

A F T E R N O O N S E S S I O N

4.10 o'clock

Council Chamber, City Hall
June 4, 1918

An informal meeting of the City Council was held this afternoon at the above named hour; Present His Worship the Mayor, Controllers Finlay, Hines, Murphy and Taylor, Aldermen McNab, H.S.Colwell, Gillis R.B.Colwell, Kelly, Foley, Hart, Day, Guildford, Godwin and Parker, and a large number of representative citizens-

The Council was summoned to meet the members of the Halifax Relief Commission.

Mayor Hawkins- The Council was called together, as well as the Municipality of Dartmouth, at Mr. Rogers' instance. The City Council Advisory Committee are unfamiliar with the statement that the Commission is prepared to give us. I understand they have a statement prepared regarding their intentions re the work in the devastated area. I will call upon the Commissioner without any further remarks-

T.S.Rogers - I am afraid the Mayor knows more of the contents of the statement than he has just said. The Commission has, according to its promise, kept as closely as it could, in touch with the Mayor and Committee from the Council, but necessarily, in the progress of great undertakings such as this, it was quite impossible to discuss in full, details of matters of this sort until they are crystalized into some kind of shape. I thought it better to commit what I have to writing, and copies will be handed to the members. I shall read it now, so that you will be familiar with it, and may discuss it at this meeting.

OUTLINE OF STATEMENT OF T.S.ROGERS
K.C. CHAIRMAN HALIFAX RELIEF COMMISSION
as to policy of restoration made before City Council of Halifax and Town Council of Dartmouth and other public bodies, June 4, 1918

1. For many reasons beyond the control of the Commission, a general statement of its policy as to rebuilding the destroyed houses and the restoration of the affected district structurally has had to be deferred until the present moment. The Commission was delayed for many weeks awaiting settlement of its powers by the legislature; it then had to submit its proposals to the Federal Government, which Government along with the Imperial Government made the large grants enabling a modern and progressive development possible; it had to await the reports and advice of its architects and engineers, the making of important contracts for essential reconstruction materials, and it felt bound, as far as it reasonably could, to ascertain the individual wishes of the home owners likely to be affected by its proposals. These matters though not fully overtaken have been sufficiently grappled with to enable us to take the public into our full confidence to-day. The Mayor has been conferred with on several occasions, and the Board of Control has been made aware of the main outlines of our policies, and the Commission has every reason to

- hope for the widest cooperation with us of the civic and other authorities concerned as well as the public generally.
2. Under the provisions of the Act of legislature recently passed, the Commission has defined the devastated district to include that portion of the City bounded westerly by Robie Street and Longard Road, easterly by Campbell Road, northerly by Leeds Street (running past the Rockhead property) and southerly by the Wellington Barracks property and Russel Street extension. The area containing about three hundred and twenty-five acres.
 3. That part of this district lying between North Creighton Street on the west and Campbell Road on the east is to be more particularly subject to the Commission's regulations as to rebuilding. This portion includes the Richmond district from Russell Street north and both sides of Gottingen Street from East Young Street north. It is the Commission's ambition to make this district one of the best residential portions of the City for persons of moderate means.
 4. The Commission has acquired the Fort Needham property containing about eight and a half acres, the Blackader property to the north, containing over three acres, and is proceeding to expropriate the large vacant lot south of Fort Needham, and the six blocks on Gottingen Street north of Fort Needham extending to Duffus Street and eastwardly on this frontage practically to Albert Street. On the west side of Gottingen Street it is expropriating all the blocks lying between North Creighton Street and Gottingen Street and extending from East Young Street to Cabot Street. The owners in the expropriated territory have so far as possible, been personally interviewed and it is felt that comparatively few within these areas will be unduly disturbed. Due compensation will of course be made for the land, the market value of which had been well established and has been further tested by a number of purchases on behalf of the Commission. If the house owners within this district desire to rebuild they will be promptly interviewed and their individual wishes met so far as is consistent with the Commission's general plan of development.
 5. Albert Street will be reached from Campbell Road by an easy gradient either through the military property (negotiations as to which are proceeding) or from a point on Campbell Road at the north-east corner of the military property. Albert Street will be widened so as to become a leading thoroughfare, and at or about Richmond Street will by an easy grade ascent across Acadia Street to Gottingen Street. There will also be a diagonal street running from Campbell Road following an easy gradient and passing upon or near the Richmond School property and thence across Acadia Square and reaching Gottingen Street at the northern base of Fort Needham. Pending the exact location of these streets, on which engineers have been working for some weeks, permits for the restoration of buildings on the few sites likely to be affected will not be issued. At the point where these two streets converge, reservations will be made for public buildings such as schools and churches, and the centralized development at this point will be worthy of the best art of the Commission's engineers and architects.
 6. The Fort Needham property, will, it is hoped, in a large part be devoted to park purposes, though considerable land facing new streets which following natural contours will encircle its base, will be made available for building

purposes. The City no doubt will place in the hands of the Commission the lands known as Mulgrave Park, Acadia Square and other City property in that vicinity in exchange for other public property devoted to streets and parks. The Commission's work in this respect is City work, and no differences are anticipated and even so they must prove easy of adjustment. The opportunity of developing the Fort Needham and surrounding property is unique. The Commission trusts that this eminence will be retained on behalf of the public of Halifax as a memorial to those who lost their lives in the disaster, and to the courage, fortitude and patience of the sufferers who survived.

