

**TO:** Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:**   
George McLellan, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2003

**SUBJECT:** Regional Planning Public Consultation Process

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**ORIGIN**

December 3, 2002 - Regional Council endorsed "Regional Planning Phase II Action Plan", which directed the development of a community consultation plan for approval by Regional Council.

June 10, 2003 - Regional Council endorsed the Regional Planning process, which included public consultation.

July 16, 2003 - Regional Planning Committee agreed upon a Regional Planning Public Consultation Process and recommended it proceed to Regional Council for adoption.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council adopt the Regional Planning Public Consultation Process as outlined in Attachments #2 and #3 of this report to complete the Regional Plan.

## BACKGROUND

Phase I of the Regional Planning Process is complete. This phase included a range of opportunities for public input and built upon the visioning initiative of HRM's Vision 20/20.

In Phase II of the process, public consultation will become more focussed. Specifically, consultation will be targeted at raising the public's overall awareness of the issues and impacts associated with the region's current form of growth and in developing and understanding the options for a future built on sustainability.

## DISCUSSION

The Regional Planning Phase II process and time line were endorsed by Regional Council on June 10, 2003 and will be used as the work plan for the process (Attachment #1). In addition to providing high level indications of milestone deliverables, it provides an outline of the specific steps within Phase II where public consultation shall occur.

Attachment #2 of this report outlines how the Regional Planning Committee and staff team is proposing to undertake consultation with the citizens of HRM during Phase II of the regional planning process. It is expected that the approach outlined will provide numerous opportunities for all citizens to get involved - from community groups and organizations, the business and development communities, as well as individuals. Opportunities for input will range from tear-off surveys in Regional Planning newsletters, to workbooks and open houses, and a comment box on the Regional Planning website. Citizens will also have access to the staff team and numerous resource materials at the new Regional Planning Project office in the Halifax Ferry Terminal. All input received will be reviewed and recorded, and respondents will receive acknowledgement of their contribution and feedback, as well as kept apprised of additional opportunities for participation as we progress.

The creation of a regional plan for HRM will effect all one hundred and ninety-six (196) communities in the region. The consultation process must therefore provide all citizens with opportunities to have input. The Regional Planning Committee will aid Regional Council and staff in the coordination of public consultation and ensure that opportunities for input are provided across the region.

In mid-July, a public awareness campaign began. (This aspect of the overall consultation plan was previously endorsed by Council on June 10<sup>th</sup>) Using the first of a series of Regional Planning newsletters, the Regional Planning Principles, existing conditions in the region and status quo risks are being communicated. Additional newsletters, public displays, and media opportunities are also being used throughout the campaign which is expected to continue through September. Additional opportunities for public consultation, beginning in fall 2003, are outlined in Attachment #2.

Attachment #3 of this report outlines a shortened consultation process whereby amendments to existing municipal policy and/or new regional policy may be considered by Regional Council to facilitate on-going implementation as projects are completed or where more timely action is appropriate. Examples could include amendments to implement recommendations of the Water Resource Management Strategy and/or the approval of a Master Plan(s).

### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

There are no immediate implications associated with adopting the recommended public consultation process. Costs associated with the implementation of the components of the consultation process will be allocated from the resources of the Governance and Strategic Initiatives business unit.

### **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN**

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

### **REGIONAL PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

The public consultation process will serve to raise awareness of HRM's regional planning principles, existing conditions in the region and status quo risks associated with our existing growth pattern. Further, it will provide opportunities for the engagement of the citizens of the region in the completion of a Regional Plan.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

The public consultation process as outlined in this report may be modified, however, pursuant to Section 204 of the Municipal Government Act, the Regional Council shall adopt a public consultation process "*concerning the preparation of planning documents*" (Section 204(1)).

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment #1: Regional Planning Process, Phase II
- Attachment #2: Regional Planning: Proposed Public Participation Program "A"
- Attachment #3: Regional Planning: Proposed Public Participation Program "B"

