

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

November 13, 2007

PRESENT:

Mayor Peter Kelly
Deputy Mayor Sue Uteck
Councillors: Krista Snow
David Hendsbee
Robert P. Harvey
Gloria McCluskey
Andrew Younger
Bill Karsten
Jim Smith
Mary Wile
Dawn Sloane
Sheila Fougere
Russell Walker
Debbie Hum
Linda Mosher
Stephen D. Adams
Brad Johns
Steve Streach
Patrick Murphy
Gary Martin
Reg Rankin
Gary G. Meade

REGRETS:

Councillors: Harry McInroy

STAFF:

Mr. Dan English, Chief Administrative Officer
Ms. Geri Kaiser, Deputy CAO, Corporate Services & Strategy
Ms. Mary Ellen Donovan, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Julia Horncastle, Municipal Clerk
Ms. Jennifer Weagle, Legislative Assistant
Ms. Shawnee Gregory, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 9:50 a.m.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - October 23, 2007

MOVED by Councillor McCluskey, seconded by Councillor Younger, that the minutes of October 23, 2007 be approved as presented. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. COUNCIL FOCUS AREAS

- C A staff report dated November 13, 2007 on the above noted was before Council.
- C A copy of the presentation was distributed to members.

Ms. Geri Kaiser, DCAO, Corporate Services & Strategy, presented a brief background of the Council Focus Areas, noting that in December 2007 staff will further update Council on the strategic priorities not directly addressed by the focus areas discussed today, including the Community Energy Plan, the Economic Strategy, and the Immigration Strategy.

3 (i) Tax Reform

- C Council Focus Area 2008/09 - Tax Reform was before Council.
- C A copy of the presentation was before Council.

Mr. Bruce Fisher, Manager, Fiscal & Tax Policy, presented to Council the Tax Reform Council Focus Area for 2008/09, a copy of which is on file.

Councillor Hendsbee arrived at 9:57 a.m., Councillor Mosher arrived at 10:00 a.m. and Councillor Sloane arrived at 10:16 a.m.

Following his presentation, Mr. Fisher responded to questions from members of Council, clarifying the following:

- C Recommendations from the Tax Reform Committee will be forthcoming in mid-late January 2008;

- C Consultation did not end with the spring workshops, and staff are still open to comments and suggestions from members of Council, residents, and business owners;
- C The focus of the Committee has been residential tax rates, with a lesser focus on commercial tax rates;
- C Staff have been closely following the *Municipal Government Act*, and have been examining legal and administrative requirements associated with implementing possible recommendations.

During discussion, the following comments and suggestions were noted by members of Council:

- C Many seniors find it challenging to stay in their homes because of high property taxes, and seniors should be a priority with regard to tax reform;
- C Concern that landlords were not engaged in the tax reform process;
- C Clarification that the Council Focus Areas for 2008/09 were not listed in any particular order on the agenda in terms of priority;
- C Provincial Assessment Caps are out of the control of Council, and requirements for revenue are constant, which needs to be reflected in the tax reform review;
- C The importance of equality and fairness in the outcome of the review.

Ms. Kaiser clarified that the Tax Reform Committee is a Committee of Council, and as is standard practice, the meetings are open to the public and minutes and reports are posted on the website. She noted the importance of consultation on this matter, and the need to engage the public in the process. Ms. Kaiser clarified that the final recommendation to Council will not be posted to the web before it is provided to members of Council.

Ms. Kaiser also clarified that staff have involved Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations throughout the tax reform process and will continue to keep them advised of the progress.

3 (ii) Community Development

- C An overview of Council Focus Area 2008/09 - Community Development was before Council.
- C A copy of the presentation was before Council.

Mr. Paul Dunphy, Director, presented to Council the Community Development Council Focus Area for 2008/09, a copy of which is on file.

Committee of the Whole recessed at 11:12 a.m.

Committee of the Whole reconvened at 11:22 a.m. with the same members present with the exception of Councillors Fougere, Mosher, Smith and Snow, and with Councillor Hum now joining the meeting.

Mr. Dunphy responded to questions from members of Council at this time, clarifying the following:

- C The Regional Plan Advisory Committee will be making recommendation to Council in December regarding the criteria and ranking of the next Community Visioning Project communities;
- C Staff will be making recommendation at a later date on the location of future rinks in HRM through the Facility Master Plan.

During discussion, the following comments and suggestions were noted by members of Council:

- C Clarity is needed on HRM organizations, community organizations and Provincial organizations;
- C Concern with as of right development, and the lack of community input and meetings;
- C A need to meet the expectations of the public and to move forward with the Community Visioning Project.

Members of Council requested further information on the 1100 youths who received direct financial assistance from the HRM Kids and Canadian Tire Jump Start Programs, including where they are from, what type and how much assistance was provided, and the total budget for these programs. Mr. Dunphy advised that staff will provide information to Council without revealing the identities of the individuals.