7. The Commission will require that all buildings lying between Campbell Road on the east and North Creighton St. on the west and Duffus St. on the north and Russell St. on the south, a district to be known as the "restricted area" shall be of first class or fireproof construction, and in this area, though as far as possible individual preferences will be respected, the Commission will insist on such rules and regulations as will lead to the development of the slope on both sides in accordance with its plans. Those who desire to rebuild have been conferred with for some time past and those who do not wish to rebuild will be dealt with on a reasonable basis. If they desire to rebuild on particular lots required for other purposes, exchanges will be arranged for or decisions may be postponed pending the further development of the Commission's plans. Opportunities of acquiring completed houses will be open to the former house owners.
8. The lands on the west side of Gottingen St. will be developed by the construction of a large number of houses of the lower cost type. Those houses can be acquired by former house owners in that district against the appraised value of their former holdings. Other purchasers affected by the disaster can acquire them on the instalment plan of payment, and others will be let at reasonable rentals. All owners who cannot be provided with new houses during this season will have the first opportunity of occupying until next season, the houses which will be erected by the Commission for letting.
9. It is hoped that Russell, Kaye, East Young, Union and Albert Streets, in fact the whole Richmond slope, will be developed into a most desirable residential district. Home owners in this district will be got in touch with as quickly as possible, and provisions will be made it is hoped to their general satisfaction, for rebuilding. The architects have completed many designs for housing and have under preparation many more and will without delay let contracts not only for construction of the individual houses but also a large number of tenements. The number will only be limited by the ability to obtain contractors to undertake the work.
10. The Commission is prepared to set aside out of the capital sum of the Pension Fund the sum of one million dollars or more to be devoted to the building of modern tenements and small ownership housing, the income from which will be devoted to the payment of pensions established for the victims of the disaster. The Commission is likewise prepared to expend a sum as large as may be necessary possibly another million dollars, in restoring the damaged houses of individual owners. Due allowance will be made for the fact that homes cannot be restored for the former market or appraised value, and the disposition for the Commission will be to aid its housing problem those

Who would otherwise suffer from the fact that their property cannot be restored for the sums awarded. Each of these cases must be dealt with on its merits, and greater proportionate consideration must be afforded to those whose houses were of low cost type.

11. The building material for reconstruction in the specially restricted area will be of pressed concrete known as hydro-stone. This material is manufactured under pressure of seventy thousand pounds, and it must not be confused with the concrete blocks now used to some extent in Halifax. The blocks can be faced in the process of manufacture so as to produce variety of effect.. Stucco will also be made use of and it is hoped that brick will also to some extent for the sake of variety, be one of the materials used.
12. ~~The~~ In that portion of the devastated district not included in the specially restricted area, the Commission cannot undertake to control building operations except in accordance with the City laws as heretofore enforced. If however the City Council is of the opinion that there should be further restrictions, the Commission will be glad to meet them in conference and come to a conclusion which will be in the general best interests. Many of these houses not in the ~~restricted~~ restricted district are under repair and it would be quite impossible to enforce such a development as is proposed in regard to the specially restricted area.
13. The same remarks apply to the Town of Dartmouth and outlying sections, the reconstruction of which areas will continue to be largely of wood, but the Commission will as far as possible endeavor by its advice and counsel to encourage every reasonable improvement in all building operations undertaken. Steps are on the way towards the rebuilding of many wooden houses throughout the whole district.
14. A contract has been awarded to the Nova Scotia Construction Company for the manufacture of the hydrostone in large quantities at Eastern Passage. The experts have pronounced the gravel and sand at that point as of the highest quality. The necessary machinery is on the way and when the work once begins, construction will proceed with great rapidity. Arrangements are quickly developing for the building of the houses not within the restricted area.
15. The architects are the well known firm of Messrs. Ross and McDonald of Montreal, who have been studying the problem on behalf of the Commission for many weeks past. The street changes and general planning development are proceeding under the advice of Thomas Adams of the Commission of Conservation, Ottawa, who has had an assistant on the ground for some time. The Commission has had the continued aid every since its appointment, of Mr. H. W. Johnston, C.E., Asst. City Engineer, whose cooperation has been of the greatest value. His advice has been freely adopted in the replanning of the devastated area.
16. The new manager of the Reconstruction Department who will continue the important work of repair and will cooperate with the architects and engineers in the Commission's housing plan, is Mr. Geo. H. Archibald, a native of Nova Scotia although a resident of Toronto and a well known engineer and contractor in that City. He rendered

valuable voluntary services to the City for weeks following the disaster and the Commission feels it has done well to secure his services at the present time. Col. Low, after six months of the most arduous work carried on under great difficulties and without remuneration, feels compelled to retire in order to personally supervise the many large contracts which have recently been awarded to his firm.

