



**HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES  
December 2, 2015**

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

STAFF: Mr. Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer  
Mr. John Traves, Municipal Solicitor  
Ms. Cathy Mellett, Municipal Clerk  
Ms. Cathy Collett, Legislative Assistant

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

*A video recording of this meeting is available: enter link  
[http://archive.isiglobal.ca/vod/halifax/archive\\_2015-12-02\\_live.mp4.html](http://archive.isiglobal.ca/vod/halifax/archive_2015-12-02_live.mp4.html)*

*The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to Council are available online:  
<http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/151202cow-agenda.php>*

*The meeting was called to order at 9:31 a.m., and recessed at 11:31 a.m. Committee of the Whole reconvened at 11:41 a.m. Committee of the Whole adjourned at 12:44 p.m.*

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Councillor Karsten, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m. in Council Chambers, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

**2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – NONE**

One of the February meeting dates for Committee of the Whole – Budget conflicts with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Sustainability Conference. The Chair commented that he would follow up on this conflict

**3. PROPOSED FIVE YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAM BUDGET (2016-17 TO 2020-21)**

The following was before the Committee of the Whole:

- A staff recommendation report dated November 23, 2015
- A presentation dated December 2, 2015
- A revised copy of Attachment B of the report dated November 23, 2015
- An Extract from the October 28, 2014 meeting of Regional Council, circulated by Councillor Rankin

Ms. Jane Fraser, Director, Operations and Support, gave a presentation regarding the Proposed Five Year Capital Program Budget (2016-17 to 2020-21), commenting that the policies of Regional Council created a strong fiscal position for HRM.

The Chair opened the floor to questions.

Committee members indicated that they would like to waive the rules of order and hold public participation before questions of clarification.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Mason

**THAT the rules be waived to allow Public Participation to occur before questions of clarification.**

**MOTION PUT AND PASSED**

The Chair opened the floor for Public Participation

**Jerry Post** from the South End of Halifax thanked the Committee of the Whole for the opportunity to speak. He explained that he returned to Halifax three years ago after living abroad. He commented that he had been invited by the Mayor to a session on healthy communities and is discouraged by the lack of improvements that have been made to accessibility in HRM. He continued that Access A Bus is not effective and too expensive for the city, indicating that a trip that would cost HRM \$37.00 would cost \$15.00 by taxi. He explained that Access A Bus does not meet people's needs and that while the Accessibility Advisory Committee recommends changes to the service, no action is being taken. Mr. Post commented that the budget recommendations contained in the staff report indicate that nothing will be changed in terms of the Access A Bus service, and that this represents complacency towards the issues with the service. He suggested that it would be effective to supplement Access A Bus service with taxi service. He concluded that he is encouraged by what he hears from members of Regional Council, but that it does not seem to filter down into action.

The Chair called three times for Public Participation, hearing none, he declared Public Participation closed.

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Watts

**THAT Committee of the Whole recommend to Regional Council to:**

- 1. Direct staff to prepare the five year capital plan including the preliminary 2016-17 capital budget, and schedule of reserves withdrawals, as presented to Committee of the Whole and as per Attachment A of the <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/151202cow-agenda.php>**
- 2. Approve the list of 2016-17 advanced capital funding as per the revised Attachment B as circulated at the meeting.**
- 3. Approve the list of multi-year projects as per Attachment C of the staff recommendation report dated November 23, 2015.**

Councillor Mason commented that he compared this year's projected 5-year budget with the one debated last year and that some projects keep sliding into the future. He suggested that reducing the amount of debt payments would be one option for addressing the projects that keep being missed in the budget.

In response to Councillor Mason's comments, Ms. Fraser explained that some changes have been made to how capital budgeting is done in order to increase transparency, for example, resources are not committed to projects unless there is a planned course of action. She commented that being able to manage and deliver the projects that have been committed to is a priority.

Councillor Watts indicated that she was open to the possibility of making changes to debt servicing in order to finance other projects. She questioned what passing the staff recommendation would commit Council to, and if there would still be the opportunity to make adjustments in subsequent meetings of the Committee of the Whole – Budget. She indicated that she would like to look at the Accessibility Budget and questioned why it dropped from 400,000 in 2014 to 100,000 this year. She requested a breakdown of the Active Transportation budget, specifically how much will go into sidewalks, trails and cycling infrastructure.

Ms. Fraser indicated that the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) would address the comments made regarding debt servicing policies. She explained that there will actually be close to \$900,000 worth of work done on accessibility projects in 2016/17. Staff has addressed as much of the 'low-hanging fruit' as possible, such as door fixtures, and 45% of this work is complete. This work will continue into 2016/17 and will include an audit of the libraries. She commented that what are not seen as specific accessibility projects are the normal accessibility improvements that are part of all new and renovated building designs, as well as transit projects such as the automated signals at crosswalks.

