

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

**HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
1996/97 OPERATING BUDGET SESSION
August 23, 1996**

PRESENT:

Mayor Walter Fitzgerald
Councillors: Gordon R. Snow
David Hendsbee
Ron Cooper
Harry McInroy
Condo Sarto
Bruce Hetherington
Clint Schofield
Jerry Blumenthal
Graham L. Downey
Howard Epstein
Russell Walker
Bill Stone
Ron Hanson
Barry Barnet
Bob Harvey
Peter Kelly
Reg Rankin
Jack Mitchell

ABSENT:

Deputy Mayor Greenough
Councillors John Cunningham
Stephen Adams
Larry Uteck
Bill Dooks

STAFF MEMBERS:

Mr. Ken Meech, Chief Administrative Officer
Chief Vincent MacDonald, Commissioner, Police Services
Ms. Val Spencer, Commissioner, Policy and Planning
Deputy Police Chief David McKinnon
Deputy Police Chief Frank Binns
Mr. Phillip Moir, Finance Co-ordinator
Ms. Patti Halliday, Assistant Municipal Clerk

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POLICE SERVICES

Vincent MacDonald, Commissioner, Police Services, gave an overview of the operating budget for the Police Services, noting the budget for 1996-97 has an overall increase of 3 percent. Chief MacDonald noted this increase takes into account a fairly significant shortfall from uncollected revenue for ticket violations. Other items contributing to the increase include a 4 percent increase in RCMP costs based on a previous arrangement with the former Halifax County, pay equity costs for Dartmouth crosswalk guards, eight new crosswalk guards in the former County and Town of Bedford, an additional payroll clerk for HRIS, step increases, the hiring of three term constable positions and a clerk to assist with training.

Chief MacDonald noted Police Services has achieved major savings in administration. Previously, there were 21 senior staff positions and now there are only 11. However, due to the complexity of working with three collective agreements, it is difficult to manage a public safety organization.

Chief MacDonald stated the Board of Police Commissioners, at their meeting on August 19, 1996, substantially approved the Police Services budget. However, the Chairperson of the Board, Mr. Abraham, wanted two concerns of the Board mentioned. The first concern is with the eight proposed new crossing guard positions being cut. The other concern was the decision not to fill five of the vacancies. The Board recommended that rather than lose them completely, they could be added as of January 1, 1997. Therefore, the Board recommended another \$50,000 be added to accommodate this on January 1, 1997.

Councillor Stone, on behalf of the Board of Police Commissioners, spoke on their satisfaction with the Police Service and the concerns of the Board as expressed by Chief MacDonald. Councillor Stone also acknowledged the presence of Superintendent Lorne Hall, RCMP, noting he is retiring today after 37 years of service with the RCMP.

Councillor Hendsbee expressed concern with not knowing the process for the distribution of the 22 crosswalk guards in the former County. He noted North Preston has wanted crosswalk guards for their school for some time. Chief MacDonald replied they decided the best way to approach this would be to ask Council and the community to make them aware, for the next year, of any crosswalk guard requests. They can then evaluate them to see if they fit the criteria. Councillor Hendsbee requested further information on the process so he can advise the local schools and parent associations of the process. Chief MacDonald agreed to provide this.

Councillor Cooper asked if it were possible to use municipal expertise regarding repairs and maintenance. Deputy Chief McKinnon replied that last week they entered into discussions with Regional Operations regarding the mechanical operation and ventilation of the building. They are in the process of rewriting some specifications of the contract eliminating those things that Regional Operations can cover.

Concerning the crosswalk guards, Councillor Cooper asked if there is a designate to look after this function. Deputy Chief McKinnon replied the overall coordination comes under the Deputy Chief of Community Services. Chief MacDonald added they will correspond to all previous County Councillors to be certain they are aware of the process. This will likely be done in the next week or so.

Councillor Cooper also expressed concern with the closures of the Dartmouth cells. He asked what the possibility would be of having a couple of officers held up in Halifax putting people in cells creating less police presence on the streets. Chief MacDonald replied it would not be much different from the way it is now, as it is just a matter of dropping the prisoner off. No paperwork is involved. However, the union has expressed some concerns, and they will be discussing this at the next union meeting.

Councillor Sarto stated he felt the amount allocated for overtime was low. Deputy Chief McKinnon noted they have introduced some programs to reduce overtime. There could be more significant gains if they can come to an agreement with the union on collective bargaining. Councillor Hendsbee expressed concern with off duty officers being paid cash to oversee public functions.

Councillor Rankin expressed concern with the costs of RCMP coverage stating he would like to see more cost savings next year. Although the presentation spoke about cost savings with senior personnel, Councillor Rankin stated next year he would like to hear about cost savings with personnel such as sergeants, corporals, etc.

In response to a question from Councillor Kelly asking when they would fill the eleven vacancies, Deputy Chief McKinnon replied they could fill six immediately from the waiting list of sworn police officers. An advertisement will be in the paper tomorrow to build on the waiting list of qualified applicants.

Councillor Kelly expressed concern with the 80 percent change in officer to population ratio in Bedford. Inspector Murray replied sergeants on the previous force were office bound for the most part of their shift with administrative duties. In the new region, case managers have taken over those responsibilities creating more officers on the street than previously.

Councillor Kelly asked if the Police Services had an internal policy for travel. Chief MacDonald replied the Halifax Department did have one. It is his intent to have a similar policy for HRM as he is concerned with this issue. A policy will be coming forward shortly and is a priority. Deputy Chief McKinnon added that some terms of reference regarding travel and meal allowances are covered under the terms of the collective agreements of the previous municipal units.

