



**HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES
January 29, 2014**

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

REGRETS: Councillors: Brad Johns
Matt Whitman

STAFF: Mr. Greg Keefe, Chief Financial Officer
Mr. John Traves, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Sherryl Murphy, Deputy Clerk
Ms. Jennifer Weagle, Legislative Assistant

The following does not represent a verbatim record of the proceedings of this meeting.

*A video recording of this meeting is available:
http://archive.isiglobal.ca/vod/halifax/archive_2014-01-29_live.mp4.html*

*The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to Council are available
online: <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/140129cow-agenda.html>*

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m., and recessed at 12:20 p.m. Council reconvened in at 12:46 p.m. Council adjourned at 1:49 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Councillor Karsten called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – None

3. Budget Presentation – Community and Recreation Services

The following documentation was before Committee of the Whole:

- A staff report dated January 13, 2014
- A revised presentation “Community & Recreation Services’ 14/15 Draft Budget and Business Plan” was circulated.

Mr. Brad Anguish, Director, Community and Recreation Services, presented the proposed 2014/15 Community & Recreation Services’ Budget and Business Plan, including the following:

- Business Unit Overview
- 2013/14 Progress Update

Councillors Hendsbee and Rankin arrived at 10:14 a.m.

Mr. Anguish pointed out a correction to slide 10 of the presentation; that the RFP for artifact conservation and cleaning is awaiting award.

Mr. Anguish continued with the presentation of the proposed 2014/15 Community & Recreation Services’ Budget and Business Plan, including the following:

- Operating Budget Overview
- Service Area Budget Overview
- 14/15 Operating Budget Highlights (Priority Outcomes)
 - Healthier Community
 - Economic Development
 - Improved Governance and Financial Stewardship of HRM’s recreational and cultural assets.
- Year to Year Base Comparison
- 14/15 Cost Reduction Initiatives
- 14/15 Priority Alignment

Responding to an inquiry with regard to staffing from Councillor Walker, Mr. Anguish indicated that a number of key staff positions have been filled, and they are working toward filling the last of the vacancies.

MOVED by Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor McCluskey, that Committee of the Whole direct staff to proceed to prepare the 2014/15 Community & Recreation Services' Budget and Business Plan as proposed in the accompanying presentation, incorporating additional direction provided by motion of Committee of the Whole for inclusion in the proposed HRM 2014/15 Budget and Business Plan documents.

Councillor Walker noted concern with delays in moving projects forward to Community Councils and Regional Council, noting that a two year time frame for approvals is unacceptable. He suggested that Community and Recreation Services may need more development approvals staff. Mr. Anguish indicated that staff have made a few changes over the last year with regard to the way staff work with the development industry which has seen some improvements. Mr. Anguish indicated that he is always available to review individual cases with Councillors to discuss timelines.

Responding to an inquiry from Councillor Walker as to the operating hours of By-law Enforcement, Mr. Anguish advised that a report is due to the Executive Standing Committee on the subject, and staff propose that evening and weekend service could be provided within the current proposed budget. Councillor Walker indicated that he wished to note that the budget for By-law Enforcement may need to be increased to adequately staff evening and weekend enforcement service to all of HRM.

Noting the \$400,000 figure indicated for Naming Rights on slide 18 "14/15 Cost Reduction Initiatives", Councillor Walker suggested that this figure should not be included as the Call for Proposals is still open. Mr. Anguish indicated that this is an estimated figure, based on a range of value estimated by professionals in a previous report to Council, which indicated that the value could be up to \$500,000.

Councillor Walker inquired where the \$260,000 capital funds to improve Barrier Free Facility Access and Regulations, as indicated on slide 19 "14/15 Priority Alignment" will be spent. Mr. Anguish indicated that Community and Recreation Services staff are working with Planning and Infrastructure staff, who advise on the priorities for barrier free improvements. Councillor Walker requested an email from staff with the total to bring HRM facilities up to standard, noting that the \$260,000 budget for this item may need to be increased to address problems with barrier free access.

Mayor Savage, in reference to the \$500,000 savings from a permanent reduction of vacant positions (slide 18), cautioned against meeting budget targets through reducing services, which could have an inadvertent effect on the economic development of the region. Mr. Anguish indicated that a focus has been put on recruitment of quality staff, and that staff in Development Approvals has increased over the last fiscal year.