Ms. Fraser explained that this Committee of the Whole discussion is just the first step, and that numbers can be adjusted during all Budget discussions. The direction and commitment that is the most important at this point is in regards to advanced capital, as it allows staff to move forward with those projects. She informed the Committee of the Whole that the maximum for advanced capital is 50% so that there is the flexibility to make changes throughout the budgeting process.

Addressing Councillor Watt's question regarding Active Transportation, Ms. Fraser explained that the Active Transportation budget is \$5.1 million: new sidewalks will be between \$3 and \$3.1 million, the Sackville Greenway Trail will be \$535,000 and \$465,000 will go to community trails through Halifax Regional Trails Association. She commented that she is also under the understanding that there will be another million for bicycle lane projects and that she hopes to bring back the detailed sheets when she returns to the Committee of the Whole budget discussions with the business units.

Ms. Amanda Whitewood, CFO, explained that in regard to debt servicing, the Policy Framework – whose origins are in the multi-year financial strategy from 1999 – has had a few minor revisions over the last 15

years. One of these changes, in 2009, was to the debt servicing plan. That was a 5-year period in which targets were adjusted to align with growth. That five year period has expired, thus Council could make adjustments again if they saw fit to do so.

Councillor Rankin addressed the comments made by Mr. Post during public participation and commented that Committee of the Whole ought to signal that his comments were heard and that there is the flexibility and ability to respond within this budget. He indicated that he was in support of fiscal discipline. Councillor Rankin circulated an extract from the minutes of the October 28, 2014 meeting of Regional Council and provided commentary with respect to boundaries for the Blue Mountain Birch Coves Lake Park, questioning Ms. Fraser on Council's fiscal capacity to respond.

Ms. Fraser explained that she will engage Council in a discussion of Blue Mountain Birch Coves Lake Park at another time as the discussion will likely take place In Camera. She indicated that fiscal concerns are not considered an impediment to this project.

Councillor Mosher commented that she received an e-mail from a citizen who was disappointed that the Committee of the Whole – Budget was not offered with captioning.

MOVED by Councillor Mosher, seconded by Councillor Watts

**THAT Committee of the Whole – Budget be provided with captioning henceforth.**

#### **MOTION PUT AND PASSED**

Councillor Mosher requested a detailed response regarding St. Andrew's Community Center, commenting that it is an integral part of the peninsula. She also requested information regarding the Herring Cove Road widening project that started in 1972, noting that it is not referenced in the Budget until 2020 and that, despite findings from the study from 2012 mentioned in the report, it is causing safety concerns and other problems for the community. She concluded by questioning if the potential for natural gas shortages have been considered in regards to the Eric Spicer Building and commented that the Chain of Lakes Trail has thousands of users a day, but no fountains or washrooms.

Ms. Fraser responded that she does not know what course of action will be taken for St. Andrews, but that it is in the Budget as a placeholder until there is a better sense of what the project entails. She informed the Committee of the Whole that there is money in the budget for intersection improvements on Herring Cove Road. Ms. Fraser commented that the Eric Spicer Building is a large energy efficient project that is funded through the FCM Green Fund money and that there is always volatility with any renewable resource. She explained that a large investment has gone into the Chain of Lakes Trail as it is a signature trail and that funding is done through the Committee and links back to the strategic Active Transportation Plan, with the focus on the connectivity of the trails in the urban greenway.

Councillor Mosher questioned how the Chain of Lakes Trail Association (COLTA) could apply for washrooms or fountains.

The Chair commented that the details of the capital projects for next year could be discussed during the Business Unit discussions.

Upon Councillor Adams' request, Ms. Fraser agreed to provide information in regards to the Lion's rink.

Mayor Savage thanked Ms. Fraser and her staff for the hard work and discipline that went into the capital budget.

In response to a question from Mayor Savage regarding the 100 Wild Islands Project, Ms. Fraser explained that HRM contributed to Gerrard Island and that, with the direction of Council, could designate reserved funds if cost-sharing on that project was something that comes up in the future.

In response to a question from Mayor Savage with regards to Accessibility projects, Ms. Fraser explained that accessibility improvements are included in all new and renovated buildings and that this work will be ongoing.

In response to a question from Mayor Savage on streetscape funding, Ms. Fraser explained that the work on Spring Gard Road will be done through the normal Transportation and Public Works budget.

Mayor Savage commented that he wants to be sure that when the new bicycle access to the MacDonald Bridge comes to Council it will be budgeted for over and above the normal Active Transportation Budget.

