

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

May 27, 2008

PRESENT:

Mayor Peter Kelly
Deputy Mayor Stephen D. Adams
Councillors: Steve Streach
David Hendsbee
Gloria McCluskey
Andrew Younger
Bill Karsten
Jackie Barkhouse
Mary Wile
Patrick Murphy
Dawn Sloane
Sue Uteck
Sheila Fougere
Russell Walker
Debbie Hum
Brad Johns
Robert Harvey
Tim Outhit
Reg Rankin
Gary Meade

REGRETS:

Councillors: Krista Snow
Harry McInroy
Jim Smith
Linda Mosher

STAFF:

Mr. Dan English, Chief Administrative Officer
Ms. Mary Ellen Donovan, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Julia Horncastle, Acting Municipal Clerk
Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

Committee of the Whole was called to order at 1:05 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - May 13, 2008

MOVED by Councillor Sloane, seconded by Councillor Wile that the minutes from May 13, 2008, as presented, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. COMMUNITY FACILITY MASTER PLAN

C A report from the Community Facility Master Plan Steering Committee, dated May 21, 2008, was before Council.

C A copy of the Community Facility Master Plan as prepared by Asbell Management Innovations Inc., dated May 2008, was before Council.

Mr. John Lindsay Jr., Chair, Steering Committee, provided comment and introduced Ms. Betty Lou Killen, Development and Planning, Community Development, who presented the report.

Councillor Fougere entered the meeting at 1:19 p.m.

During the ensuing discussion on the Community Facility Master Plan (CFMP) presentation, the following comments/concerns were raised by members of Council:

C More detail on the cost rather than a high level overview would assist Council in making a decision as the costs could escalate. There has been concern expressed in the community that HRM is not receiving all the information it requires to make a decision. Staff advised that more detail would be provided during each stage of the process and that each step would have to be approved by Council. Detail on the multipad rink surfaces was not included in this report as a separate report on the ice surfaces/arenas will be presented to Council in June or July.

C A priority field for football / rugby, due to ball teams being bumped in the spring, was suggested, and; that a lacrosse facility be built.

C Concern was expressed that there be adequate training for the proposed Community Boards. Staff confirmed that there is an extremely good process in place to train the Boards. The Community Boards would provide leadership opportunities for the community.

C HRM should be actively collaborating with the Halifax Regional School Board in regard to the CFMP as their participation and input is critical.

MOVED BY Councillor Hum, seconded by Councillor Harvey that Regional Council approve in principle the Community Facility Master Plan.

Discussion continued:

- C An indoor soccer facility is needed. There are business interests in HRM who are willing to build such a facility now, yet HRM seems to be planning for the future. The public/private partnerships have to be addressed. Staff advised that HRM will partner with Soccer Nova Scotia to build an indoor soccer facility on the Mainland Common.
- C The CFMP seems to be about sports we play now. Plans should be underway for future recreational requirements for growing sports such as a cricket, lacrosse and racquetball as there are groups who are now requesting access to such services, in particular, a racquetball facility. Plan now for sporting trends rather than build additions to the facilities later on.

Ms. Betty Lou Killen commented that the model and process will be laid out during this process and will be established with the arena report and RFP. Research shows that sport usage is changing. Careful consideration will be given to the conversion of a facility rather than decommissioning.

In response to Councillor Streach's concern with recreation facilities/services for youth in rural areas, Ms. Killen commented that community facilities in rural centres are more critical to that community due to the number of facilities available. HRM does recognize that community centres have to be more effectively provided in rural areas; schools and fire halls are contributing factors and HRM will take advantage of partnerships with the school board and fire services. Councillor Streach commented that HRM should be encouraging residents of neighbouring communities to use facilities closer to them rather than competing against communities.

Councillor Rankin commented that the inclusion of rinks in the CFMP would have made it a complete report. He expressed concern with the lack of time lines in the report and inquired what Council could do to get the process implemented. Staff advised that the process is underway and that action will be taken in a systematic and cost effective manner.

Councillor Murphy expressed concern with the possible loss or closure of community complexes. He emphasised the importance of those complexes to the area residents, such as the Needham Centre and Devonshire Arena, and that residents of older, established neighbourhoods may not travel outside their area to a larger complex when they can walk to a nearby community facility. He further commented that HRM is a young city but is made up of old regions and he is frustrated with having to repeatedly stand up and protect the services/facilities currently provided in his community. Staff responded to

Councillor Murphy's concerns indicating that citizens of HRM are being fairly and equitably serviced. The CFMP is not about closing facilities; it is about using Operational and Capital funds in the most effective way possible.

Councillor Karsten commented that the Province's participation in this initiative is pertinent and that the CFMP would also provide them with the guidelines. Staff confirmed that the province did participate with this initiative including financial support.

