

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PROPOSED 1999/2000 CAPITAL BUDGET) MINUTES FEBRUARY 22, 1999

PRESENT: Deputy Mayor Larry Uteck
Councillors: Bill Dooks
Gordon R. Snow
David Hendsbee
Ron Cooper
Jack Greenough
Condo Sarto
Bruce Hetherington
Clint Schofield
John Cunningham
Jerry S. Blumenthal
Graham L. Downey
Sheila Fougere
Russell Walker
Stephen D. Adams (10:15 a.m.)
Barry Barnet
Robert P. Harvey
Peter J. Kelly
Reg Rankin
Jack Mitchell

**ABSENT WITH
REGRETS:** His Worship Mayor Walter Fitzgerald
Councillor Harry McInroy
Councillor Bill Stone

STAFF MEMBERS: Mr. Ken Meech, Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. Dan English, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. George McLellan, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Ms. Vi Carmichael, Municipal Clerk
Ms. Karen Swim, Assistant Municipal Clerk

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The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:00 a.m. by Deputy Mayor Uteck.

1. BUDGET PROCESS

Mr. K. R. Meech, Chief Administrative Officer, made reference to the requests currently being received from members of the public wishing to make presentations on various aspects of the budget proposal. In this context, Mr. Meech indicated that staff are seeking direction as to how Council wishes to accommodate those requests, keeping in mind the previous commitment to having an approved budget by March 2.

Mr. George McLellan, Deputy CAO, briefly reviewed his memorandum of February 19, 1999 containing his recommendation for addressing requests from the public for input. In his remarks, Mr. McLellan suggested that, as the budget is reviewed, a "parking lot" of projects be developed for possible funding from a small pool of money (e.g., \$300,000 - 400,000) to be set aside by staff. Once the budget review is complete, individuals or groups wishing to make presentation on those projects might do so to the Program and Services Review Committee who would, in turn, make recommendation to Council for amendments to the proposed budget.

Following a brief discussion, **it was MOVED by Councillor Kelly, seconded by Councillor Hendsbee that, pending completion of Council's initial review of the budget proposals, an advertisement be placed in the local newspapers inviting public presentations to be heard at a future meeting of Committee of the Whole.**

In putting forward this motion, Councillor Kelly noted that it is important that Council should first complete its initial review of the budget proposals so that individuals and special interests groups will be better informed as to what the implications of the 1999/2000 budget are likely to be.

Responding to a question from Councillor Hendsbee regarding "parking lot" items previously submitted to the Program and Service Review Committee, Mr. Meech advised that it was his intention to discuss these matters with Council at a later point in the meeting. **Note:** Councillor Hendsbee subsequently circulated a document entitled *Budget Presentations to the Expanded Audit Committee -- Operating Budget Parking Lot Items (February 10, 1999)*.

Speaking on the motion, Councillor Hetherington indicated that, while he supported the concept of public input into the budget approval process, he felt that the Program and Service Review Committee would be a more appropriate venue for those submissions. He went on to point out that, in addition to the fact that Minutes are taken and recommendations are made to Regional Council, Committee meetings are open to all members of Council.

Councillor Greenough, Chair of the Program and Service Review Committee, spoke in opposition to the motion. In his comments, Councillor Greenough emphasized that Council has already committed to meeting specific objectives with regard to the 1999/2000 budgets. Under the circumstances, therefore, he questioned whether an advertisement actively encouraging members of the public and special interest groups to make presentation to Council would raise what he termed "false expectations" with regard to how Council can react to these submissions.

THE MOTION WAS PUT AND DEFEATED.

MOVED by Councillor Hetherington, seconded by Councillor Blumenthal that:

- (1) all public presentations with reference to the proposed 1999/2000 budget be referred to the Program and Service Review Committee; and further, that**
- (2) as the budget deliberations progress, a "parking lot" consisting of deferred and/or contentious items be developed for consideration by the Program and Service Review Committee.**

THE MOTION WAS PUT AND PASSED.

Responding to a request for clarification from Councillor Hetherington, the Deputy Mayor advised that an additional meeting of Committee of the Whole will be scheduled to consider the recommendations received from the Program and Service Review Committee as well as any other "contentious" issues raised by individual members of Council.

Concurring with the comments made by Deputy Mayor Uteck, Mr. McLellan advised that staff will be taking note of all "parking lot" items put forward during today's discussion, and will subsequently prepare an analysis of their implications for Council's consideration.