Ms. Fraser replied that staff would need direction from Council if the funds for this project are not to come from the Active Transportation budget.

Councillor Craig commented that he would like Council to consider expanding the debt a little more so as to put more money into streets.

Councillor Craig suggested that HRM develop a strategy to improve the Street Distress Index. He explained that it is estimated to take more than 20 million to bring the streets of Lower Sackville up to a state of good repair. He indicated that he intends to bring forward a motion to address improvements to streets, particularly in Lower Sackville.

Councillor Johns commented that the capital budget is a good budget for the urban part of the Municipality and would like to see what is in the budget for his residents.

In response to Councillor John's question regarding a breakdown of the budget by district, Ms. Fraser explained that a lot of the work done across all districts falls under the bundled accounts, such as Parks and Playgrounds State of Good Repair and Street Recapitalization projects. Responding to Councillor John's question regarding MacLellan Drive, Ms. Fraser explained that the \$200,000 bookmarked for this project is for functional design.

Councillor Nicoll gestured to a survey in which a large percentage of residents indicated that they are in favour of the recapitalization of the streets and roads; she suggested that this is because citizens are not always aware of the other areas covered by municipal taxes, such as solid waste and transit. She commented that the budget sets aside over \$12 million to cover conventional bus replacement and \$15 million for sidewalk renewals, but that it is unclear how these projects are integrated in terms of connectivity. She questioned if it would be advantageous to prepare an action plan showing the criteria of current standards for street, road, and sidewalk renewals and asked whether direction should come from the Committee of the Whole – Budget or Regional Council to develop such an action plan.

Ms. Fraser explained that in regards to connectivity and the integrated plan, what staff are looking at is the Active Transportation plan that was approved by Council.

Councillor Nicoll expressed concern for the high-traffic streets that are not covered in the Active Transportation Plan, but are without sidewalks on both sides. Ms. Fraser responded that such streets would fall under the integrated mobility plan.

In response to a question of clarification from Councillor Nicoll, Ms. Fraser explained that with regard to the Advanced Capital under technology, staff are seeking approval for two projects, one for Council technology and the other to initiate a recreation system upgrade.

Councillor McCluskey commented that more needs to be done in terms of accessibility improvements to streets, especially during the winter months when snow can make it very difficult for citizens with mobility challenges to be able to leave their homes. She expressed concern that there is nothing in the capital budget about a Dartmouth museum, commenting that there are thousands of artefacts in storage in Dartmouth that need to be relocated.

Ms. Fraser explained that, in terms of accessibility, the improvements would be found in the bundled account for intersection improvements and that the funding stream for the Dartmouth museum will come from the sale of the old Dartmouth City Hall, which has not yet been purchased.

Responding to a question from Councillor McCluskey, Ms. Fraser explained that the Eric Spicer building is a large asset with a lot of people working out of it, and that it will be receiving an energy retrofit and a roof replacement.

At 11:31 the Committee of the Whole took a break. Committee of the Whole resumed at 11:41The Committee of the Whole recessed for ten minutes. Councillor Dalrymple exited the meeting at this time.

Councillor Hendsbee requested more detailed information with regards to park upgrades, regional water access, and beach upgrades as well as a breakdown of what projects in the budget have already been approved, what projects are designated as works in progress, and what projects are new projects.

Councillor Hendsbee echoed Mayor Savage's comments on the 100 Wild Island Project and commented that the Municipality should be supporting this project as well.

Ms. Fraser explained that there are projects in the 16/17 budget that were started in 15/16 and will not be finished before year end and multi-year projects such as the Dartmouth four-pad that span several years. She commented that there will be a greater level of detail with regard to specific projects brought forward in January as the budgeting process continues.

In response to a question from Councillor Outhit, Ms. Fraser explained that the Bedford Park and Ride is to be considered by the Audit and Finance Standing Committee and funding would come from the 15/16 budget.

Councillor Outhit questioned if the building of an additional fire station in the Larry Utek area is represented in the Capital Budget. Ms. Fraser agreed to come back with information on this.

Ms. Fraser answered questions of clarification regarding debt financing.

Councillor Outhit commented that he does not believe that taking funds away from debt payment and putting it into road paving is an advisable plan.

Ms. Fraser commented that the fire station in Bedford, #8, will be moved to the Larry Utek area, the new fire station will be #9, and both stations are covered in the capital budget.

Responding to a question from Councillor Walker regarding the Scotiabank Center, Ms. Fraser explained that there is a three-year projected build for that project. In 2016/17 there will be an ice slab replacement, LED lighting upgrade, and roof recapitalization; in 2017/18 the center clock will be replaced, along with upgrades to the ice plant; and in 2018/19 there will be a new P.A. system and podium repairs.

