

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MINUTES
August 10, 2010**

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

STAFF: Mr. Wayne Anstey, Acting Chief Administrative Officer
Ms. Mary Ellen Donovan, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Cathy Mellett, Municipal Clerk
Ms. Krista Tidgwell, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 1:03 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - July 6, 2010

MOVED by Councillor Nicoll, seconded by Councillor Blumenthal, that the minutes of July 6, 2010 be approved, as presented. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Councillor Outhit entered the meeting at 1:08 p.m.

Deputy Mayor Johns entered the meeting at 1:09 p.m.

**3. RECREATION SERVICE REVIEW - SCOPE - Staff Presentation
(deferred July 6, 2010)**

- A presentation dated July 6, 2010 and estimated time lines were before Council.

Paul Dunphy, Director, Community Development, provided introductory comments regarding the recreation service review presentation to Council. Highlights were as follows:

- Councillors have a good knowledge as to how recreation is delivered within their District and adjacent Districts
- there are presently several different recreation delivery models within HRM
- the objective of today's presentation is to obtain an understanding regarding what HRM's Recreation Services program looks like within the Region, how it is delivered/funded and it's diversity
- the review will not focus on recreational facilities (ie. how facilities are designed)
- Council has adopted a Recreation Facility Master Plan in principle
- HRM's revenue recovery rate is approximately 39% of the cost of programs; the national average is approximately 30%; the gross operating budget represents approximately 2.3% of HRM's total operating budget
- a majority of the policy and mission statements for recreation were developed in consultation with the community; however, they have not necessarily always come back to Council for ratification

Councillor Sloane entered the meeting at 1:20 p.m.

Karen MacTavish, General Manager, Community Recreation Services, delivered the presentation to Council. The following points were noted:

- staff address recreation services at a grassroots level to accommodate community uniqueness and specifically address individual community needs
- the Recreation Blueprint describes the types of services offered within HRM and the service levels within the various communities
- at amalgamation staff applied the most fitting model to HRM regardless of what predecessor municipalities had done
- there was pressure to assimilate HRM's Continuing Education programs that were recreation in nature and not scholastically or academically based, even though HRM lacked additional resources
- in 1998 Recreation Services had a significant downsize:
 - the recreation budget was reduced by 15%
 - 11 positions were eliminated
 - community development became a key part of HRM's service delivery
 - Recreation Services switched its inclusion mandate; inclusion is a specialty area whereby HRM seeks to eliminate barriers that citizens may face when participating in recreation (ie. cultural, financial, supplies, transportation barriers)
 - staff were trained to deal directly with the citizens' needs
 - the elimination of the Needham Centre and the Leburn Centre's daycares
 - recreation focussed on pre-school play programs and recreation programs by removing itself from direct daycare services
- in 2003 staff downsized HRM's publications and focussed on community based marketing strategies
- the High Five program sets high standards for recreation programs across HRM
- approximately 6,000 youth were involved in providing input to the Youth Engagement Strategy
- adult programming is still provided to communities with high needs and where HRM is the sole service provider
- HRM has a key leadership role with the Physical Activity Strategy and is working with six key community stakeholders
- the youth development initiatives are in addition to the direct programs and services offered for pre-schools and children throughout the Region
- in addition to the 8,000 hours of recreation programs, there is over 9,000 hours annually of youth opportunities
- staff recently developed a new youth council for The Pavilion
- direct programs are grassroots in nature; programs are located in church halls, community centres, community halls and HRM's recreation centres

- the Adventure Earth Centre provides youth a level of understanding of the environment and developing leadership skills through experiential programs
- HRM owns and operates three pools, as well as, provides Facility Lease Agreements to:
 - Centennial (indoor pool)
 - Cole Harbour (outdoor pool)
 - Commons (outdoor pool)
 - Bedford (outdoor pool)
- the Sport and Facility group provides input to the Infrastructure and Asset Management and Community Development divisions regarding the review of facility needs and planning
- HRM's recreation fees are reviewed annually; the fees are generally increased at a rate of 2% per year; staff assess the market conditions, other service providers and increases in costs to ensure that HRM is covering off all of recreation's direct costs on an annual basis

Mr. Dunphy noted that work is being done within other Municipalities that attempts to define where there is greater individual benefit, the individual will pay a greater portion of the program's cost. The greater the community benefit, the greater the subsidy for the program.

