

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

June 25, 2013

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

REGRETS: Councillor Stephen Adams

STAFF: Mr. Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. Martin Ward, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Sherryl Murphy, Acting Municipal Clerk
Ms. Jennifer Weagle, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – None

3. Staff Presentation – Update on the draft Regional Plan and Summary of the Stantec report

The following information was before Council:

- Correspondence from: Greg Aikins, Deborah Jones, Nathan Rogers, Ryan Turner, John Cascadden, Woodens River Watershed Environmental Organization, and Adam Conter was circulated to Council.
- A copy of the staff presentation was before Council.
- A handout “Scope: Regional Plan 5 Year Review” was circulated to Council.

Ms. Jane Fraser, Director, Planning & Infrastructure, and Mr. Austin French, Manager, Planning, introduced themselves to Council. Mr. French presented an update on the Regional Plan 5 Year Review to Council. Mr. French’s presentation included the following topics:

- Purpose of the Regional Plan review
- HRM’s Vision “to enhance our quality of life by fostering the growth of healthy and vibrant communities, a strong and diverse economy, and sustainable environment”
- Guiding principle of the Regional Plan to address the needs and views of all sectors of HRM recognizing the diversity of its citizens, community and geography
- Regional Plan areas of review
- Reason for the Regional Plan Review (legislative requirement, to address changing conditions, and evaluate effectiveness of current policy)
- RP+5 process timeframe
- Review of engagement phases 1 & 2, including studies
- Feedback from engagement phases 1 & 2
- Phase 3 community engagement
- What is not changing – growth targets and foundation
- Trend in growth targets
- Purpose of Stantec Report
 - To provide empirical basis for understanding public, private and social costs and benefits of various development patterns
 - To model both capital and operating costs as well as potential impacts on the municipal tax rate, the environment, public health, quality of life, etc.
- Stantec Project Framework - Four alternative growth scenarios
- Stantec Project Cost Categories
- Stantec Overall Scenario Costs - HRM 2009-2031

- Stantec Municipal Scenario Costs - HRM 2009-2031
- What is changing – key policy goals
 - Revised community design program
 - Enhanced regional center.
 - Integrated land use and transportation
 - Protected industrial land holdings
 - Plan performance measurement
- Key policy directions with regard to these goals.

Councillor Outhit arrived at 10:13 a.m. and Councillor Johns arrived at 10:30 a.m., during the presentation.

Responding to concerns from Councillor Whitman about private lands being designated for greenbelting when the property owner had other plans for the land, Mr. French clarified that it is not about restricting development, it is about balance. A portion of the land would be set aside for development.

Mr. French provided clarification at the request of Councillor Whitman with regard to the calculation of the Municipal Scenario Costs in the Stantec report (table 9.5). He clarified that the calculation includes costs associated with residents sitting in traffic, hospital costs associated with emissions and road costs.

At the request of Councillor Dalrymple, Mr. French clarified that Fall River in the 2006 plan is designated as a rural commuter centre and in the proposed revised plan as a rural district centre, to recognize the growth that is taking place in Fall River and the fact that a new community plan has been adopted for the community. Councillor Dalrymple commented that the community is eager to undertake phase 2 of the Fall River Visioning Plan, for the rural areas surrounding Fall River.

Councillor Mason acknowledged the hard work of the citizen volunteers on the Community Design Advisory Committee (CDAC). Councillor Mason noted that there should be more in the report with regard to improving suburban community design.

Councillor Watts thanked staff for the presentation. She noted that residents in all areas of HRM are concerned with how growth is happening, the implications to the Municipality in the long term, and that HRM moves toward a sustainable model that looks after the needs of residents in all areas of the Municipality. Councillor Watts suggested that it is a serious problem that HRM is not currently trending to reach the 25% growth target in the urban core initially anticipated, and encouraged focus on solutions to meet those targets. She indicated that, in addition to the Provincial Affordable Housing Strategy that HRM should include more concrete mechanisms than what are in the plan right now to assist with housing affordability, in particular within the existing housing stock.

Councilor Hendsbee arrived at 10:49 a.m.

Ms. Fraser provided clarification to Council that the Stantec report was prepared to look more at societal and opportunity costs and cautioned Council against using it to make decisions on the long term infrastructure and operating costs of a municipality.

Responding to questions of clarification from Councillor Fisher with regard to the Port Wallace lands, Mr. French clarified that there has been no change in what are considered the Port Wallace Lands from the 2006 plan.

Councillor Karsten asked whether there has been any cost analysis done to determine the cost implications of underground services for a building lot. Mr. French indicated that there was an engineering study done some years ago, and recently updated, that set the cost of undergrounding at about \$8,500 for a lot with 40 feet of frontage, although the private sector has suggested the cost to be higher. Councillor Karsten requested that staff take a second look at the cost of undergrounding for building lots to better inform Council in regard to the actual cost.

Councillor Karsten commented on the different definitions of greenbelting being used, and inquired whether a more definitive term could be used in the plan. Mr. French advised that there has been direction from the Community Design Advisory Committee (CDAC) to refine the definition of greenbelting.