Commenting on the Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lake Park, Councillor Walker explained that he has met with landholders and would like to see direction on funds being spent in the next five years on land acquisitions in this area.

Councillor Walker questioned whether or not the Green Carts have been retendered, as HRM's Green Carts are double the price of other green carts. Ms. Fraser agreed to bring back more information on the subject.

Councillor Walker questioned where the next phases of LED light conversion will take place. Ms. Fraser explained that staff are beginning with the remote areas and working inwards and agreed to return with more detailed information on the subject.

Councillor Mason commented that, at another time, Council needs to adopt an accessibility action plan. He noted that the new four-pad in Dartmouth will service the entire Municipality, and that the focus should be on what is the highest rate of return for HRM.

In response to a question regarding the timeline for GPS and AVL technology for buses in HRM, Mr. Dave Raege, Acting Manager, Technical Services, Halifax Transit, explained there will be no change in the delivery timelines for these services.

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Watts

**THAT Committee of the Whole request a staff report for consideration during the 2016/17 budget discussion regarding a review and refresh the 2009 HRM Revised Debt Servicing Plan with an emphasis on capacity to fund state of good repair, particularly road maintenance, paying particular attention to ability to service debt over a five year term, and consistency with the spirit and intent of the 1999 Multi-Year Financial Strategy.**

Committee of the Whole – Budget agreed to discuss this motion after the discussion on the staff recommendation concluded.

Councillor Watts commented that there should be a policy direction around parkland acquisition. She inquired if there was a strategy around the installation of washrooms in regional parks.

Ms. Fraser explained that \$60,000 is set aside to do a study on this subject.

Councillor Johns left the meeting.

Councillor Rankin requested information on the status of the reserves under solid waste and Ms. Fraser agreed to provide this.

Councillor Craig remarked that, as Mr. Jerry Post stated during Public Participation, there needs to be an alternate way of moving around the Municipality for people with disabilities. He questioned where in the budget improvements to the 311 service are represented. Ms. Fraser responded that an RFP just went out for this project and that a number of the key sections of Hansen are being replaced during this budget.

Mayor Savage read a press release from the Provincial Government dated July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1998 and commented that this Council has shown prudence by consistently paying down the debt. He questioned how the five-year general outlook is affected by the new Federal Government and their commitment to infrastructure.

Ms. Fraser responded that the strategy will be to look at the funding opportunities available and align them with the stated priorities of Council. She commented that it is important for the Municipality to be in a position to take advantage of the available cost-sharing opportunities and thus make room for other projects that do not qualify for federal funding.

Councillor Outhit commented that, while he would not necessarily be opposed to decreasing debt payments if necessary, he is not in favour of changing the debt policy to make more funds available for road paving. He stated that road paving needs to come out of operating funds.

Councillor Karsten provided commentary on the Mount Edward Road Ball Field project and questioned if the \$11.1 million designated for the project includes the funds from the Province? He expressed disappointment that the budget did not mention the Baker Drive pad.

Responding to Councillor Karsten's comment, Mr. Brad Anguish informed the Committee of the Whole – Budget that the Baker Drive project will be addressed once the results come back from the Community Facilities Master Plan (CFMP). He explained that while funds are not allocated for a project until there is

an established plan, staff have every intention of moving forward on the project with Council's direction after the results of the CFMP come back.

The Chair called for the question on the staff recommendation.

**MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

The following motion moved by Councillor Mason and seconded by Councillor Watts was now on the floor:

**THAT Committee of the Whole request a staff report for consideration during the 2016/17 budget discussion regarding a review and refresh the 2009 HRM Revised Debt Servicing Plan with an emphasis on capacity to fund state of good repair, particularly road maintenance, paying particular attention to ability to service debt over a five year term, and consistency with the spirit and intent of the 1999 Multi-Year Financial Strategy.**

Councillor Outhit indicated that if the specific reference to road maintenance was removed he would be prepared to support the motion, but that he does not support increasing the debt for the purpose of paving roads.

Councillor Mason explained that the motion does not suggest that the Municipality would incur more debt in order to increase road maintenance, but rather it suggests that existing debts are not paid off at the current rate, in order to free up more funds in the operating budget.

Councillor Craig indicated that he supports the motion as it is and commented that keeping roads in a state of good repair is a priority for residents.

Councillor Walker reiterated Councillor Craig's position that keeping roads in a state of good repair is a basic service and a priority for residents.

Mayor Savage indicated that he supports the request for a staff report.

**MOTION PUT AND PASSED**

**4. PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS**

This matter was dealt with earlier in the meeting, see Page 2.

**5. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:44 p.m.

Kevin Arjoon  
Municipal Clerk