Mr. Dunphy further indicated that staff is looking for Council to adopt a range of policies that will identify the purpose, mandate and service standards of HRM's recreation.

Councillors Fisher, McCluskey and Karsten entered the meeting at 1:53 p.m

MOVED by Councillor Uteck, seconded by Councillor Sloane, that Halifax Regional Council approve the scope of the Recreation Service Review to include:

- 1. a review of the four (4) service areas in Recreation Services with respect to appropriate services and levels of service;**
- 2. that the review include an evaluation of costs, revenues, pricing, grants and subsidization; and**
- 3. that the review include an analysis of trends and across Canada market scan.**

Councillor Uteck commented that the Community Recreation Services review is very timely for the upcoming budget.

Councillor Rankin recognized on behalf of Council, Minister Bill Estabrooks who was in attendance.

Councillor Sloane expressed concern with scheduling field use for youth activities. She noted the importance of youth being able to walk/bike to a baseball field instead of taking a bus or depending on someone to drive them.

Councillor Sloane further expressed concern with the Commons' pool and spray pool, noting that they are well utilized; however, they are small, outdated and require extensive maintenance. She questioned the spraypool's safety and commented that many residents have expressed similar concerns regarding the pools. She suggested that staff review combining the pools and address this issue as a priority.

Councillor Hendsbee entered the meeting at 2:00 p.m. and exited at 2:03 p.m.

Mr. Dunphy advised that the scope of the service review is related to recreation programs and services. Issues related to facilities (baseball fields and sports fields) are included within the Facility Master Plan (FMP). Due to other priorities within the FMP, staff have not been able to implement strategies which address matters such as upgrading turfs to artificial and obtaining more usable days. Discussions have taken place at the staff level regarding how HRM can resource the strategies and move forward. Mr. Dunphy indicated that he believes this will be done independent from the programs service review.

Mr. Dunphy indicated that he would speak with staff regarding assessing the condition of the Commons' pools and their priority level within the Capital Budget.

Wayne Anstey, Acting Chief Administrative Officer, indicated that staff are reviewing the various locations along the Peninsula respecting a long term solution for scheduling field use.

During the ensuing discussion, the following points, concerns and suggestions were noted:

- the importance of recreation volunteer organizations
- more financial assistance to children and families to assist with participation; recreational costs should not deter a child from participating
- the inability to travel can also hinder a child's ability to participate in a sport/event
- the possibility of allocating a staff member(s) to update HRM's website daily regarding fields/facilities' availability
- consideration of recreational programs/scheduling for senior citizens; the population of seniors within HRM is increasing; many seniors use

recreational programs for socialization; possibility of day time slots for seniors and evening time (after school) slots for children

In response to a concern raised by Councillor Wile regarding the difficulty of accessing school facilities, Ms. MacTavish advised that HRM has a reciprocal Service Exchange Agreement with the HRM School Board. This Agreement is entirely dependant on the school and not the geographical area. Access can be gained more easily to Elementary schools. High schools and junior high schools can be more difficult to access. Service Exchange Agreement negotiations are presently taking place. During the last review, staff were able to achieve increased access. In exchange for HRM staff booking the schools for the School Board, HRM Recreation Services receives 10,000 hours of school use. Ms. MacTavish noted that that she could provide a list of HRM schools and provide information regarding where there may be issues with bookings.

Ms. MacTavish clarified that seniors programs will be a part of staff's review. Many seniors are able to make leisure choices that are not necessarily dependant upon public recreation. HRM needs to ensure that the service areas it provides for are being met.

Mr. Dunphy noted that staff periodically bring forward for Council's review an opportunity to oversize the construction of a school's recreation facilities (ie. gym/meeting space). Council would be buying/building a share in the school, which would give HRM a greater opportunity for access to that school. HRM receives improved dollar value for recreation facilities constructed as part of a school partnership rather than a stand-alone construction.