Responding to a request from Councillor Hendsbee for clarification on the \$300,000 2015/16 projected savings for recreation facility rationalization (slide 18), Mr. Anguish advised that this entails meeting with asset stewards in Transportation and Public Works and asset managers in Planning and Infrastructure to look at facilities that are underperforming and underutilized. Councillor Hendsbee inquired whether taking more municipal control of such facilities would

end up costing more through greater labour cost implications. Mr. Anguish indicated that this may not be the case in all situations, and there may be opportunities for economies of scale through eliminating redundant staffing, purchasing, and management of facilities. Mr. Anguish noted that volunteer community leadership with these facilities has been invaluable, and staff intend to work with Council to look at the governance and management of these facilities and how they fit with Council's priorities before taking any steps.

With regard to facility lease agreements, Councillor Hendsbee inquired how Community and Recreation Services will be more supportive of the operations of these facilities. Mr. Anguish indicated that the budget has been realigned to provide more financial support for the facilities under facility lease agreements through realigning discretionary contingency funding to assist those facilities that have been struggling with operating costs.

Councillor Darymple, referencing the \$500,000 2015/16 projected savings for multi-district facility efficiency (slide 18), inquired when the community recreation centre portion of the governance review would take place. Mr. Anguish clarified that the only direction staff have from Council is with regard the review of multi-district facilities, and that staff have no direction from Council with regard to a governance review of community and recreation centres.

Councillor Dalrymple inquired how to get a recreation needs assessment done for a community. Mr. Anguish indicated that staff are undertaking the community facilities master plan, through which he suggested the recreation needs of the community could be addressed.

Councillor Dalrymple inquired how to expand on the number of school gyms opened to the community for unstructured recreation, noting he would like to see gyms open before and after school, on weekends and in the summer months when school is out. Mr. Anguish clarified that the current arrangement with five school gyms is for programmed recreation, although there is a separate service exchange agreement with the Halifax Regional School Board which gives HRM a certain number of hours of access to gyms. Mr. Anguish noted difficulties with this arrangement, including varying policies from school to school, and union requirements with janitorial staff. He indicated that staff will be re-negotiating this service exchange agreement in the coming year.

In response to a question from Deputy Mayor Fisher with regard to adding PayPal as a payment option, Mr. Anguish indicated that Finance staff will determine the best options for increased payment methods.

In response to an inquiry from Deputy Mayor Fisher with regard to the "13/14 Progress Update" (slide 6), Mr. Anguish indicated that he will forward to Council a list of the "significant development projects that have received approval in the Regional Centre supporting the over 5,000 new residential units and over 2 million sq. ft. of commercial space" referenced.

Mr. Anguish clarified at the request of Deputy Mayor Fisher that the updated event strategy, including a signature events strategy, will be presented to the Special Events Advisory Committee in February or March of 2014.

Deputy Mayor Fisher noted that the \$39 million indicated to implement the consolidation plan for the Long Term Arena Strategy on slide 19 of the previous presentation handout is missing from the revised presentation handout. Mr. Anguish explained the error, noting that in assembling the presentation he intended to convey that funds would be set aside to enable Council to implement the strategy, although that figure should not have been used. Further information should be forthcoming during the capital budget discussion on February 25th.

Councillor Mason noted concern that the special arts review is now scheduled to come forward at the end of the fiscal year, although the original intent was for it to be discussed by Council for inclusion in this budget.

At the request of Councillor Mason, Mr. Anguish clarified that there are still funds for the Heritage Conservation District program and a report will be forthcoming with a recommendation to maintain the reserve.

With regard to the Community Facilities Master Plan, Councillor Mason noted that in the Peninsula Recreation Services report, Citadel Recreation Centre was recommended for \$2 million in improvements. He suggested that there could be cost savings to HRM by finishing this facility and consolidating programs there.

With regard to development approvals, Councillor Mason inquired whether staff are prioritizing resources for applications in the Regional Centre over suburban and rural applications, which is a perception he has been hearing from the community. Mr. Anguish clarified that by virtue of its legislation, HRM by Design requires a 60 day turnaround for development approvals in downtown Halifax.

Councillor Mason noted that updates to By-law M-100 respecting standards for residential occupancies is a priority for District 7.

Councillor Mason also inquired whether the HRM Call Centre 311 service has adequate staff resources, given that residents are increasingly being directed to call 311 for service. Mr. Anguish indicated that they feel the call centre is adequately staffed, and with increasing use of self-serve online technology, staff are better able to serve residents.

Councillor Watts suggested that it is not always clear to residents calling 311 that if they want a call back, they have to indicate so to the operator, and perhaps this could be made clearer when a call is being taken.

Councillor Watts indicated that there is a demand for online payment options for services such as parking permit payments, to increase efficiency of service.

Councillor Watts requested that staff present the parameters of the review of the Community Facility Master Plan to the Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee. She commented on the many reports being prepared at this time, such as the gym review, rink review, surplus schools, and how these plans all fit within the context of the development of the Centre Plan.