Councillor Sloane referred to the HRM by Design's philosophy that in a neighbourhood everything that is needed is there and everything there is needed. She added that some residents cannot afford to go to Dalplex or the Tower and need facilities closer to home. She expressed concern with discussions concerning the possible closure of the Centennial Pool (or moving it to the Halifax Forum area), the George Dixon and Needham Centres in favour of more centralized facilities. Councillor Sloane encouraged Council to consider the five campaigns outlined by HRM BY DESIGN for a big, beautiful city and that existing community facilities be maintained.

Councillor Wile expressed concern that the proposal for weekday closures of older facilities during non prime time periods when usage is low, and; the consideration of moving non prime time use to another facility is actually a means of facilitating the eventual closure of the older facility. She explained that this approach seems similar to a big box store putting the squeeze on a smaller group. Councillor Wile stressed that people want to stay in their own community and seniors in particular would not want to travel further in the winter to reach a recreation facility.

Councillor Fougere explained that the CFMP reflects the importance people place on recreation and the facilities but HRM has not met public expectations. She expressed concern with the possible transitioning of HRM from being a direct provider of recreation services to an enabler and cautioned Council not to download the responsibility to the public. She further commented that Recommendation 21, in regard to change for electoral districts, is not a good idea as electoral districts are imaginary lines on a map and are subject to change; the emphasis should be placed on community access. Councillor Fougere also expressed concern with factoring too heavily on the university facilities as the public expect public facilities to be publically run and available. The Universities' first obligation will be to look after their own needs. She further recommended caution in regard to Recommendation 55 and that consideration be in regard to the people and not the buildings. Also, track facilities have not been adequately addressed considering that HRM does have Nationally and Internationally ranked facilities for track. Councillor Fougere added that the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM) has stressed the importance of Capital Cost Contributions (CCC) for recreation facilities and HRM should encourage that as well. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has the position that the funds should be separated so they do not have to fight for

a share. The Recreation Taskforce could also provide important information.

Councillor Barkhouse commented that the CFMP is proactive but she does not want to see any facilities close. Recognition and support of the Community Boards for the work they do is important. There must be involvement by the residents for decisions in and about their own communities.

In response to Councillor McCluskey's concern that paddling was not considered in the CFMP although HRM has world class athletes in that field, Mr. Paul Dunphy, Director, Community Development, explained that the scope of the CFMP study did not include private clubs. Staff further explained to Councillor McCluskey, in regard to her concern with the lack of pool facilities to attract National Swimming Championships to HRM, that the requirement for two pools (warm-up and competition) on the same property was somewhat prohibitive considering HRM is now adequately serviced by existing pools (Dalhousie and Centennial). The demand would be minimal (the maximum would be once every six years) for the hosting of such events.

Councillor Harvey commented that the CFMP is a great document. He understands that the intention is not to close facilities but to provide equitable services and encouraged Council to move quickly to implement the initiatives.

With the agreement of Council, Mayor Kelly advised that the Committee of the Whole session would be extended to 4:00 p.m.

Ms. Killen confirmed for Councillor Murphy that the Department of National Defence (DND) has been working in consultation with HRM in regard to maintaining two rinks at the Shannon Park and Shearwater sites as they are one of the key facility providers in the region.

Councillor Younger suggested that a clear policy on subsidies is required as new facilities are being asked to break even and others are receiving subsidies.

Councillor Uteck commented that facilities owned and run by HRM are all in a deficit situation. She suggested that HRM have a smart partnership with the universities as they are not running at a deficit. The universities also take in approximately 120 youth from the community free of charge. She further commented that there is no place on the peninsula to hold a public meeting.

Councillor Adams suggested that all reference to rinks in the CFMP be removed as there appear to be two different directions in regard to rinks. Considering the report on rinks will be before Council shortly, all reference to rinks should be included in that report.

Mayor Kelly, with the agreement of Council, deferred Item 4. Proposed By-Law 0-109, Respecting Open Air Burning to a future Committee of the Whole session due to time constraints.

With the agreement of Council, Mayor Kelly called a five minute recess at 3:24 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 3:37 p.m.

A friendly amendment to the motion was requested as follows:

MOVED BY Councillor Adams, seconded by Councillor McCluskey that all references to rinks in the Community Facility Master Plan be included but not binding in the Arena Capacity Study RFP. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

The amended motion now reads as follows:

MOVED BY Councillor Hum, seconded by Councillor Harvey that Regional Council approve in principle the Community Facility Master Plan and that all references to rinks in the Community Facility Master Plan be included, but not binding, in the RFP document on short term solutions. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Councillor Hendsbee suggested that the Consultants be acknowledged in the CFMP for their valuable participation with this project. He further encouraged members of Council to bring forward to staff any errors in detail with the CFMP as soon as possible as the document is now available on the web.

4. PROPOSED BY-LAW O-109, RESPECTING OPEN AIR BURNING

Due to time constraints, this item was deferred to a future Committee of the Whole session.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Ms. Julia Horncastle
Acting Municipal Clerk