**MOVED by Councillor Kelly, seconded by Councillor Blumenthal that all items deferred from last year's budget (as shown on Page Cap 3) not be subject to debate, but rather that they go forward as part of the 1999/2000 budget without change.
THE MOTION WAS PUT AND PASSED.**

2. 1999/2000 CAPITAL BUDGET DELIBERATIONS

Mr. George McLellan, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, provided Council with a brief overview of the 1999/2000 Capital Budget proposal, and responded to questions from various members of Council.

With reference to Page Cap 6, *Robb Engineering Joist Repairs*, Councillor Barnet requested information from Legal Services staff as to whether any attempt is being made to recover some of these costs (estimated at \$260,000) from Robb Engineering.

Responding to a question from Councillor Barnet with regard to Page Cap 6, *Halifax City Hall (Replace Flag Pole)*, Mr. Philip Townsend, Capital Projects Coordinator, advised that there is some indication that the flag pole has reached the end of its life expectancy and is now becoming a safety issue. Councillor Barnet indicated that he would like to have this project included as a "parking lot" issue.

Councillor Snow noted that the proposed Capital Budget contains a considerable amount of money earmarked for recreational purposes (i.e., a sports field). He went on to point out, however, that it would be difficult for him to support the funding of this initiative when he is aware of another project in the community which is badly needed because of safety concerns. The Councillor therefore requested information as to whether one project could be exchanged for the other.

Mr. McLellan pointed out that, according to the practise that has been followed by Council in the past, should Councillor Snow agree to give up the recommended recreation project, there would be no guarantee that the monies so released would be turned back to District 2. More specifically, the funds would be earmarked for the next priority project, regardless of the district in which that need is identified. Under the circumstances, therefore, Mr. McLellan strongly recommended that Councillor Snow's safety-related project be allocated to the "parking lot" for future consideration.

Responding to a question from Councillor Blumenthal regarding the proposed use of outside consultants, Mr. Meech made reference to reductions in Engineering's Design and Construction section, noting that, as a result of those reductions, funds have been included in certain capital projects for the use of external resources. The CAO went on to advise that a report concerning the overall use of outside consultants, as previously requested by Councillor Blumenthal, should be available shortly.

Councillor Blumenthal requested that *Grand Parade Electrical Upgrade* (Page Cap 6) at an estimated \$100,000 be earmarked as a "parking lot" item for future consideration.

Councillor Walker asked that *Major Facilities - Upgrades* (Page Cap 9) at an estimated \$200,000 be added to the "parking lot" list, adding that when the matter comes back for discussion he will be asking for information as to what was being requested by these facilities in comparison to what is being proposed.

Councillor Walker also asked that *Regional Trails Development* (Page Cap 9), estimated at \$150,000, be included on the "parking lot" list. **Note:** A document entitled *A Proposal*

to Develop the Halifax Regional Trail System dated February 12, 1999 was subsequently distributed to members of Council.

Councillor Hetherington made reference to the need for a sidewalk on Atlantic Street (Dartmouth), but indicated that he would be discussing this matter further with staff in an attempt to substitute this project for another of lower priority proposed to be undertaken this year.

10:30 a.m. - Deputy Mayor Uteck retired from the meeting with Councillor Rankin assuming the Chair.

Commenting on Councillor Hetherington's remarks, Mr. McLellan pointed out that staff could not automatically agree to substitute one project for another, given that there may be other "priority" projects in greater need of funding. He went on to emphasize that this approach is in keeping with Council's previous practise; namely, that when a project in one district is replaced, the funds are not automatically retained for another initiative in that same district but are instead made available for the next project (in order of priority) regardless of location. He acknowledged, however, that staff would be bringing forward their rationale for proceeding with the projects in question.

10:40 a.m. - Deputy Mayor Uteck returned to the meeting with Councillor Rankin resuming his usual seat on Council.

Councillor Schofield asked that staff reconsider adding the following streets to their list of locations proposed for resurfacing: (1) Ernest Avenue; (2) Albro Lake Road -- sidewalks and curb on the south side of Albro Lake Road; and (3) sidewalks on Elmwood Avenue.

Councillor Kelly asked for a break-down, wherever possible, of the "block" items included throughout the Capital Budget proposal except in instances where expenditures apply to ongoing maintenance and repair.

Councillor Kelly made reference to improvements proposed for Camden Street, and asked that this matter be placed in the "parking lot" until staff have had an opportunity to discuss with the Halifax Regional Water Commission the possibility of partnering in this project.