Councillor McCluskey commented that when the BMO Centre in Bedford was constructed, Dartmouth was promised they would be next in line. Mr. Anguish indicated that by the end of February an interim report to seek direction on the next steps for the long term arena strategy would be coming forward.

Councillor McCluskey indicated that Brightwood Golf Course is having a problem with dogs running at large on their property. Mr. Anguish indicated that management should immediately call 311 when a dog is running at large.

Councillor McCluskey asked for clarification on what the Youth Development program includes under Community Recreation & Culture services. Mr. Anguish indicated that Youth Development involves youth at risk programs such as Souls Strong, Girls United and the Youth Advocate program.

At the request of Councillor McCluskey, Mr. Anguish clarified that where there is capacity in facilities with unprogrammed time, staff are trying to open the facilities to the public, such as though free skating at the Bowles Arena and free boating at the St. Mary's Boat Club.

At the request of Councillor Adams, Mr. Anguish clarified that the role of Community and Recreation Services with regard to community centres is to service those that exist and respond to additional needs at Council's direction.

Councillor Adams asked for an update on the issue of signage on Prospect Road and Peggy's Cove Road, noting that he has been unable to determine the staff lead on this project. Mr. Anguish deferred to Legal Services, who runs the by-law review project. Mr. John Traves, Municipal Solicitor, indicated that within Legal Services' business plan for the upcoming year is the continuation of the by-law review project, which is a multi-year project. He indicated that Legal Services staff are in the process of meeting with Directors to identify project leads and determining the priorities of Council in relation to these projects.

Councillor Adams indicated that members of Council should be advised of any project lead changes. Mr. Mike Labrecque, Deputy CAO, committed to getting back to Councillor Adams with the staff lead on the signage project.

Councillor Nicoll inquired when discussions will start on the joint use agreements for the gymnasiums at Cole Harbour District High School and Graham Creighton Junior High. Mr. Anguish indicated that staff are still working on finalizing the Porters Lake agreement, which will be the template for future agreements.

Councillor Nicoll indicated that the Cherry Brook Community Centre is past its prime and the community is eager for a new facility. Mr. Anguish indicated that ownership of the property has recently been confirmed as belonging to HRM, which should allow for the matter to move forward.

With regard to questions from Councillor Nicoll about the Operational Enterprise Asset Management system, Mr. Anguish indicated that there is no customer relationship management component related to that system, so this will not affect 311 customer service response outcomes.

Councillor Craig noted concern with decks and balconies not being built to code, and that when permits are issued, final inspections should be carried out, and an inventory be kept of deck and balcony permits. Mr. Anguish indicated that staff have agreed to review the deck and balcony permitting process, advocate with the province for strengthened legislation, and increase communications, through partnering with the Home Builders Association, and playing a role in the upcoming Home Show.

Councillor Craig indicated that he would like to see in this budget the Customer Relationship Management software, and asked that staff bring this back for consideration during the budget approval. Mr. Anguish indicated that Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) staff will be better able to speak specifically of the software, although Community and Recreation Services staff have indicated the need to integrate the customer relations interface, which has been endorsed by ICT, and staff are looking at how to move toward that goal. Councillor Craig indicated that he will raise this with ICT staff during their budget presentation.

Councillor Hendsbee noted that members of the community want the Eastern Shore Community Centre to consolidate services such as the library, community services access centre, and the fitness centre to the Musquodoboit Harbour Rink, and would also like a second ice pad. Mr. Anguish indicated that the consolidation of services has been discussed, although there is no direction from Council in this regard.

At the request of Councillor Hendsbee, Mr. Anguish indicated that staff are working to determine what the recent provincial announcement for new schools entails and reviewing past direction from Council with regard to community recreation needs to determine opportunities for partnership.

Councillor Hendsbee indicated that he would like to have community signage put up for North Preston/East Preston/Westphal. Mr. Anguish indicated that there is a civic addressing program, with a report forthcoming to Council, and he will get back to the Councillor with specifics to civic addressing in those communities.

Councillor Hendsbee inquired whether there would be an opportunity for review of and revision to the Animal Control By-law given recent provincial discussions on anti-tethering legislation. He noted in particular introducing a one-time lifetime dog license fee instead of requiring annual renewal. Mr. Anguish indicated that staff do not have direction from Council for a one-time fee, although that could be discussed when a review of the Animal Control By-law comes to Council in the next few months.

