



**BUDGET COMMITTEE
(STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ON BUDGET)
MINUTES
April 25, 2023**

PRESENT: Councillor Paul Russell, Chair
 Mayor Mike Savage
 Deputy Mayor Sam Austin
 Councillors: Cathy Deagle Gammon
 David Hendsbee
 Becky Kent
 Trish Purdy
 Tony Mancini
 Waye Mason
 Lindell Smith
 Shawn Cleary
 Kathryn Morse
 Patty Cuttell
 Iona Stoddard
 Pam Lovelace
 Lisa Blackburn
 Tim Outhit

STAFF: Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer
 Jerry Blackwood, Executive Director of Finance & Asset Management/Chief
 Financial Officer
 John Traves, K.C., CD, Executive Director of Legal & Legislative
 Services/Municipal Solicitor/Chief Governance Officer
 Iain MacLean, Municipal Clerk
 Elizabeth Macdonald, Legislative Assistant
 Catie Campbell, Legislative Assistant

The following does not represent a verbatim record of the proceedings of this meeting.

The agenda, reports, supporting documents, information items circulated, and video (if available) are online at halifax.ca.

The meeting was called to order at 1:28 p.m., and adjourned at 3:38 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:28 p.m. and acknowledged that the meeting took place in the traditional and ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq people, and that we are all treaty people.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – March 1 & 8, and March 29, 2023

MOVED by Councillor Cleary, seconded by Councillor Stoddard

THAT the minutes of March 1 & 8, and March 29, 2023 be approved as circulated.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Additions: None

Deletions: None

MOVED by Councillor Deagle Gammon, seconded by Councillor Morse

THAT the agenda be approved as presented.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. CALL FOR DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS – NONE

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Patrick Sullivan, President & CEO of the Halifax Chamber of Commerce spoke to service and infrastructure challenges faced by Halifax Regional Municipality due to population growth and highlighted the need for the 2023/24 Budget to incentivize entrepreneurship and foster long-term growth of the private sector, particularly in relation to local businesses. Sullivan expressed concerns that increasing taxes may harm local businesses and suggested the Budget Committee consider cutting costs internally.

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer spoke to Halifax Regional Municipality's remote work policy and provided clarification on a previously quoted statistic.

Amy Wttewaall, Halifax Dance spoke to concerns with introducing paid parking on Saturdays and encouraged the Budget Committee to delay passing this policy. Wttewaall explained that local businesses are still in the process of recovering from the impacts of Covid-19, noting Halifax Dance experienced a 25% decrease in registration since the onset of the pandemic. Wttewaall further expressed concerns that paid Saturday parking would serve as an additional barrier to businesses in the process of economic recovery.

Brian Doherty, Old Triangle Pub spoke to their opposition to paid parking on Saturdays and noted that downtown businesses are in the process of recovering from the negative impacts of Covid-19, with many facing repayment of Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) loans. Doherty expressed their concern that introducing paid parking in conjunction with reduced transit services on weekends would make downtown less accessible to customers and workers.

Steve McMullin, Grafton St. Theatre and Roxbury spoke against paid parking on Saturdays and urged the Budget Committee to reconsider the proposal at a future date. McMullin stated the proposed changes

would serve as an additional cost to employees and disadvantage downtown businesses as competitors outside the downtown core often offer free parking.

Joe McGuinness, Legendary Hospitality spoke to concerns with paid parking on Saturdays and expressed disappointment that business owners and industry professionals were not consulted in the policy development process. McGuinness noted that despite a growing downtown core, implementing paid parking could discourage patrons from visiting downtown and pose a barrier when recruiting employees.

McGuinness spoke on behalf of Derek Martin, President and Founder, Halifax Wanderers noting various challenges faced by the organization during the Covid-19 pandemic and fears the proposed parking policy would dissuade people from visiting downtown.

Paul MacKinnon, Downtown Halifax Business Commission spoke against the proposed paid parking on Saturdays, noting decreasing property assessment values, loss of office workers, the need for short-term economic investments, the importance of maintaining a thriving downtown core, and the unknown economic impacts of introducing paid parking on Saturdays. MacKinnon explained the policy could deter patrons from visiting the downtown and harm local businesses, adding many are in the process of recovering financially from Covid-19. MacKinnon responded to questions of clarification from the Budget Committee.

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer spoke to the new Commercial Tax Structure and the proposed Saturday hourly parking rates in the 2023/24 Budget.

Sue Uteck, Spring Garden Area Business Association spoke against the proposal to introduce paid parking on Saturdays, noted that businesses are recovering from the negative impacts of Covid-19, face a declining customer base and supply chain issues. Uteck noted patrons encounter issues accessing the downtown core due to unreliable transit and that paid parking would further disincentivize many from visiting downtown. Uteck emphasized the need for the Budget Committee to work in collaboration and in consultation with the business community and suggested the Committee explore alternative avenues to generate income.

Gabriel Ugenti, Five Fisherman Restaurant spoke to the potential negative effects that the proposed paid parking on Saturdays policy may have on business owners and staff operating downtown. Ugenti urged the Budget Committee to vote against the proposed policy change.

Frank Yunace, Pete's Frootique spoke to barriers faced by downtown business owners: continuation of financial losses from the Covid-19 pandemic, the ongoing Spring Garden Road Enhancements project, and reduced accessibility on weekends due to decreased Transit services. Yunace urged the Budget Committee to revisit the proposed paid parking on Saturdays policy in the future.

Greg Balingit, Grafton Connor Group spoke to the ongoing challenges faced by businesses post-Covid and encouraged the Budget Committee to reject the proposed paid parking on Saturdays policy.