The following further points, concerns and suggestions were noted:

- when HRM amalgamated there was a reduction in recreational facilities
- seniors want facilities to host their activities (ie. bridge)
- the review should confirm that all HRM facilities are accessible; rather than building new facilities, HRM should be maintaining/upgrading its present facilities
- identify how increasing densification in HRM will impact HRM's recreation programs
- the review should look at innovative models and determine how to make HRM's recreational programs more available and accessible, particularly around financial issues
- there are families within HRM that require financial assistance but do not identify themselves and therefore, their children miss out on recreational activities
- programming should be aggressive about civic engagement and building citizenship
- concern regarding the lack of general recreation opportunities for youth; focus is being put on higher level organized sports

- concern with potential challenges HRM's volunteer managements boards face with additional pressure, potential for burnout; whether the boards bring the necessary skill/mind set to run HRM's facilities/programs
- sports and recreation should be its own department; review how HRM offers physical and leisure activities to youth and seniors; where HRM is headed respecting funding for organized sports
- review and determine HRM's role/policy for recreation

Councillors Hendsbee and Streach entered the meeting at 2:28 p.m.

Councillor Nicoll noted the following points and concerns for staff's review:

- Cole Harbour should have its own direct services program; Cole Harbour has one of the highest youth populations in HRM
- HRM's recreation and grassroots needs of the community are not being met
- lack of HRM staff attendance during networking opportunities at the South Eastern Community Health Board meetings; there are networking opportunities to get HRM's youth involved with recreation
- as members of the Youth Advisory Committee, there is a disconnect between recreation and the Committee; the Committee is presently serving youth at risk; lack of representation for the youth at large
- HRM's Recreation Centre office, which is under a Facility Lease Agreement, is housed in a former RCMP office building on a five lane highway heading to Lawrencetown; the office provides recreation support from the community of Sheet Harbour to Lawrencetown; the office should be located more centrally within Cole Harbour and offer additional space due to the present size of the facility
- Cole Harbour Place is not always accessible to residents due to cost and is membership driven; Cole Harbour Place is not able to meet the recreational needs of the community
- the use of HRM's trails is an opportunity for citizens to become active without additional cost
- a need to be more creative with recreation programs

Councillor Barkhouse expressed concern with the lack of consideration given regarding transportation. She provided an example for Eastern Passage where if a resident does not own a vehicle and resides within a community that does not offer transit service or a route to the facility, it makes it difficult for that individual to access a recreational facility designated for their District. She noted the importance of residents having a means to access a facility within their community and asked that staff give consideration of this during their review and placement of facilities.

Councillor Lund asked the following questions:

- are residents unable to access the schools due to cost

- what kind of partnership agreements does HRM have with the non-profit organizations that operate recreational facilities located in former schools, church halls, old fire halls, etc.; whether HRM is working with the non-profit organizations' programming that are housed in the older facilities
- whether a needs assessment will be included within the service review
- as listed in the Market Scan Questionnaire, what constitutes "all the stakeholders" and whether public meetings are included

Ms. MacTavish advised that HRM's partnership with the schools depends on the type of school (P3, High School, etc.). She noted that Councillor Lund could meet with staff and review the citizens' feedback regarding which schools in District 23 are difficult to access. With respect to the non-profit organizations, there are different arrangements for different circumstances. If the facility has an active community board, there are examples where HRM staff will partner with the board in the delivery of special events, programs or services. If the group is seeking assistance to operate a facility, HRM staff would provide assistance to help that group set up their business plan, marketing plan and/or develop programs. She reiterated that Councillor Lund can meet with staff to review his specific concerns.

Ms. MacTavish further indicated that an internal scan will be done that will capture all of the existing documents, policies and programs. Staff will also be doing a national scan (market scan) of what other municipalities are doing. Stakeholder consultations are being conducted with HRM's citizens and will include various stakeholder groups and user groups (child/youth/adult/senior). The user groups will be broken out by geography and interest groups in an attempt to capture feedback regarding citizens' recreational needs. Staff anticipate setting up meetings in October 2010.

Councillor McCluskey expressed the following points and concerns:

- concern with the lack of summer programs post amalgamation; pre amalgamation, Dartmouth had free recreational playground programs for children during the summer months
- lack of seniors recreation programming
- possibility of Councillors using their funds to implement recreational programs within their districts
- HRM recreation should be working more closely with the paddling clubs throughout HRM
- residents of North Dartmouth are concerned that they may lose the baseball fields on the Dartmouth Commons; children are able to access these fields without transportation; a petition is being formed against the potential loss of the fields
- possibility of implementing more affordable sports for children; perhaps HRM can provide basketball courts and balls for community use; option of offering free tennis lessons once a week so children can learn to play

Councillor McCluskey requested that the review include the number of children HRM financially supports for recreational activities and the cost to HRM.