Councillor Hendsbee inquired whether staff anticipate any tax structure change to allow for more operational contributions to all community facilities. Mr. Bruce Fisher, Manager, Financial Policy & Planning, indicated that there are two outstanding reports to Council with regard to recreation tax; the first relating to the area rate on local recreation centres and whether that

should be absorbed into the local tax rate; and the second relates to recreation boundaries. Mr. Fisher indicated that the reports are anticipated to be completed in early March.

At the request of Councillor Dalrymple, Mr. Anguish indicated that staff will compile and provide Council with a list of schools that HRM have an agreement with for access to gyms.

Councillor Mason suggested that HRM advocate with the province to set the expectation that schools be open for recreational purposes to maximize tax dollars.

Councillor Mason referenced an August 14, 2012, Committee of the Whole motion regarding the Long Term Arena Strategy, which proposed four-pad arenas for both Peninsula Halifax and Dartmouth. Councillor Karsten added that there is strong recollection that when the Bedford four-pad arena was approved, that an amendment was made to the motion by former Councillor Andrew Younger that the next four-pad be in Dartmouth. He indicated that this was not transcribed in the official record.

Mayor Savage asked to what extent the Call Centre is able to answer inquiries in French. Mr. Anguish indicated that during recruitment for the call centre, bilingualism is considered an asset and there are some French speaking staff at the Call Centre. He further indicated that the Call Centre also uses a 3rd party translation service, which offers service in 160 languages.

Councillor Watts asked for clarification of whether the Adventure Earth Centre (also referred to as the Environmental Leadership Program) was expanded, and whether that program has had any change in the level of staffing. Mr. Anguish indicated that the satellite program was expanded into several schools, and a lease agreement was recently completed for the Windsor Junction Community Centre to open a pilot site at that location.

Councillor Watts inquired whether the Open Gym program would be expanded to other school gyms, in particular, any within the urban core. Mr. Anguish indicated that there is currently no more funding to expand this program, which seeks to partner with schools and/or the province to open gyms for programming.

Councillor Watts indicated that she has been hearing concerns about the lack of cultural space for rent, for example, with the closure of the Roy building. Mr. Anguish indicated that staff work with community groups to show them where spaces are available.

Councillor Watts noted concern about the Bloomfield Centre, and inquired what role HRM would have financially in supporting the implementation of the Bloomfield Master Plan. Mr. Anguish indicated that staff will await the report and take direction from Council.

Councillor McCluskey inquired as to the status of a report she requested on dangerous dogs two years ago. Mr. Anguish advised that the report is being drafted.

Councillor McCluskey encouraged staff to work with the Native Community on the restoration of the totem pole at Sullivan's Pond, noting that the totem pole came from British Columbia.

Deputy Mayor Fisher inquired whether staff had taken into account budget impacts with provincial plans for anti-tethering legislation, as it would affect Animal Control and HRM By-law Enforcement staff. Mr. Anguish indicated that staff have not considered this and will take a look at the proposed legislation.

Councillor Watts requested clarification on the \$260,000 allocated for improvements to barrier free facility access and regulations (slide 19). Mr. Anguish indicated the specifics of the program are yet to be determined, although Community and Recreation Services will be working with Planning and Infrastructure on this item. Further details will be available at the Capital Budget discussion on February 25th. Ms. Jane Fraser, Director, Planning and Infrastructure, indicated that part of the \$260,000 will be set aside to carry out a needs assessment of HRM facilities. Councillor Watts acknowledged that this work has been undertaken by the Accessibility Advisory Committee for a number of years.

Councillor McCluskey inquired, with the recent Supreme Court decision on the decriminalization of prostitution, whether staff have looked at issues related to the introduction of brothels, such as zoning. Mr. Anguish advised that preliminary discussions have taken place on that matter, as well as the matter of medical marijuana, to determine what would need to be done in both eventualities.

Councillor Rankin commented that access to school gyms would greatly alleviate the demand for recreation in communities.

Councillor Rankin indicated that staff should consider emergency locations for storm events where people can use a telephone or wait for transit service to resume, and also consider alternatives for getting people home, particularly in rural areas. Mr. Anguish thanked the Councillor for bringing this to the attention of the Integrated Emergency Service, HRM Customer Service, and Metro Transit for consideration.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. Budget Presentation – Halifax Public Libraries

The following documentation was before Committee of the Whole:

- A staff report dated January 22, 2014.

