



**HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES
January 6, 2016**

PRESENT: Mayor Mike Savage
Deputy Mayor Matt Whitman
Councillors: Barry Dalrymple
David Hendsbee
Bill Karsten
Lorelei Nicoll
Gloria McCluskey
Waye Mason
Jennifer Watts
Linda Mosher
Russell Walker
Stephen Adams
Reg Rankin
Brad Johns
Steve Craig
Tim Outhit

STAFF: Ms. Amana Whitewood, Chief Financial Officer
Ms. Karen Brown, Acting Municipal Solicitor
Mr. Kevin Arjoon, Municipal Clerk
Ms. Cathy Collett, Legislative Assistant

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

A video recording of this meeting is available: http://archive.isiglobal.ca/vod/halifax/archive_2016-01-06_live.mp4.html

The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to Council are available online: <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/160106cow-agenda.php>

The meeting was called to order at 9:32 a.m., and recessed at 12:00 p.m. Committee of the Whole reconvened in at 12:45 p.m. Committee of the Whole adjourned at 2:56 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – NONE

3. PARKS AND RECREATION

The following was before the Committee of the Whole:

- A Staff recommendation report dated December 21, 2015 with an attached presentation entitled 2016/17 Parks and Recreation Draft Budget & Business Plan

i) Presentation

Mr. Brad Anguish, Director, Parks & Recreation, gave a presentation regarding the proposed 2016/17 Budget and Business Plan for the Parks and Recreation business unit.

Councillor Walker entered the meeting at 9:44 a.m.

The Chair thanked Mr. Anguish for his detailed presentation.

ii) Public Submissions

The Chair invited members of the public to come forward to address Committee of the Whole on any item relating to the Budget.

Mr. Jeff Blair, Halifax, representative of the Board of Directors for Disc Nova Scotia, outlined two major issues that affect the sport community overall, particularly the sport of Ultimate Frisbee. The first issue is that the current infrastructure for sports is largely inadequate and sports fields are dispersed across the city, which frequently means participants would need to travel to several facilities. The second issue is that sports fields are often too small and poorly maintained. Mr. Blair suggested that it would be a good idea to invest in a regional sports hub/campus and focus on serving the needs of large scale events as well as providing community access. Mr. Blair thanked Council and the Parks and Recreation staff for giving him a chance to speak.

Ms. Wendy MacDonald, Mainland North, commented that, while the Parks and Recreation report is very exciting, there are a few issues regarding communication and collaboration. She gestured to the inadequacies of the recreation schedule, commenting that it is unclear and hard to read. She provided Mr. Anguish with a copy of a full-color recreation pamphlet from a municipality in New Brunswick as an example of the type of communication she believes to be effective. Ms. MacDonald commented that she hopes for new signage in mainland North, as there are a lot of unsigned parks in that area. She called for greater collaboration with community volunteers and questioned the fit of trails under the Transportation business unit.

The Chair called three times for speakers, there being none, the Chair indicated that the floor was open to questions and comments from members of the Committee of the Whole.

iii) Debate

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor McCluskey

THAT the Committee of the Whole direct staff to proceed to prepare the 2016/17 Parks & Recreation Budget and Business Plan as proposed in the accompanying presentation,

incorporating additional direction provided by motion of Committee of the Whole for inclusion in the proposed HRM 2016/17 Budget and Business Plan documents.

Members of the Committee of the Whole thanked Mr. Anguish and Parks and Recreation staff for their hard work and for the detailed and informative presentation.

In response to a question from Councillor Watts regarding a potential sport committee, Mr. Anguish indicated that the Sport Committee is still in the planning phase and it is not yet known what the representation on the committee will be.

In response to a question from Councillor Watts regarding trails, Mr. Anguish responded that HRM is responsible for maintaining recreational trails (loop trails) that are not maintained by a community group, but that HRM is not responsible for placing or building these trails.

Responding to Councillor Watts' comments regarding international trends and Parks and Recreation's broad vision for the next ten years, Mr. Anguish commented that there will be a big focus on both "risky play" and building stronger communities through opportunities for intergenerational recreation.

In response to comments and questions from Councillor McCluskey, Mr. Anguish responded that snow shoes are available for rent at the Pavilion and that staff are looking into a greater level of lending for this equipment. He indicated that Shubie Park is next on the list for a focused strategy on compliance issues and that the washrooms at Dillman Park will be part of the regional washroom strategy.

Councillor Adams indicated that he will be bringing a motion regarding rugby facilities in HRM to the table after the main motion has been addressed.