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

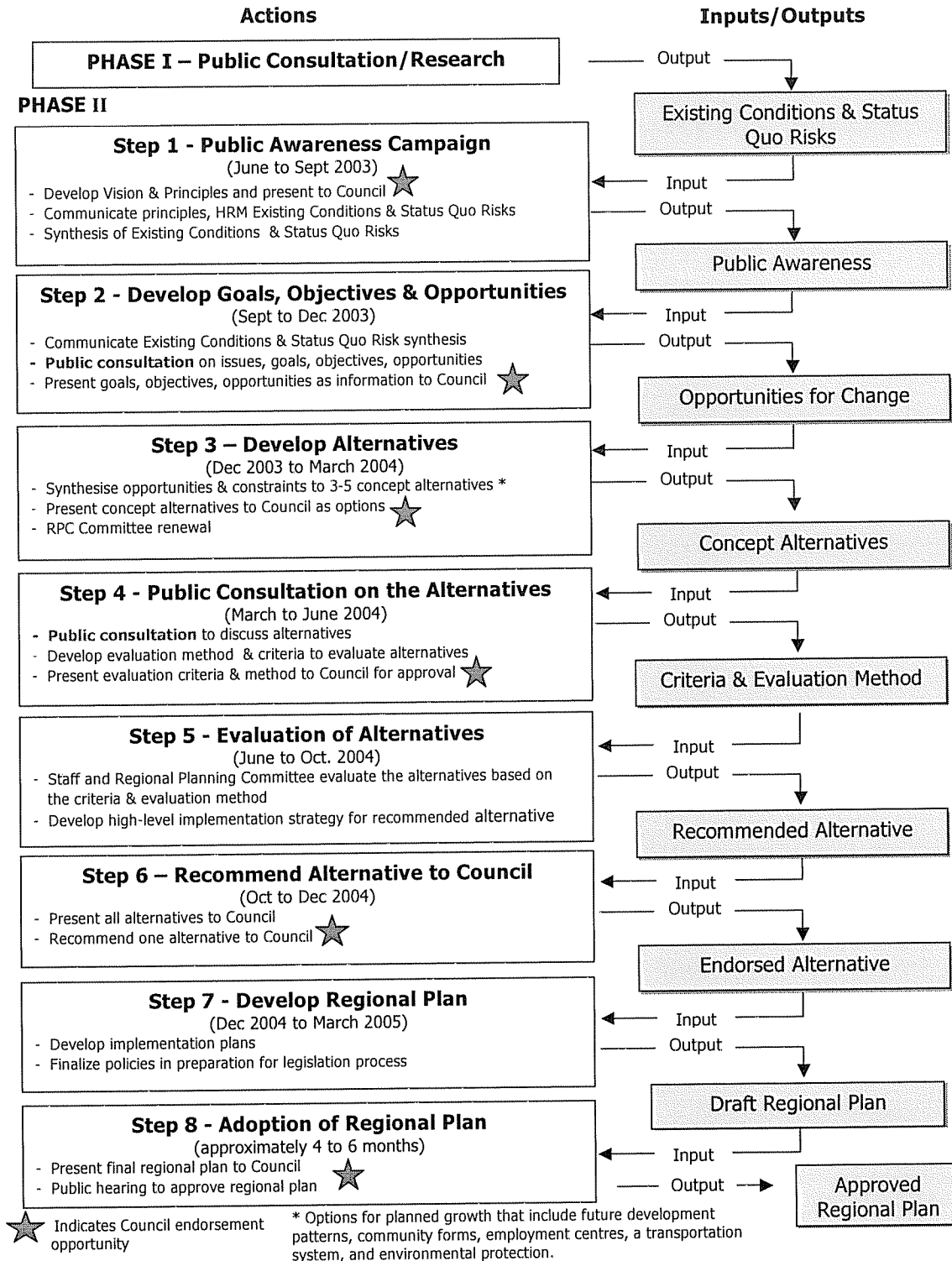
Report Prepared by: Susan Corser, Planner II, Regional Planning

Report Approved by: Betty MacDonald  
Betty MacDonald, Director of Governance and Strategic Initiatives

Carol Macomber  
Carol Macomber, Project Manager, Regional Planning

Attachment #1  
Regional Planning Process – Phase II

June 2003



Attachment #2

**Regional Planning Phase II  
Proposed Public Consultation Process "A"**

Purpose:

To obtain input from the citizens of Halifax Regional Municipality on the creation of regional statements of land use policy (e.g. Regional Plan) effecting all Municipal Planning Strategies (MPS), Land Use By-laws (LUB), and Subdivision By-Laws.

Jurisdiction:

The creation of land use policy is of region-wide significance and therefore will be handled directly by Regional Council. This will help ensure that the issues are handled consistently throughout HRM.

