

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

April 11, 1996

PRESENT:

Mayor Walter Fitzgerald
Councillor Dooks
Councillor Snow
Councillor Cooper
Councillor McInroy
Deputy Mayor Greenough
Councillor Sarto
Councillor Schofield
Councillor Cunningham
Councillor Blumenthal
Councillor Downey
Councillor Uteck
Councillor Epstein
Councillor Walker
Councillor Stone
Councillor Hanson
Councillor Adams
Councillor Barnet
Councillor Harvey
Councillor Kelly
Councillor Rankin
Councillor Mitchell

ALSO PRESENT:

K.R. Meech, Chief Administrative Officer
Wayne Anstey, Municipal Solicitor
Vi Carmichael, Municipal Clerk
Julia Horncastle, Assistant Municipal Clerk

REGRETS:

Councillor Hetherington
Councillor Hendsbee

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

Council observed a minute of silence in memory of Gerald Godsoe.

Report - Standing and Advisory Committees

Mayor Fitzgerald suggested after the staff presentation, all questions and suggestions will be summarized and a committee formed to make recommendations, to a future Committee of the Whole, on a committee structure which would best suit the needs of the Regional Municipality.

A report entitled "Standing and Advisory Committees" was submitted and reviewed by Ms. V.M. Spencer, Commissioner of Policy and Planning.

Councillors were provided an opportunity for input with respect to the report and the suggested makeup of a committee structure.

Councillor Blumenthal advised he would like to see more community input and representation by seniors.

Councillor Kelly stated the proposed ad hoc committee should travel to various communities to provide the opportunity for various groups i.e. youth and disabled (which are an integral part of the overall community), to have input. These groups should, in his opinion, have the right to form committees, however, the process by which they report, either to a sub committee or an advisory body, has to be established.

Councillor Schofield suggested Community Councils be in place before the advisory work for the committees is started and, if sub committees are in place, they could report to Community Councils rather than staff.

Councillor Cooper advised that Halifax Regional Municipality consists of a number of communities which will not change over the coming years and, as a result, will provide an opportunity for advisory committees to handle common items, as well as committees to handle community concerns. He went on to state if public consultation is entered into, he would have some concern with the length of time this would involve. Further, he suggested that a smaller number of committees of Council should be considered, with fairly broad powers to deal with general concerns.

Ms. Spencer noted a discussion had been held with respect to diversity of communities and client service. The idea of having fewer committees reporting directly to Council is not just a matter of being efficient with Council's time, but rather a matter of trying to move forward to integrate some of the key issues.

Councillor Cooper stated the Regional Municipality does have the ability to set up structures to address community concerns that are not regionally wide and, if that is put in abeyance, then some of the essential representation will be taken away from the residents. Community Councils addressing community concerns are compatible with committees to address region wide concerns. He advised the makeup of the municipality, in the concept of rural, urban and suburban, has to be taken into consideration and their needs addressed. He suggested some committees interact directly with Council, others with administration and others work with regional wide concerns while, at the same time, addressing community concerns.

Mayor Fitzgerald vacated the Chair.

Deputy Mayor Greenough assumed the Chair.

Mr. Meech stated there is a need for discussion with regards to whether there is going to be universal service levels and standards across the Region. Differing needs such as the kind of service that is provided in one particular area does not dictate the kind of services that will be provided in another area. This would have an influence in terms of what people will expect and will have an affect on cost recovery.

Councillor Cooper stated he would like to see an opportunity for Council as a whole to have input.

Councillor Epstein advised under the Heritage Act and the Planning Act there is a statutory requirement for a Heritage Advisory Committee and a Planning Advisory Committee. He asked if Community Councils have their own Planning and Heritage Advisory Committees.

In response, Ms. Spencer stated there is an overlapping of legislation. Both the Planning and Heritage Advisory Committees have clients that go through the committee system as part of development projects and whose homes may be a heritage property. The rights and procedures these persons might expect should fall under the appropriate legislation.

Councillor Epstein asked for clarification on the meaning of "committees would be few in number but broad in scope", as stated in the report, to which Ms. Spencer responded this has yet to be determined. She advised staff did take into consideration there would be official sub-committees to deal with specific issues.

Councillor Epstein cautioned a recommendation that suggested only a few committees as this would put a time commitment burden on those individuals serving on these committees due to lengthy agendas. He suggested continuing with a larger number of

committees with the mandates of these committees changed or broadened to fit the needs of the Regional Municipality.

Councillor Uteck expressed concern with respect to setting up Community Councils at this time, as Council needs to work regionally not break down into individual community representation under a Community Council structure.

Councillor Stone stated community input is important and necessary and questioned whether Council should be setting up all these committees because once set by Council, they become a Council responsibility. If communities set up committees to deal with issues that are important to them, they can then bring their concerns to individual councillors who in turn can bring them to Council. He agreed with the recommendation of the report with respect to setting up a number of standing committees as there will be requests for presentations to Council and, in his opinion, some of these can be addressed at committee level.

Councillor Adams indicated support of sub-committees reporting to advisory committees, with Council receiving the final recommendation. He favoured "ad hoc" committees which could be set up to address specific issues and suggested having existing citizens' committees staying in place for the present time. He went on to state there would be more objectivity when an item comes to Council if there were citizen committees working with staff.