Councillor Harvey referred to *Sleep & Fun Parks - Sackville* (Page Cap 7) and asked that this project be placed in the "parking lot," pending staff comment as to the advisability of reallocating these funds toward a playground on Walker Avenue. In his comments, the Councillor pointed out that Walker Avenue now has five apartment buildings with no playground space, adding, however, that land had been purchased by HRM for this purpose during the past year.

Councillor Harvey also asked for clarification as to whether funds are available for the paving of a number of gravel roads located in existing subdivisions within HRM's core area. He added that he was particularly interested in the plans for such roads within the Stonemount Subdivision.

Mr. Kulvinder Dhillon, Director of Engineering and Transportation Services, advised that staff will provide a list of all gravel roads proposed for paving under the 1999/2000 Capital Budget.

Councillor Dooks advised that a crosswalk light had been removed from the No. 7 Highway in Musquodoboit Harbour, immediately in front of a senior citizens apartment and at a very busy intersection. The Councillor went on to note that while it is uncertain who is responsible for the removal of this light (i.e., HRM or the Province), he would like it replaced. He went on to ask that this matter be included on the list of "parking lot" items but also noted that, in his opinion, this should not be considered a capital project.

Mr. McLellan indicated that he would investigate the matter and contact Councillor Dooks with his findings.

Councillor Greenough referred to the fact that there are no resurfacing projects included in the coming year's budget for District 6 and asked to have the Waverley Road (Montebello to Red Bridge Pond) project moved up to the "active" list of projects proposed for this year. Acknowledging, however, that this project represents a considerable expenditure of money and may not be feasible for the 1999/2000 budget year, the Councillor asked that staff consider including at least one resurfacing project (from a list provided to Mr. Rick Paynter, Manager of Construction Services) for District 6.

Councillor Rankin made reference to the St. Margaret's Arena, and expressed concern that, despite the fact the Arena is now paying off its debt with no obligation on the part of HRM, it is not receiving the kind of capital assistance that is being offered other similar facilities. The Councillor asked that this matter be reconsidered and, if possible, funds set aside for this facility under the heading *Major Facilities - Upgrades*.

Councillor Sarto made reference to the resurfacing proposed for Woodlawn Road (Spikenard - Main) and asked that it be deferred for a year in favor of Bellevista Drive (Mount Edward Road - Civic No. 40).

Councillor Mitchell asked for a break-down from staff of the information included under the "block item," *Field Upgrades*.

Councillor Cooper made reference to the sidewalk project proposed for Forest Hills Drive (Cedarwood - Flying Cloud), Page Cap Sum 19. Noting that, in his view, there are other

streets much more deserving of sidewalk construction during the next fiscal year (such as those in the vicinity of collector streets and/or schools), the Councillor asked staff to provide him with the rationale for their recommendations.

Councillor Barnet made reference to the new sidewalk proposed for Lacewood Drive in the Bayers Lake Business Park (at an estimated cost of \$655,000), and asked for information from staff as to whether this project would be subject to Local Improvement Charges.

Responding to a question from Councillor Blumenthal, Mr. Peter Bigelow, General Manager (Recreation Facilities), advised that *Recreation Heritage Building Upgrades* (Page Cap 6) at an estimated \$100,000 pertained to block funds set aside primarily for the purposes of emergency repairs. He noted, however, that a break-down of the items included under this heading would be made available to Council.

MOVED by Councillor Greenough, seconded by Councillor Sarto that the proposed 1999/2000 Capital Budget be conditionally accepted, pending receipt of further information from staff in response to questions raised during today's deliberations. THE MOTION WAS PUT AND PASSED.

Responding to a question from Councillor Greenough, Mr. McLellan advised that staff will be meeting to discuss the "parking lot" items and the measures that can be taken to incorporate them in the coming year's budget. He went on to suggest that a revised budget proposal could be ready for Council's consideration within a week to ten day's time.

IT WAS FURTHER AGREED that the list of "parking lot" items previously submitted to the Program and Service Review Committee (including the matter of District Capital Funds) would be included for consideration in the revised budget proposal to be prepared by staff.

3. ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Councillor Hendsbee, seconded by Councillor Cooper that the meeting be adjourned at approximately 11:50 a.m. THE MOTION WAS PUT AND PASSED.

Vi Carmichael
MUNICIPAL CLERK