Christian Rankin, Co-Owner Obladee Wine Bar spoke to rising business costs, fewer patrons frequenting the downtown core, and urged the Budget Committee to reject the proposed paid parking on Saturdays policy and to find an alternative solution to generating revenue.

Colin May, Dartmouth spoke to concerns of growing rates of violent crime and recommended the municipal, provincial, and federal levels of government work collaboratively to alleviate issues faced by inner cities. May further suggested that the Halifax Regional Municipality request the province commission an updated study on crime rates in Nova Scotia.

6. Proposed 2023/24 Budget

The following was before Budget Committee:

- Staff report dated April 18, 2023
- Correspondence from Dr. Krista Jangaard, Ben MacKeil, Tim Rissesso and Paul MacKinnon and Sue Uteck, Christy Sanford, Neil and Darlene Cook, Sandra Selva, Terry S. Canning, Patrick Sullivan, Angela MacDonald, Anita Keeping, John Malone, Debbie MacIntosh, Margaret Sibley Nancy Hoddinott, Norma Corbett, Mark Gavin, Lucille Graham, Betsy Eldon, Jerry Philip, Ron Blommers, Grace Lane-Smith, Evan Murphy, Rosanne Reeve-Newson and D. Labrie, Karen McKinnon, Andrea Macmillan, Shahul Hameed, Janet Parker, Jan Robinson, Tricia Dauphinee Bishop, Robin Haws, Audrey Flanders, Lisa Billard, Nancy Murray, Kim O'Brien-Kendall, Paula Fredericks, Monica Gonzales, Trudy Fong, Erin Ferguson, Raquel Roth, Harry Mah, Gail Forster, Christopher Dunlap, Diane E. Highmore, Liza Hageraats, Mehvish Hussain, Kelley Edwards, Jonathan Roberts and Mary Nkrumah, Kathleen Richardson, Karen Smith, Marel Eager, and T. Mitchell
- Handout titled, "Draft Budget and Business Plan 2023/24"
- Handout titled, "2023-2024 Draft Capital Plan"

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer gave an overview of the proposed 2023/24 Municipal Budget. O'Toole highlighted the proposed operational and capital budget breakdowns, the new commercial taxation policy, five new area rates, and that the average residential home tax bill would increase by 5.8%.

MOVED by Councillor Lovelace, seconded by Councillor Blackburn

THAT the Budget Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to adopt the Resolution for Approval of Operating and Capital Budgets and Tax Rates for Fiscal 2023/24 as set out in Schedule 1 of the staff report dated April 18, 2023.

John Traves, K.C., CD, Executive Director of Legal & Legislative Services/Municipal Solicitor/Chief Governance Officer responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee on legislative requirements, noting that a motion of rescission would be required to remove Item 5, BN022A Parking Changes – Saturday Parking from the Resolution for Approval of Operating and Capital Budgets and Tax Rates for Fiscal 2023/24.

MOVED by Councillor Lovelace, seconded by Councillor Purdy

THAT the motion be amended to the Resolution for Approval of Operating and Capital Budgets and Tax Rates for Fiscal 2023/24 as set out in Schedule 1 of the staff report dated April 18, 2023 by removing Item 5, BN022A Parking changes - Saturday parking, in the amount of \$ 538,000. and the tax rate adjusted accordingly.

Tyler Higgins, Manager, Budget and Reserves responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee Cand noted that if approved, this would increase residential and commercial taxes by 5.9%, and the average residential home tax bill would increase by \$128.00.

Victoria Horne, Director, Parking Services responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee and noted that if approved, fees would be implemented on June 1, 2023, Administrative Order amendments would be required, zones B,C and H would be impacted, and the rate would be \$2/hour from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Horne further highlighted parking availability feedback is primarily complaint and data driven, and weekend parking would be monitored in consultation with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs).

O'Toole responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee, highlighted there had been no transit service reductions on Saturdays, clarified that delayed implementation would create a deficit in Budget 2024/25, and that deficits are required to be addressed first in the following year's budget.

Traves responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee and noted voting requirements for by-laws and fees are set within the Administrative Order which would return to Council by June 1, 2023.

Two-third majority vote was required.

MOTION TO AMEND PUT AND PASSED. (13 in favour, 4 against)

In favour: Budget Committee Chair Russell, Mayor Savage, Deputy Mayor Austin, Councillors Deagle Gammon, Kent, Purdy, Mancini, Mason, Morse, Stoddard, Lovelace, Blackburn, Outhit

Against: Councillors Hendsbee, Smith, Cleary, Cuttell

The motion now read:

THAT Budget Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to adopt the Resolution for Approval of Operating and Capital Budgets and Tax Rates for Fiscal 2023/24 as set out in Schedule 1 of the staff report dated April 18, 2023 and be amended by removing Item 5, BN022A Parking changes – Saturday parking, in the amount of \$538,000. and the tax rate adjusted accordingly as amended.

Higgins responded to questions of clarification from the Budget Committee, noting the tax rate would go down by 4.3%.

MOTION AS AMENDED PUT AND PASSED. (16 in favour, 1 against)

In favour: Budget Committee Chair Russell, Mayor Savage, Deputy Mayor Austin, Councillors Deagle Gammon, Hendsbee, Kent, Mancini, Mason, Smith, Cleary, Morse, Cuttell, Stoddard, Lovelace, Blackburn, Outhit

Against: Councillor Purdy

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:38 p.m.

Iain MacLean
Municipal Clerk