Councillor Craig, noting that there is an area in his district that is an unserved area intersecting two serviced areas, inquired whether there is an opportunity within the revised plan to change zoning. Mr. French indicated that policy IM-17 in the existing plan (G-16 in the revised plan), allows minor adjustments to conform to specific community needs.

Councillor Outhit suggested that there needs to be measurables and deliverables included in the plan to make it more of a plan and less of a vision. He suggested that there should be significant incentives for development in infill areas, such as waiving capital cost charges. Mr. French noted that the Regional Plan does have a visionary element, with the purpose of making the Municipality work better as a whole and to allow success in land use development through good community design.

At the request of Councillor Walker, Mr. French clarified that the Birch Cove Lakes area, more correctly referenced as the Highway 102 corridor lands, has been identified for facilitated discussions with land owners to try to acquire more of the lands for use as a park. Councillor Walker suggested that many residents in the urban center will be opposed to rezoning lands from R1 to R2.

Councillor Hendsbee thanked staff for their cooperation in extending the public submission deadline to July 19th and for allowing more RP+5 community meetings in rural locations, noting that there will be open house meetings on Wednesday, July 10th in Gaetz Brook, and Tuesday, July 16th in Sheet Harbour. He suggested a change in the way charges are applied for parkland fees to include condos and multiple unit buildings.

Responding to questions from Councillor Nicoll, Mr. French clarified that the plan proposes to maintain a five year review cycle. He further clarified that Map 1 (settlement and transportation map) identifies 50 communities in HRM which are further categorized in table 3.

Responding to an inquiry from Deputy Mayor Rankin, Mr. French indicated that the biggest catalyst for business development in an area is residential development.

In response to questions from Mayor Savage with regard to the Stantec report, Mr. French advised that the report was requested by staff as a background study for the RP+5 process. He clarified that the study was completed a few months ago, in time for the CDAC to review before making changes to the draft plan. Mr. French further clarified at the request of Mayor Savage that the top four things that will help HRM hit growth targets are investment in community design through the centre plan, investment in infrastructure and road improvements, improvements in transit with a shift to more densely populated areas of HRM, and a focus on greenbelting and public spaces. Mr. French noted that the growth targets set in 2006 were meant to be used as conceptual guides.

Responding to concerns from Councillor Whitman that the growth targets are not aggressive enough, Mr. French noted that although the plan review is scheduled for every five years, it is open for revision by Council at any time and that the scope for the current review process was adopted by Regional Council.

Councillor Mason indicated that he feels the community design element of the plan is not strong enough, and encouraged the allowance of community focused small scale commercial use in suburban developments.

Councillor Watts commented that key focus areas to meet growth targets will be housing affordability, transit improvements, and community design. She noted that the Bayers Road widening is still included in the plan, along with the third harbour crossing, and that there is nothing in the plan about the Active Transportation Functional Plan. Mr. French clarified that the third harbor crossing would be beyond the lifespan of the plan. He further clarified that the Active Transportation Functional Plan has not yet been approved by Council and staff did not want to pre-suppose the outcome of the work being done on that plan.

Councillors Whitman, Fisher, McCluskey, and Karsten left the meeting at 11:55 p.m.

Councillor Hendsbee indicated that he has previously raised the issue of the provincially owned Lake Eagle property in the Preston area, which he feels should be acquired for a district park, perhaps by way of a land swap, and noted that this does not appear in the plan. Councillor Hendsbee advised that he has also previously raised the issue of a Highway 7/107/207 connector, connecting Lawrencetown to Westphal, bypassing Cole Harbour Road and Ross Road and reopening the Old Miller Road. He noted that this would be a strategic transportation link, and should be brought back into the discussion.

Councillor Hendsbee further commented that the third harbor crossing will be necessary at some point in the future, and Council should allow the Bridge Commission to reserve properties in the corridor for this potential.

Councillor Craig, referring to page 6 of the draft RP+5 plan, noted that he would like to see more frequent local transit. Mr. French clarified at his request that “enhanced pedestrian linkages” refers to sidewalks, trails, and greenways.

Mayor Savage left the meeting at 12:00 p.m. and Deputy Mayor Rankin took the Chair.

Councillor Mosher arrived at 12:04 p.m.

Councillor Hendsbee, noting that HRM does not have jurisdiction over roads in much of rural HRM, indicated that he hopes that over the next five years staff will work with the province to develop an active transportation strategy to pave the shoulders of the trunk highways. The Councillor suggested that a scorecard be used to measure progress until the next review. Councillor Hendsbee noted that Metro X service has not been extended to all areas including destinations along Highways 102, 103 and 107. He commented on the need for serviceable boundary adjustments to identify urban growth centres on major corridors, and to reevaluate urban growth reserves to create opportunities on those sites.

Councillor Outhit commented that the difference between mass transit and public transit needs to be defined, suggesting that mass transit is getting people to work downtown, whether that be by bus, ferry or commuter rail. He noted that waterways as transportation corridors do not require the same costly maintenance and repairs as roads. Councillor Outhit suggested that it would be good to talk further about the use of bus lanes and high occupancy vehicle lanes.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:11 p.m.

Cathy J. Mellett
Municipal Clerk