

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

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HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE OF WHOLE  
MINUTES

August 14, 2012

PRESENT:

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

STAFF:

Mr. Mike Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer  
Ms. Karen Brown, Acting Municipal Solicitor  
Ms. Sherryl Murphy, Acting Municipal Clerk  
Ms. Krista Vining, Legislative Assistant  
Ms. Sheilagh Edmonds, Legislative Assistant

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. in the World Trade and Convention Centre.

**2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – NONE**

**3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS**

The agenda was accepted as distributed.

**4. SIDEWALK LOCAL IMPROVEMENT CHARGES AND TAXES - (Deferred August 7, 2012)**  
**(i) Supplementary Report dated July 24, 2012**  
**(ii) Staff Report dated January 19, 2012**

The following was before Council

- Supplementary staff information report dated July 24, 2012
- Staff report dated January 19, 2012
- A copy of the presentation

Mr. Bruce Fisher, Manager of Financial Information and Policy delivered a presentation on HRM's sidewalk local improvement charges (LICs) and taxes.

**MOVED by Councillor Uteck, seconded by Deputy Mayor Karsten that Halifax Regional Council direct staff to:**

- 1. Develop a new sidewalk, curb and gutter LIC and taxation system for 2013-2014 that recovers the costs of all sidewalks in HRM through the general rate;**
- 2. Provide additional details for the selected option, including potential tax rates, prior to the 2013-2014 budget presentation; and**
- 3. Provide direction as to whether similar solutions should be considered for LICs on other roads features such as paving of gravel road upgrades.**

Council entered into discussion with the following points, concerns and suggestions being made:

- concerned with LICs being skewed from district to district; based on assessment some of the LICs have no correlation to what the district will actually receive

In response to a question raised regarding Capital Cost Contributions (CCCs), Mr. Fisher advised that there is no impact to CCCs. In new master plan areas where sidewalks are being constructed the contractor would continue to pay CCCs for the cost

of sidewalks Today's discussion is about the operating, maintenance and construction costs for all existing sidewalks in the Municipality.

- suggestion was made to review CCCs and whether areas are paying for the entire sidewalk being installed in a new subdivision
- the majority of HRM's arterial sidewalk are required due to the downstream effects of increased traffic from developments outside the core, impacting local residents inside the core
- there should be some type of contribution for large scale developments if it leads to the necessity for a sidewalk
- suggestion was made to develop a classification system that emphasises a priority on arterial roads and sidewalks to address safety
- concern was expressed with future qualifications for sidewalks in rural and suburban areas under the general tax rate; there should be equal opportunity for all areas to receive a sidewalk

In response to a question raised as to whether the tax rate would change for suburban and rural areas, Mr. Fisher advised that if Council were to approve the motion, staff would return with a detailed report on the tax rates for urban, suburban and rural areas. He suggested that for suburban and rural areas, unless they already have an area rate or LIC for sidewalks, there would likely be some increase to the tax rate. Urban areas would likely see minor decreases to the tax rate depending on the combinations of existing LICs.

Further points, concerns and suggestions made:

- concern noted with increased tax rates to rural and suburban areas without providing service
- identify areas that will qualify for sidewalks under the general tax rate and what would happen if an area did not qualify for a sidewalk under the general tax rate; whether there would be an opportunity in the future for some form of an area rate or LIC
- the need for a correlation between sidewalk ratings and their design; HRM should be responsible for upgrade costs incurred by a change in standard (i.e. use of concrete in place of asphalt)
- that HRM's active transportation plan be an integral part of the decision making process for sidewalk installation; making connections to enable pedestrians to move safely and quickly to their destination
- through the general tax rate there is the potential for communities to have sidewalks installed that may not have had the opportunity in the past
- concern noted increased demands for sidewalks if HRM charges for sidewalks across HRM; already pent up demand for sidewalks in urban areas
- concern with aging infrastructure and the wait times for upgrades
- concern expressed with the lack of sidewalks and residents not wanting to walk along road to use transit service but are paying into the tax rate for this service

In response to a question raised, Mr. Fisher advised that the report back to Council would clarify whether there is a policy that would limit rural access to sidewalks. He went on to clarify that it is not staff's intent to increase or decrease the budget; however, Council could chose to allocate more or less funding toward sidewalks.

