy efficiency; affordable housing; transportation; active transportation; governance</p>	

Councillor Hendsbee asked about the process for compiling this meeting’s discussion.

The Mayor noted the discussion will be captured and commonalities will be identified between priority areas.

The CAO further noted that there are many common themes and issues and the next step will be to distill this discussion into common themes and return to Council with a report. On affordable housing, he noted this is probably not a relevant budget discussion.

Councillor Watts commented that staff resources need to be considered when addressing affordable housing, as this issue will affect our budget.

Deputy Mayor Rankin noted it is now up to staff to consider what has been put forward and offered the following revised motion, to which Council agreed:

MOVED by Councillor Rankin, seconded by Councillor Nicoll that Halifax Regional Council direct staff to present the 2013/14 draft Budget and Business Plans to the Audit and Finance Committee for review and discussion prior to consideration by Regional Council following the priority outcomes described in Attachment “A” having regard to the changes and additional priorities raised by Council during the course of discussion in Committee of the Whole.

Councillor Mason offered an alternative motion to table the discussion until December 11, 2012 after staff are able to respond to these comments.

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Fisher that the motion be tabled to a Committee of the Whole Council meeting to be held on December 11, 2012.

Discussion ensued on the motion to table.

MOTION PUT AND DEFEATED.

The Deputy Mayor noted the motion he has put forward defines the process for going forward. After further discussion a vote was taken on the revised motion.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

A further discussion on affordable housing ensued.

Councillor Adams argued this issue is not in Regional Council's mandate.

Councillor Watts and Councillor Mason noted in the Regional Plan and the Nova Scotia Municipal Government Act the municipal role in affordable housing is clearly defined.

Councillor Mosher noted that HRM has already taken a number of areas of service provision from other levels of government without commensurate funding and HRM should take care in areas of service provision not already under its purview.

Councillor Outhit suggested managing housing can be done through other tools, such as incentives and policies, which may not require additional funding.

The CAO clarified that only the province can build affordable housing. He concurred that there could be a role for HRM to play within the municipal mandate but that a clear definition of the issue is required.

The Mayor further noted that materials for the upcoming Audit and Finance budget meetings will be provided to all members of Council.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:12 p.m.

Cathy J. Mellett
Municipal Clerk