Responding to comments from Councillor Mason regarding field conditions, Mr. Anguish indicated that safety is the key priority and that if the standard for fields is to be raised from that of player safety, then the question remains as to where and with what resources.

In response to Councillor Mason's question regarding accessibility upgrades, Mr. Anguish commented that staff are working towards providing the opportunity for barrier free play at all parks in HRM, but that there are still parks that do not have a strong barrier-free play capability.

Responding to Councillor Mason's comments regarding winter maintenance in Shubie Park and Point Pleasant Park, Mr. Anguish explained that community developers are working out in the field so as to increase contact time with members of the communities and to hear about the priorities of residents.

In response to Councillor Outhit's comments regarding field maintenance, Mr. Anguish indicated that grass upkeep will be better this year and that there will be an increased level of supervision to make sure that this is the case.

Responding to a question from Councillor Outhit regarding partnerships, Mr. Anguish indicated that staff are continuing to follow the direction given by Council to look for partners in Dartmouth and that the partnership with the Forum Association has been initiated.

Responding to the Councillor Outhit's comments regarding the presentation of statistical park data, Mr. Anguish explained that he was hoping to illustrate that, in regards to the park asset guidelines and the standards for meeting the state of good repair, the numbers demonstrate that either more funds or less assets are required.

In response to comments and questions from Councillor Mosher, Mr. Anguish indicated that the priority of the budgeting process for Parks and Recreation was sustainability and that Parks and Recreation is in a good position, with the focus being on keeping assets in a state of good repair. He explained that safety issues are key and that Parks and Recreation fulfilled the request to reduce their budget by \$649,000.

Councillor Mosher commented that several years ago staff agreed to clear Frog Pond and Albro Lake for skating purposes and that she believes that a report on the subject came to Regional Council. She requested that the report be pursued. Staff indicated that they would look into the matter.

Ms. Amanda Whitewood, Chief Financial Officer, commented that Regional Council gave direction two months ago to address the planning gap of approximately 18.7 million dollars. She explained that staff have been following this direction and thus each business unit has been working to reduce their individual budgets.

In response to a question from Councillor Walker, Mr. Anguish indicated that he will provide further information as to whether the funds for paving the new off-leash dog park parking lot are contained in the budget.

Responding to questions and comments from Deputy Mayor Whitman, Mr. Anguish explained that staff have just received a pilot report on Segways and will need to look at the new Provincial policies on the matter. He commented that the Halifax Regional School Board Superintendent has been cooperative and responsive in their discussions and that there is a plan in place to make sure that grass maintenance is completed in a more timely fashion in 2016.

In response to Councillor Hendsbee's question regarding the lack of funding for community support for parks, Mr. Anguish indicated that, whenever possible, staff will enable a community group if they wish to maintain a park.

Responding to Councillor Hendsbee's comments regarding cemeteries and the Lake Charlotte Boat Launch, Mr. Anguish indicated that there are currently six (6) reports on cemeteries with staff and that the Lake Charlotte Boat Launch will be completed.

Responding to Ms. Whitewood's previous comment regarding Council's direction on the budget, Councillor Craig requested that if an issue arises from the motion, that it be brought to the awareness of Council so that it can be addressed.

Councillor Craig commented that he would like the new Splash Pad to be opened by June 1, 2016 and that he would like more feedback on the difference between state of good repair and good repair. He indicated that he would appreciate a list of facilities that need attention. Staff indicated that this would be provided.

Councillor Nicoll commented that the largest percentage of the population is the ageing population and that it is important to provide free services such as the Oval and the libraries as well as supporting healthy communities by providing opportunities for both youth and the elderly.

Responding to questions from Councillor Rankin, Mr. Anguish commented that the report regarding Blue Mountain Birch Cove is targeted to come in back in mid to late February and that he had previously brought a report to Council regarding the "queue" for dedicated but not developed parkland that he will locate and redistribute to Council.

Mayor Savage thanked staff for providing more services for less cost while at the same time managing to produce a balanced budget. He commented that he is excited about all the free activities available for residents of HRM and that it is important for recreation to provide an element of equality throughout communities.

Mr. Anguish commented that he appreciates hearing from members of the Committee of the Whole on the importance of signage in drawing attention to the assets and activities made available through Parks and Recreation.

Responding to questions and comments from Councillor Dalrymple, Mr. Anguish stated that he is optimistic with regards to accessing school gyms and that the Superintendent of the Halifax Regional

School Board (HRSB) has indicated that HRSB staff will work with HRM staff. He explained that centralized booking will follow best-practices for how it is utilized, but that staff would like it to include the multi-district facilities. He commented that HRM cannot provide grants to groups who unofficially “adopt” parks and that the best way for community groups to support smaller parks is to discuss their plans with staff before undertaking any projects.

