

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

December 9, 2008

PRESENT: Mayor Peter Kelly
Deputy Mayor David Hendsbee
Councillors: Steve Streach
Barry Dalrymple
Lorelei Nicoll
Gloria McCluskey
Andrew Younger
Bill Karsten
Jackie Barkhouse
Jim Smith
Jerry Blumenthal
Dawn M. Sloane
Jennifer Watts
Russell Walker
Debbie Hum
Linda Mosher
Stephen D. Adams
Brad Johns
Robert P. Harvey
Tim Outhit
Reg Rankin
Peter Lund

REGRETS: Councillors: Sue Uteck
Mary Wile

STAFF: Ms. Geri Kaiser, Acting Chief Administrative Officer
Ms. Mary Ellen Donovan, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Julia Horncastle, Acting Municipal Clerk
Ms. Sheilagh Edmonds, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kelly called the meeting to order at 3:52 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

MOVED by Councillor McCluskey, seconded by Councillor Blumenthal that the minutes of November 18, 2008 and November 25, 2008 be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. BUSINESS PLANNING OVERVIEW (Staff Presentation)

Mayor Kelly advised that due to the late hour, there was some suggestion that this presentation be forwarded to this evening's Regional Council session.

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Hendsbee, seconded by Councillor Adams that the Business Planning Overview (staff presentation) be moved to tonight's Regional Council session. THE MOTION WAS PUT AND DEFEATED.

MOVED by Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Sloane that the Business Planning Overview (staff presentation) be deferred to next week's Committee of the Whole. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND MUNICIPAL PROPERTY TAXATION

A staff report dated December 3, 2008 was submitted.

A Power Point Presentation regarding this matter was circulated.

Mr. Bruce Fisher, Manager of Fiscal and Tax Policy provided a presentation in regard to moving towards a regional approach for transit. He advised that the current tax structure for transit is hindering the expansion of transit, and that today's presentation was based on a revenue neutral assumption of how to share the costs of transit. In his remarks, Mr. Fisher noted the following points:

- C in 1998-1999 HRM spent \$2.5 million on transit capital; in 2008 it was \$36.2 million.
- C there has been a 40% increase in transit service
- C it is the urban taxpayers who are essentially paying for transit
- C about 5,000 urban taxpayers are more than 1 kilometre from a transit stop and pay for transit; nearly 2,000 suburban and rural taxpayers are within 1 kilometre of a transit stop and do not pay for transit.

- C options include:
 - C a general rate transit where everyone in HRM would be taxed;
 - C one area rate for transit for those within 1 kilometre of a bus stop, and this excludes many who will use the rural express transit;
 - C regional and local area rates - the local would be for those within 1 kilometre of a bus stop; regional would be where all pay based on commuter patterns.

Mr. Fisher advised that staff were seeking direction from Council on whether it wants to proceed with a transit tax structure in line with what was presented, or if Council wanted something different.

MOVED by Councillor Younger, seconded by Deputy Mayor Hendsbee that Regional Council:

Accept that most of HRM “Benefits” from transit service and that therefore

- 1. Metro Link, Rural Express Transit and Ferries should be paid for largely by an area rate on dwelling units in the Urban Settlement and the Rural Commuter Shed designations, and,**
- 2. Local Transit routes should be funded by a single area rate on dwelling units paid by all properties within walking distance of transit service**

And that the Draft 2009-2010 Budget should be developed upon this basis;

And that staff return to Council with the proposed tax rates and services changes.

Mr. Fisher responded to questions, clarifying the following points:

- C a lower rate for multi-unit dwellings (a rate equal to 60% of the single family rate) is proposed because it has been determined that it is more efficient to service multi-unit buildings such as condominiums and apartment buildings;
- C the rate will vary with the number of commuters in the four zones; the tax would only be introduced when the service was introduced; and staff will have to address this to the satisfaction of Council when they return with the 2009/10 budget.

At this time, the Mayor noted that Council had agreed to adjourn at 4:30 p.m. The Mayor advised that this matter will continue at next week’s Committee of the Whole session.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:37 p.m.

Julia Horncastle
Acting Municipal Clerk