Ms. Paula Saulnier, Interim CEO, Halifax Public Libraries, presented the proposed 2014/2015 Halifax Public Libraries Budget and Business Plan, including the following:

- Business Unit Overview
- Halifax Public Libraries Service Areas
- 2013/14 Deliverables Update
- 2014/15 Halifax Public Libraries Budget Highlights
- 2013/14 Operating Budget Overview
- 2013/14 Service Area Budget Overview
- Year to Year Comparison
- 2014/15 Cost Reduction Initiatives

- 2014/15 Priority Initiatives
- 2014/15 Proposed New or Expanded Services

MOVED by Councillor Mason, and seconded by Councillor Watts, that the Committee of the Whole direct staff to proceed to prepare the 2014/2015 Halifax Public Libraries Budget and Business Plan as proposed in the accompanying presentation, incorporating additional direction provided by motion of Committee of the Whole for inclusion in the proposed HRM 14/15 Budget and Business Plan documents.

Councillor Mason thanked library staff and the Board. He acknowledged that the libraries budget was reduced from \$17.5 million to \$16.2 million to help with HRM efficiencies. Councillor Mason further noted, however, that the \$150,000 reduction for library materials was only possible because of donations available for the new Central Library collection.

Councillor Walker noted that it is not the first time that circulation materials were cut to meet a budget, and indicated that a time will come when HRM will have to put more money into the collection.

Councillor Walker inquired whether there are plans to expand the parking lot at the Keshen Goodman Library. Ms. Saulnier indicated that there are no immediate plans to expand the parking lot, and staff continue to monitor the parking lot to ensure it is used only for library patrons. She noted that the forthcoming Facilities Master Plan will speak to the future of the Keshen Goodman Library.

Councillor Watts commented on a report late last year from the CAO's office which tracked goals and focus areas, noting that the way to meet many of those goals is through our libraries. She used the examples of immigration, youth leadership, and increased literacy to highlight how libraries are very important public spaces that assist municipalities in meeting target areas and obligations to their citizens. Ms. Saulnier concurred with Councillor Watts' comments, noting that there is a strong alignment between the library's strategic plan and HRM's priority outcomes.

Mayor Savage commented that libraries are important gathering places for communities. He requested clarification on the \$4.85 million in provincial grants and donations (slide 14). Ms. Saulnier indicated that the provincial grants are through the provincial Library Act, and an agreement that was struck at the time of amalgamation between HRM and the province. She explained that 28% of their funding comes from the province, 3% raised through revenue, and the remainder through HRM.

At the request of Mayor Savage, Ms. Saulnier commented on the capital campaign for the Central Library, noting a one million dollar donation from the O'Regan family and another \$900,000 that was raised in the past year. She noted that a community campaign will be launched by the beginning of April to raise the remaining 40% of the \$6 million goal.

Mayor Savage suggested that for next year's budget, Halifax Regional Libraries consider getting involved in bringing back the student writing awards component of the Dartmouth Book Awards.

Councillor Hendsbee commented that he is glad to see libraries in rural areas getting longer hours, however, he noted that the Sheet Harbor Library will be open five hours less than the JD Shatford Memorial and Musquodoboit Harbour libraries. Councillor Hendsbee indicated that he hopes there will be room in the budget for equality in the operation of rural libraries. Ms. Saulnier explained that the reduced hours for Sheet Harbour were rationalized through current use and based on hours that customers are asking to come to the library.

Councillor Hendsbee requested a copy of the asset mapping of community resources completed for North Preston/East Preston/Cherry Brook, for Councillor Nicoll and himself. Ms. Saulnier indicated she would provide this information to the Councillors.

Councillor Hendsbee noted the new school announced for Sheet Harbour, and suggested there may be an opportunity to look at relocating the library and other area services as a part of that project. He also commented on rationalization and consolidation of municipal services in Musquodoboit Harbour to the arena. Ms. Saulnier indicated that they are always open to discussing opportunities.

Councillor Hendsbee inquired how the library is keeping ahead of new technologies. Ms. Saulnier advised that the library keeps up to date with new technology, as a way of keeping in touch with what their customers want, and being efficient.

The Chair noted that Committee of the Whole was about to lose quorum. The question was called for at this time.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

The Solicitor ruled that business cannot be conducted without quorum. The member agreed to remain until the end of the meeting and the meeting continued with quorum present.

Councillor McCluskey inquired why the Alderney Gate Library was not open for Nocturne. Ms. Saulnier advised that it was too late to participate in this past Nocturne event, but they will look at participating in the next Nocturne.

In response to an inquiry from Councillor McCluskey, Ms. Saulnier advised that the North End Library has a new computer lab that is staffed by the library and very well used.

Councillor Dalrymple indicated that he will not be supporting the library budget again this year because District 1 does not have a library. He indicated that as a 1996 agreement of amalgamation, Middle Musquodoboit was promised a physical HRM presence in the community, which has not materialized.

5. Public Comments

No members of the public came forward for public comments.

6. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:49 p.m.

Cathy J. Mellett
Municipal Clerk