In response to a question from Councillor Barnet regarding recoveries, Deputy Chief McKinnon replied that the Province is now attaching outstanding fines to drivers' licenses. Therefore, they are making some headway with respect to this.

Councillor Barnet also expressed concern with the casino and asked how the municipality can recover some costs for policing services. Chief MacDonald replied that although he understands Councillor Barnet's concern, since the casino is a legal operation, they have to police it. He could not provide any direction on how the municipality can bill back for the costs. Councillor Barnet suggested that corresponding with the Province would be wise for the municipality. Mr. Meech replied the assumption was the casino would be housed in a new facility which would generate tax dollars to pay for the policing costs. If a new casino facility is going to be smaller or not exist at all, there would be a reduction in revenue for the municipality and the HRM should put together a case to approach the Province. He suggested the Mayor could meet with the appropriate Minister to state HRM's case.

In response to a comment from Councillor Hanson regarding the mission statement, Chief MacDonald replied the old one has been replaced and the new mission statement is on display in the Police Services offices.

Regarding crossing guard criteria, Chief MacDonald replied they hope to put together some standard criteria over the next twelve months or so. He also suggested an issue this Committee may want to consider and address is whether or not crossing guards should be included in the Police Services budget.

In response to concerns expressed by Councillor Stone regarding bicycle patrol, Deputy Chief McKinnon replied there are 28 trained bicycle officers. However, there have been some difficulties regarding deployment with the collective agreement. Councillor Stone stated this is an area that needs to be examined.

Another concern raised by Councillor Stone pertained to the community offices and the equipment required to operate these offices. Chief MacDonald replied they are currently addressing some of these problems.

Councillor Walker stated lake patrol is an area that needs to be examined for next year's budget and may need to be increased. He suggested having someone with special constable status patrolling Kearney Lake and requested a staff report on this issue.

With respect to Bedford and County crossing guards, Councillor Walker requested a report on salaries depicting the total salaries divided by the number of positions.

Councillor Walker expressed concern with the response time of the non-emergency phone line. Deputy Chief Binns stated the elimination of the detention area in Dartmouth will help service this line. The female commissionaires are currently being trained to assist with this on a 24-hours basis. The commissionaire at the counter will also have direct input into the RAPID system.

Councillor Blumenthal stated he was not in favour of the two-thirds cut in race relations.

He also stated he would like to see the North End and the downtown area divided into different divisions, as he felt response time in the North End is adversely affected by problems in the downtown area, especially on weekends.

Councillor Hendsbee, as Chairperson of the Grants Committee, stated the Committee has concerns with how officers will be paid for community events and would like to have a staff report on this issue.

Councillor Hendsbee also expressed concerns with cuts to race relations.

In response to a question from Councillor Hendsbee regarding revenue received from police auctions, Deputy Chief McKinnon replied these funds go to the General Revenue account and, therefore, could not give an exact amount. He stated he could find out the revenue the last auction brought in. However, it may be difficult as some assets go to other departments rather than being sold.

Councillor Rankin stated the Western Region needs more officers and the RCMP delivery is not the problem.

Mayor Fitzgerald thanked the Police Services representatives for their presentation.

POLICY AND PLANNING

- Copies of the Policy and Planning Budget 1996/97 were circulated to members of Council.

Ms. Val Spencer, Commissioner, Policy and Planning, gave a presentation of the overall Policy and Planning operating budget, which included the composition of the department, HRM challenges, the issues, first year objectives and sample projects.

Councillor Kelly stated his main concern with the Policy and Planning budget is the many unknowns as there are no comparative figures.

Councillor Harvey felt a more efficient and open, less bureaucratic, government should be on the top of the priority list for Policy and Planning in terms of objectives.

Councillor Barnet expressed concern about a number of projects over the last several months that were initiated by the community that have not gone forward. He hopes this department will help move them forward rather than hold them up further with over analysis.

Councillor Stone suggested the department should report regularly on the on going projects so Councillors have an opportunity to provide input on projects in which they are interested.

Councillor Stone asked that Councillors be provided with more details, such as time frame, possible dates, and general information, about the upcoming Council/Management seminar. Ms. Spencer agreed to provide this information.

Councillor Stone stated determining what is going to happen with committees is an important priority, as well as the finalization of a tax structure.

Councillor Blumenthal expressed concern regarding funds spent for outside consulting services.

Councillor Hendsbee stated he would like to see emphasis placed on GIS and technical systems.

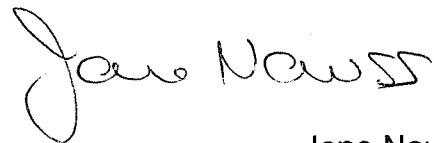
Councillor Cooper suggested this department should meet with the individual Councillors to learn where their frustrations are coming from and to help Council communicate their views and concerns to management.

Councillor McInroy expressed concern with duplication in this department by spending time learning things of which others already have knowledge. He felt the concept of this department will be hard to quantify or qualify, even in a year's time.

Councillor Hetherington suggested every Bill that goes to the Legislature should come back to Council, and Policy and Planning should be active in this process.

Councillor Hetherington expressed concerns with receiving excessive copies of the three internal telephone directories. He asked if having a single telephone directory for Councillors, which is divided by departments and districts, would be possible. The directory would include the name and numbers of the Commissioners and the people to be contacted for specific problems such as building inspectors, road inspectors, etc.

MOVED by Councillors Blumenthal and Cooper that the meeting adjourn at 2:45 p.m. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.



Jane Nauss
ACTING MUNICIPAL CLERK