During the ensuing discussion, several members of Council commented on sidewalks in the urban areas being used by residents throughout the Municipality and having fairness through the general tax rate.

In response to a question raised, Mr. Fisher indicated that details respecting the transition of LICs would have to be reviewed as there would be no new additional LICs under this proposal and there are still some outstanding LICs.

Further points and suggestions were made:

- suggestion was made to calculate the percentage each tax payer would pay into sidewalks whether they are in a urban, suburban or rural area
- Identify what the annual capital budget is for new sidewalks, how it is allocated under the general tax rate and what percentage of it is achieved through LICs or areas rates
- if sidewalks are general rated, identify the percentage for potential enhancement of investment for sidewalks

During the discussion several members of Council referred to the options outlined in the February 28, 2012 staff report, suggesting staff illustrate the implications in their report back to staff. The mover and seconder agreed to amend the motion directing staff to provide additional details for option 3 of the February 28<sup>th</sup> staff report for comparison purposes.

The motion before Council now reads:

**MOVED by Councillor Uteck, seconded by Deputy Mayor Karsten that Halifax Regional Council direct staff to:**

- 1. Develop new sidewalk, curb and gutter LIC and taxation system for 2013-2014 that recovers the costs of all sidewalks in HRM through the general rate;**
- 2. Provide additional details for the selected option and for option 3 of the February 28, 2102 staff report for comparison purposes, including potential tax rates, prior to the 2013-2014 budget presentation; and**
- 3. Provide direction as to whether similar solutions should be considered for LICs on other roads features such as paving of gravel road upgrades.**

The discussion ensued with further suggestions being made that the staff report include:

- information on traffic patterns into the downtown core

- alternative standard options (i.e. paving/widening the shoulders of the roads in place of installing sidewalks)

Councillor Harvey entered the meeting at 11:23 p.m.

In response to questions raised, Mayor Kelly clarified that if there is to be any changes in policy, recommendations would be brought forward by the Transportation Standing Committee for Council's consideration.

Upon further discussion, the **MOTION WAS PUT AND PASSED.**

Council recessed at 11:34 a.m.

Council reconvened at 11:43 a.m. with Councillor Johns in attendance.

**5. LONG TERM ARENA STRATEGY**  
**(i) Steering Committee Report dated July 30, 2012**  
**(ii) Staff Report dated July 26, 2012**

The following was before Council:

- Report from the Long Term Arena Steering Committee dated July 30, 2012
- Revised staff report dated July 26, 2012
- A copy of the presentation

Mr. Brad Anguish, Director of Community and Recreation Services outlined staff's recommendations for the Long Term Arena Strategy, identified in the July 26, 2012 staff report; as well as, provided background on the Long Term Arena Steering Committee.

Ms. Donna Goguen gave remarks on behalf of the Long Term Arena Steering Committee, highlighting points from the discussion section of the Steering Committee's July 30, 2012 report.

Ms. Betty Lou Killen, Coordinator, Community and Recreation Services provided an overview of the Long Term Arena Steering Committee's project schedule, mandate, current service delivery system, current arena inventory, project overview, key project findings, consolidation benefits, project recommendations, Peninsula consolidation, Dartmouth consolidation, consolidation costs and recapitalization costs.

Mr. Anguish reiterated the importance of receiving Council's view and direction on the Long Term Area Strategy, outlining the next steps should Council approve the recommendations proposed by staff today.

Council recessed at 12:07 p.m.

Council reconvened at 1:09 p.m. with all the same members present with the exception of Council Streach.