Responding to comments from Councillor McCluskey, Mr. Anguish indicated that he would return with more information on the snowshoe loaning program and the location of HRM’s six splash pads and that the Khyber is not in this budget because there has not yet been clear direction from Council on the matter. He noted that, ideally, the report on the Khyber will be completed in time to include the Khyber in this year’s budgeting process.

Councillor Watts commented that she is in support of the review of horticultural services and that natural beauty encourages people to walk within their communities.

Responding to a question from Councillor Watts regarding cultural arts facilities, Ms. Denise Schofield, Manager of Programs and Support Services, explained that, as requested by Council, there will be a review of cultural spaces in order to take an inventory of what is available.

Responding to a question from Councillor Hendsbee, Mr. Anguish indicated that there is a draft list of playground replacements coming forward and that he will advise Council of that list.

In response to a question from Councillor Hendsbee regarding the Lake Echo Community Facility, Mr. Anguish indicated that he would provide Council with more information regarding lease arrangements and tax relief at a later date.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Councillor Adams, seconded by Deputy Mayor Whitman

THAT the Committee of the Whole request a staff report to assess the feasibility of establishing Graves Oakley as a permanent rugby facility; and

That staff consult with but not limited to, the local rugby community, present users, provincial rugby association, the local community, and university groups.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. HALIFAX PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The following was before the Committee of the Whole:

- A Staff recommendation report dated January 6, 2016 with attached presentation entitled 2016/17 Halifax Public Libraries Draft Budget & Business Plan

i) Presentation

Ms. Asa Kachan, Chief Librarian and CEO, Halifax Public Libraries provided a presentation on the 2016/17 Budget and Business Plan.

The Chair thanked Ms. Kachan for the presentation and her dedication.

ii) Public Submissions

The Chair called three times for speakers, there being none, he opened the floor for debate

iii) Debate

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Deputy Mayor Whitman

THAT the Committee of the Whole direct staff to proceed to prepare the 2016/2017 Halifax Public Libraries Budget and Business Plan as proposed in the accompanying presentation, incorporating additional direction provided by motion of Committee of the Whole for inclusion in the proposed HRM 16/17 Budget and Business Plan documents.

Councillor Mason commented on the importance of understanding libraries as democratic public spaces, not just book repositories and remarked that the new Halifax Central Library has had the positive economic and social effect of bringing visitors to HRM. He remarked that it is important to build on the success of the Central library and that a long term strategic plan for libraries will hopefully be coming this year.

Mayor Savage thanked Ms. Kachan for the presentation and commented on both the success of the Central Library and the important role played by all of HRM's libraries in creating a gathering place for community members of all ages. Responding to his question regarding gaps in the system, Ms. Kachan acknowledged that Eastern Passage would certainly constitute a gap.

Councillor McCluskey commented that she is concerned about the North Dartmouth Library and would like to see the three year performance report broken down for this facility. She also indicated that she would like a breakdown for the professional fees included in the Halifax Public Libraries Budget.

Councillor Craig thanked Ms. Kachan for the presentation and commented that the library in Sackville is thriving and provides an important place for community members to congregate.

Councillor Dalrymple commented that the residents of Musquodboit Valley are pleased to have a new room devoted to library services, as well as a new library staff person who is playing an important role in the lives of the children in the community.

Responding to a question from Deputy Mayor Whitman regarding the old Memorial Library, Mr. John Traves, acting Chief Administrative Officer, explained that the property will revert back to the province, the park in front will remain the property of HRM, and that it is currently HRM's responsibility to maintain the property prior to the upcoming transfer to the province.

Responding to a question from Councillor Hendsbee regarding the potential for a nominal rental fee for media, with the rationale being that it would help support the business of small video rental stores, Ms. Kachan explained that providing a completely free service is at the heart of the library. In response to a request from Councillor Hendsbee, she also agreed to provide background regarding the destinations of the books that are lent out through the mail.

Responding to a question from Councillor Nicoll regarding community outreach in the Lake Loon and Cherrybrook communities, Ms. Kachan indicated that the collection development in these communities reflects the interests of community members and that children's picture books are obtained with the goal of providing illustrations that can be identified with by community members. Additionally, these communities provide reading programs within the local daycares.

Responding to a question from Councillor Watts, Ms. Kachan indicated that community engagement will be an ongoing initiative.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:56 p. m.

Kevin Arjoon
Municipal Clerk