Councillor Blumenthal advised Council has to listen to citizen input. Councillors will have to work in conjunction with staff, and stated he is not in favour of monetary compensation for citizen membership on a committee.

Councillor Mitchell indicated support of Community Councils as they can address the needs specific to those communities covered by the Community Council.

Ms. Spencer offered if there are Community Councils, there is the matter of ensuring that the work at the community level is not frustrated or duplicated by the work at the standing committee level.

Councillor Rankin suggested citizen committees should be minimized to provide a better opportunity to interface with Council, but not preclude the sub committee structure. He went on to state the continuance of Community Councils is important as they respond to different levels of community service.

It was moved by Councillor Rankin, seconded by Councillor Mitchell:

“THAT IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL THAT AN AD HOC COMMITTEE CALLED “COMMITTEE ADVISORY COMMITTEE” BE STRUCK TO REVIEW AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL WITH RESPECT TO THE STAFF REPORT REGARDING THE FORMATION AND STRUCTURE OF COMMITTEES. FURTHER IT WAS AGREED THAT STANDING COMMITTEES BE DEALT WITH BY COUNCIL AT A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE”

Councillor Cunningham stated one of the considerations when setting up committees should be with regards to the time of day meetings are scheduled.

He referenced the recommendation of not continuing with the “Commons Committee” and informed Council that the legislation governing the Commons is a provincial legislation.

Ms. Spencer clarified by stating the legislation addressing this issue was repealed with the adoption of the Halifax Regional Municipality legislation but the intention of the legislation has been incorporated into the Halifax Regional Municipality Act.

Councillor Cunningham further stated that a Community Council structure would be advantageous in dealing with rezoning issues which are relative only to a certain area or district.

Deputy Mayor Greenough suggested that a presentation could be made at a future date outlining how a Community Council functions, the types of issues it deals with and the role it plays.

Councillor Harvey stated if there are to be standing committees then these should be created as soon as possible. He said Community Councils should be created if requested by the community or councillors, as they bring decision making and accountability close to the people with local decisions being made by having local input.

Councillor Snow questioned the role the Ratepayers, Homeowners and Recreation Associations play, noting that the communities are different and need to be governed a little differently from district to district. Under Community Councils, residents have an input with local decisions made by local people, but major decisions made by full Council. He agreed with the report with regards to having standing committees but also

felt there is a need for a Community Council structure as well. He further commented that smaller community based committees are necessary.

Councillor Barnet said the establishment of a Community Council can alleviate the overall community concerns. Community Councils deal with local issues that are, for the most part, of little or no concern to Council but are important to those affected. He stated support for the report and the recommendation of setting up of standing committees as well as support for Community Councils being set up where requested.

Councillor Dooks brought Councils attention to the uniqueness of his district with regards to its size and diversity. He said there are communities in his district that are over two hundred miles away from one another and, as a result, does not see how the report can serve everyone collectively.

Councillor Walker noted he would like to see each councillor given an equal opportunity to serve on any committees that may be formed.

Councillor Cooper stated Community Councils were not the same in each area but rather evolved and adapted to reflect the area in which they operate and the community they serve. The Sackville Community Council dealt with a much larger business district than the Westphal/Cole Harbour area. He inquired as to why standing committees could not handle in house work rather than through a Committee of the Whole process.

In response, Mr. Meech stated if Council goes to the standing committee structure, not everyone will receive information at the same time, and as a result when an item arrives at Council, participation and debate will not be derived from the same information base. If standing committees are established, discussion should be held as to whether the chair should, for clarification purposes and in response to any questions, make representation when a recommendation comes forward to Council.

Councillor Epstein was not in agreement with a Community Council structure as power to make decisions on Development Agreements is turned over to those Councils and some of those agreements would not just impact locally, but regionally.

Councillor Stone explained that all councillors are not familiar with the Community Council structure while others are not familiar with standing committees; therefore, more information should come forward before any decisions are made. One of his suggestions would be that minutes of standing committees be available to all councillors before those committee issues come to Council. He advised the ad hoc committee needs to be set up and a recommendation come forward as soon as possible.

Mr. Meech suggested that the Committee of the Whole section of the report not be included in the referral to the ad hoc committee but rather have Council make a decision with regards to Committee of the Whole meetings.

The motion was put and passed.

Councillor volunteers for the ad hoc committee were:

Councillor Snow
Councillor Uteck
Councillor Kelly
Councillor Cooper
Councillor Schofield
Councillor Epstein
Councillor Sarto
Deputy Mayor Greenough

It was moved by Councillor Snow, seconded by Councillor Cooper:

‘THAT COUNCIL INVITE THE PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEES AND THE HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEES, WHICH WERE EXISTING IN THE UNITS AS OF MARCH 31, 1996, TO BE APPOINTED TO OPERATE AS INTERIM PLANNING ADVISORY AND HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEES FOR HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY’

The motion was put and passed.

Councillor Uteck recommended that a presentation by the Point Pleasant Park Commission be deferred pending the staff report respecting the Standing Committees.

Councillor Cooper asked that a nominating committee be put in place to look at membership on these standing committees.

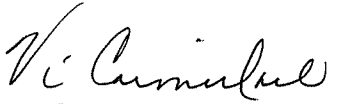
ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Councillor Blumenthal, seconded by Councillor Stone:

‘THAT THE MEETING BE ADJOURNED’

The motion was put and passed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.


Vi Carmichael,
Municipal Clerk