**MOVED by Councillor Hendsbee, seconded by Councillor Fisher that Halifax Regional Council:**

- 1. Approve the Long Term Arena Strategy (Attachment 1 of the July 26, 2012 revised staff report) in principle with the exception of the timeline for the Peninsula and Dartmouth consolidations and the location of the Peninsula 4-Pad and direct staff to undertake further assessment of those aspects based on new information received since the completion of the strategy;**
- 2. Direct staff to complete the project scope including consideration of partnership opportunities, capital costs, operational efficiencies, ice inventory, preliminary designs and public consultation for the Peninsula and Dartmouth consolidations and return to Regional Council for approval of an implementation plan;**
- 3. Direct staff to implement the Centralized Scheduling Process as outlined in the Long Term Arena Strategy (Attachment 1 of the July 26, 2012 revised staff report);**
- 4. Direct staff to implement the Community Access Plan as outlined in the Long Term Arena Strategy (Attachment 1 of the July 26, 2012 revised staff report);**
- 5. Direct staff to approach other levels of government and potential private sector partners for funding assistance; and**
- 6. Officially thank the committee members for their work and disband the Long Term Arena Strategy Committee as their mandate has been completed.**

Mr. Brad Anguish, Director, Community and Recreation Services and Ms. Betty Lou Killan, Coordinator, Client Services responded to questions.

Councillor Mosher entered the meeting at 1:15 p.m.

In response to a question by the Mayor, Ms. Killen advised that if Council approves the recommendation, staff will come back with further detail on how it will engage the stakeholders. Further to this, Mr. Anguish noted that there are multiple layers of stakeholders and that at this time, staff is looking for Council's approval of the Strategy in principle, and from this the starting point will be stakeholder engagement.

Councillor Uteck advised that she was aware Dalhousie and St. Mary's Universities want to have a temporary partnership with the Halifax Forum until they make a decision on their rink strategy. She pointed out that Dalhousie has been dealing in good faith

with the Forum and has allocated \$250,000 for renovations, and St. Mary's is prepared to do the same.

**MOVED by Councillor Uteck, seconded by Councillor Blumenthal that the motion be amended to ensure that the Halifax Forum remains as is for the next five years.**

Mr. Labrecque, Acting Chief Administrative Officer advised that it seems to be a simple amendment to the motion but in terms of all other recreation centres, from a practical perspective it imposes a constraint, and it would put the Dartmouth 4-Pad ahead of the Halifax 4-Pad.

Mr. Anguish added that his concern with Councillor Uteck's amendment was that, at this time, staff do not have the information and cannot confirm that the Universities only need five years. He pointed out that it may be a longer time, but that staff need to go out and have those discussions first.

Councillor Watts advised that she was a member of the Board of the Halifax Forum. She added that she could not support the amendment because of concern over a five year deal. Councillor Watts advised that Dalhousie and St. Mary's Universities have not given any clear direction as to what their future plans are, and to impose a five year delay could be counter-productive to HRM's plans. She requested that one of the options to be considered in the study is to maintain the current Forum and civic buildings and add one or two pads to the existing site.

In response to a question by Councillor Uteck, Mr. Anguish advised that the Forum is working with St. Mary's University on a leasehold improvement basis, and based on the motion today, there would be no problem if they want to make an investment.

Councillor Uteck indicated that given Mr. Anguish's comments, she was comfortable with the information provided and **was willing to withdraw her amendment.**

With the seconder's concurrence that the amendment be withdrawn, **the Mayor advised the amendment was withdrawn.**

Council recessed at 2:50 p.m.

Council reconvened at 3:10 p.m.

Councillor Fisher noted that the concept of 'web-based booking' is not imminent and he questioned when staff sees this coming forward. Councillor Fisher also noted that Council requested a report from staff on this matter last January and have not yet received it.

Mr. Anguish advised that staff carried out best practice research on this and found out that other cities are not doing this due to various problems. With regard to the status of the report, Mr. Anguish advised that he did not have the information at this time but would follow-up on this.



The Chair called for the question and the **MOTION WAS PUT AND PASSED.**

**6. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Cathy J. Mellett  
Municipal Clerk