The Chair advised that Councillor McCluskey's concerns were addressed during the presentation and copies of the information would be provided.

During the ensuing debate, Council noted the following points, concerns and suggestions:

- encourage participation of all community groups, organizations and services clubs
- additional funding (direct operational assistance) for community based facilities
- review of the tax structure regarding recreation delivery; reevaluate the tax reform proposal and apply it to the assessment component, if necessary
- risk of mis-communication between community groups and Councillors; bi-weekly/bi-monthly community updates
- prepare a full extensive inventory (classified and placed on a map) of all HRM owned and operated community facilities; identifying operational costs, service delivery and fund arrangements for paid personnel (how the facilities are being managed)

Councillor Dalrymple asked whether HRM staff are still maintaining an inventory list of all the volunteer organizations and contact personnel and if so, he requested a copy of the list. Ms. MacTavish noted that staff have a list of community groups. Councillor Dalrymple suggested the possibility of having this information available on HRM's website to make it easier for volunteer groups to contact one another.

Further points, concerns and suggestions noted by Council were as follows:

- concern expressed regarding the lack of adult and senior baseball leagues; lack of mixed slow pitch
- concern with being charged a rental fee for school gyms; rentals for school gyms are free outside of HRM's boundaries
- there are privately owned facilities within HRM that are available for day time programming use
- HRM should be embracing and recognising the service delivery options and diversity; programs do not have to be the same within every community
- the youth that run the recreational programs are role models for the youth that participates in the programs

Mr. Dunphy noted that staff will be doing a review of the sports fields within HRM to improve the number of fields and their access; however, this review will be done outside of the service review.

Councillor Streach asked whether the information gathered from the meetings between staff and the Facility Master Plan Advisory Committee would be included as part of the review. Mr. Dunphy clarified that those discussions were in relation to the development of the Facility Master Plan and not the recreation services review.

Councillor Streach requested that staff give consideration to reviewing the Mutual Service Agreements across Municipal borders, specifically the East Hants Sportsplex. Ms. MacTavish indicated that this review is not part of staff's original set of recommendations; however, this can be added to the review.

During further debate the following was noted:

- review and eliminate inequalities across HRM regarding area rated facilities and general rated facilities
- some services are being provided by community groups and others by HRM; decrease some of the services HRM is presently offering and supplement some of the income for local community groups, which will assist with offsetting operating costs (specifically for groups that already have an agreement with HRM through Facility Lease Agreements or another form of management agreement)
- funding equity for all Districts
- using a percentage of field booking fees towards recapitalization of fields

Mr. Dunphy advised that Council's concern regarding taxation, debt financing and area rates was not intended to be within the scope of the service review. He reiterated that staff are reviewing the service of delivering recreation programs. He suggested that if Council would like to review this area, then it should be done as a separate exercise parallel to the recreation services review. He further noted that staff will be reviewing the booking function as well as the service rates and therefore, staff can review incorporating sufficient costs into the fees to cover some recapitalization.

Council recessed at 3:07 p.m.

Council reconvened at 3:21 p.m. without Councillors Mosher and Barkhouse in attendance.

The Chair indicated that due to time constraints there would not be enough time to discuss Item 4 - Wind Energy - Staff Presentation. He suggested Council hold a special Committee of the Whole on August 17, 2010 at 1:30 p.m., to which Council agreed.

Council entered back into discussion regarding the recreation services review.

In response to a concern raised by Councillor Walker regarding a decrease in services, Mr. Dunphy clarified that from the review, staff will be providing information to Council, which will then allow Council to provide direction to staff.

Councillor Lund expressed interest in attending some of the stakeholder consultations. He further requested staff provide him a list of stakeholders groups within District 23.

Councillor Blumenthal called for the question to be put.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. WIND ENERGY - Staff Presentation

- A presentation entitled Wind Energy was before Council.

This matter was discussed earlier in the meeting, see page 11.

Item deferred to August 17, 2010 Committee of the Whole session.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Cathy Mellett
Municipal Clerk