Process:

A single region-wide program will allow regional land use policy to be generated, discussed and adopted as a comprehensive package. Steps in the process are as follows:

- consultation forums currently being implemented include:

**Public Awareness Campaign (during Step 1) - (July to September 2003)**

Using newsletters, the Regional Planning Principles, existing conditions in the region and status quo risks will be communicated. The newsletters will be distributed as a part of regional planning public displays in municipal customer service centers, ferry terminals, shopping malls, as well as HRM festivals and events. (A list of public display locations and dates will be posted on the website) The newsletters will be mailed to groups and individuals on the regional planning mailing list and distributed to communities through HRM's libraries. The newsletters will contain a tear-off survey which citizens can fill out and return to the regional planning office. Public feedback can also be provided to the regional planning office by e-mail/website addresses.

At the conclusion of the summer's public awareness campaign, the results of the campaign will be reviewed with the RPC and an update provided to Regional Council.

- consultation forums currently being planned include:

**Public Consultation (during Step 2)** - (October to December 2003)

Using workbooks and focus groups, the synthesis of existing conditions and status quo risks will be communicated. The workbook and focus groups will elicit the public's responses to specific questions that can be used to formulate sound goal and measurable objective statements. The information gathered from the public will be used by both the Regional Planning Committee and staff to formulate and recommend Regional Planning Goals and Objectives to Regional Council. A minimum of three (3) open house sessions will be hosted by the Regional Planning Committee (aided by staff) to facilitate discussion on regional planning goals and objectives. Members of the Planning Advisory Committees and other stakeholders will be notified of the meetings.

**Public Awareness Campaign (early in Step 3)** - (January 2004)

Using a newsletter, the Regional Planning Goals and Objectives will be communicated. The newsletter will be distributed as a part of regional planning public displays in municipal customer service centers, ferry terminals, shopping malls, as well as HRM festivals and events. (A list of public display locations and dates will be posted on the website) The newsletters will be mailed to groups and individuals on the regional planning mailing list and distributed to communities through HRM's libraries. Public feedback can also be provided to the regional planning office by e-mail/website addresses.

**Public Consultation on the Alternatives (during Step 4)** - (March to June 2004)

Using a minimum of three (3) public open house session, the Regional Planning Committee (aided by staff) will communicate the alternatives to the status quo, and facilitate discussion on the alternatives. The communication/facilitation around the alternatives will contain visual elements, and may employ the use of interactive software. Members of the Planning Advisory Committees and other stakeholders would be notified of the meetings.

**Public Awareness Campaign (Step 6)** - (October to December 2004)

Using similar tools (e.g. newsletter) as with the two previous awareness campaigns, the preferred alternative will be communicated to the public and the implications of this alternative made clear. In addition to demonstrating how the preferred alternative achieves the Regional Planning principles, goals and objectives, the five (5) key theme questions will be answered:

1. What locations are regionally significant to support economic expansion?
2. Where should we encourage residential growth over the next 25 years?
3. What type of transportation system should support this growth?
4. How do we protect our environmental assets?
5. How can we maximize the benefits of the varied uses of the Halifax Harbour?

(Note: Regional Council will be provided with updates during, and at the conclusion, of each component of the public consultation)

- public input at regional plan approval stage will include:

**Public Hearing to Approve the Regional Plan (during Step 8)** - (after March 2005)

Following Regional Council's first reading and setting of a date for a public hearing to consider approval of the regional plan, the public will have an opportunity to address Regional Council during the public hearing. Concurrently, Regional Council will consider the adoption of an implementation strategy to bring about amendments to all municipal planning strategies, land use by-laws, and subdivision by-laws in accordance with regional plan policy.



**Attachment II**

**Regional Planning Phase II  
Proposed Public Consultation Process "B"**

Purpose:

During the process to complete the regional plan, Regional Council may deem it appropriate to proceed immediately to bring about a region-wide policy(s) which, if not addressed in the shorter term, may undermine the Council's ability to consider and adopt an overall long term strategy for regional growth. A shorter term, action-oriented approach would enable the incremental implementation of work as it is completed, including amendments to implement recommendations of the Water Resource Management Strategy and/or the approval of a Master Plan(s). In the event this interim step is necessary, the citizens of HRM will be consulted.

Steps in the process would be as follows:

- initiation report to Regional Council;
- consultation with the general public through a minimum of three public information sessions. Staff would present the proposed amendments and chair the meetings. Members of the Planning Advisory Committees would be notified of the meetings;
- following first reading and setting of a public hearing date, the public would have an opportunity to address Regional Council at the public hearing to consider the amendments