Council agreed to break for lunch at 12:00 p.m.

Committee of the Whole reconvened at 1:37 p.m.

3. COUNCIL FOCUS AREAS

(ii) Community Development (continued)

A discussion ensued with Mr. Paul Dunphy responding to questions. The following comments were noted:

- C There was a suggestion from several Councillors to raise funds to create more Youth Centres across the municipality;

- C There was concern that opening only three Youth Centres annually will be too long a process;
- C Councillor Snow stated that she will not support area rates;
- C There was concern from Council and staff over volunteer support. There is difficulty recruiting new volunteers and the burnout rate for current volunteers is high.

Councillor Hum entered the meeting at 1:47 p.m.

(iii) Public Safety

- C A copy of the PowerPoint presentation was before the Committee of the Whole.
- C An Information Report dated November 13, 2007 was before the Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Bill Mosher, Chief Director of Fire Services provided the presentation on Public Safety. Highlights of his presentation are as follows:

- C The umbrella of Public Safety consists of Fire, Integrated Emergency Services, Police/RCMP Services. However, all of the Council Focus areas are inter-related when it comes to Public Safety;
- C Thirty-two (32) new Police Officers funded by the Province of Nova Scotia were hired for 2007. As a result, there has been a downward trend in violent crime rates. However, Mr. Mosher admits that they still have work to do;
- C Harmonized By-Laws and effective By-Law service continue to reflect a more balanced, coordinated response to By-Law issues;
- C Mobile parking enforcement has increased due to increased resources;
- C The Animal Services unit is fully operational. A new canine shelter contract has been put in place. By-Law and enforcement services will assess the impact of By-Law A-300 regarding future service and shelter requirements;
- C The Civic Addressing project will be completed at the end of January, 2008. Police (Community Projects) will be enforcing Civic Addressing By-Law C-300 in conjunction with Civic Address Program Staff;
- C Volunteer Recruitments for Fire and EMO are continuously ongoing in HRM;
- C Ongoing funding of seventy-five percent (75%) Federal and twenty-five percent (25%) Municipal is going towards the Emergency Preparedness program. The funding has been applied to equipment and training to support the Canadian Task Force Five Halifax Team;

A discussion ensued with Mr. Mosher responding to questions. The following comments were noted:

- C Concerns were raised regarding HRM's firefighting capacity involving wildfires. Staff informed the Council that this was a provincial rather than municipal mandate;
- C Council would like to give municipal volunteers more recognition. They would also like to address the difficulties with volunteer recruitment;
- C Concerns were raised over the lack of civic numbers in both rural and suburban areas. It is a mandatory By-Law to have a blue civic number yet very few residents have complied. Councillor Snow suggested that HRM could potentially help residents incur the cost of these numbers;
- C Councillor Smith would like to have heavier focus and enforcement on street prostitution issues. He stated that more education about cold case squad and major crime may help.

Committee of the Whole recessed at 2:55 p.m.

Committee of the Whole reconvened at 3:11 p.m.

(iv) Infrastructure

- C A copy of the PowerPoint presentation was before the Committee of the Whole.
- C An Information Report dated November 13, 2007 was before the Committee of the Whole.

Ms. Cathie O'Toole, Director, Infrastructure and Asset Management, provided the presentation on Infrastructure. Highlights of her presentation are as follows:

- C The four key issues identified in 2007/08 are:
 - C the five (5) Year Capability Plan
 - C the five (5) Year Recapitalization Plan
 - C Transit Enhancements and Strategic Transportation
 - C Capital Planning and Delivery
- C New items to be discussed are Sustainability Integration, Asset Management and Infrastructure Deficit;
- C HRM's Capital Budget has been slowly and steadily growing. It is now at \$214 million;
- C As the Recapitalization Plan continues, Staff will be able to get more data on the conditions of HRM'S assets which will create more accurate estimates;
- C Equipment and Fleet are doing better than other asset classes like Buildings, Sidewalks and Sewers;
- C With regards to Enhancement to Transit and Strategic Transportation; there is an initiative to construct a satellite garage. The initiative hasn't actively begun yet, however, a scope of requirements has been conducted;

- C There will be a presentation coming forward to Council regarding the Transit Initiative during the last week of November or first week of December. The presentation will include further information on the Satellite Garage;
- C Initial funding is being pursued for the Harbour Link project.

Deputy Mayor Uteck assumed the position of Chair and Mayor Kelly left the Committee of the Whole meeting.

Councillor Martin entered the meeting at 3:18 p.m.

Council agreed to defer discussion of this item to the next Committee of the Whole meeting.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

Julia Horncastle
Acting Municipal Clerk