17. The work of the Commission in other departments is making due progress, but on this occasion it is not intended to make more than a passing reference to the work of the Rehabilitation Department under the competent leadership of Dr. Cutton and his coadjutors Miss Wisdom and Miss Haliburton. The work is thoroughly organized and the dependents and sufferers are receiving admirable attention at the hands of most capable departmental heads and industrious assistants.

18. The Commission once more appeals to a considerate public for cooperation in its further tasks and more especially in the great work of rebuilding the ruined housing. The efforts of the Commission in dealing individually with so many cases can only succeed when the people affected realize that there is a sincere desire on the part of the Commission to help them out of their difficulties, and any person, whether occupying a public position or not, who by word or act does anything that tends to create in the minds of those affected by the disaster a feeling of unsettlement and dissatisfaction, hampers the Commission in its work and injures the sufferers and the Community at large. The Commission therefore appeals hopefully for united and sympathetic support.

T.S.Rogers-

I would like to add a word or two to this, which may be of interest to you. That portion of the public not closely in touch with the work of the Commission, can hardly have any realization of what has to be undertaken by your commissioners during the last few months. It is interesting to know that at the first of this month we had considered no less than 13193 claims for loss of personal effects and property, and there are 6000 yet to be considered, and adding to those, claims of small traders, etc., the total to-day is about 13838 which have been considered, the great majority of which have been settled. We have disbursed on this account the sum of over two million dollars. Our appraisal board has appraised to date over 750 damaged properties and destroyed houses. There are on the list for repairs at this very hour, 3500 houses. A great many of them are in process of repair to a greater or less extent, so you can realize what this involves in the way of work, particularly in these difficult times when labor is so scarce and so high and materials likewise. Cash disbursements up to the present time have been upwards of five millions. In the Pension Board not less than 577 pensions have been dealt with, involving a capital sum of \$1,750,000. This does not include the cases of disability which are still under Dr. Cutton, his staff and our medical board.

Mayor Hawkins- From this you will get some idea of the magnitude of the undertaking of the Relief Commission. In my position I am not supposed to discuss any question, but the meeting is open for discussion of questions, not only by the Council itself, but any of the gentlemen in the audience.

Ald. Godwin- There is a question I would like to ask- If the Appraisal Board appraise a property for \$3000 and the Commission build a house of the same kind which would at this date cost say \$5000, do they take a \$2000 mortgage on it?

T.S.Rogers - Not without the consent of the owner. We provide a house worth \$3000 at least. It may cost us more than \$3000, but each of those cases must be dealt with individually. It is impossible to lay down any principle which can bind us in every particular case. A man may have a house valued at \$1700, which would cost him at least \$2500 to rebuild. We are not going to ask him to provide the difference. You can understand it would be impossible to lay down a principle that is applicable to all such cases. The aim of the Commission is to be as fair as it possibly can, and that is as far as we can to at the present time.

Ald. Godwin- The values the appraisal board have set on the properties have been much lower than what the properties could be rebuilt for. The people in the North end want to know if they have to take the amount awarded or if they will get their property rebuilt. They are prepared to carry a mortgage if they previously had one, if they get the same building, but if they had no mortgage they do not want to carry one.

T.S.Rogers- In some cases it has been suggested by the property owners themselves that we build them a better house and they give us the difference, and we have always gladly said we would. As to whether or not we would put a bathroom and heating apparatus in houses where there was nothing of this kind before, we will encourage any man to have ordinary plumbing and heating and let him pay for it, but we will not insist upon it or urge it unduly.

Ald. Parker- There are a number of people in the North end at the present time who have small houses there without hot water heating or plumbing. Those people when they go to rebuild will be glad to pay the difference to have a bathroom with hot and cold water. They are asking for it. There are also a number of people who have gone to the trouble to have plans prepared. Will those plans be considered? You may have to re-arrange them and have perhaps a different design on the outside, but I have been asked if you will consider those plans.

T.S.Rogers- The answer is that we have already done so in a number of instances. The question of good taste has two sides to it, and one of them is the individual side. The Commission hesitates to interfere with individual taste. Of course individual taste at times is peculiar, and if you are going to improve your City, individual taste must be subject to the approval of our architects. We will endeavour as far as possible to meet the views of the people in this regard. A number of plans submitted have been accepted in effect.

Mayor Hawkins- What is your intention about building on streets where there is no water or sewer?

T.S.Rogers- We will have to confer with the City Council on that subject. It may be necessary to have some sewer and water extensions made, and it is only fair that in those streets the cost of the work should be charged against the properties in the usual way. We have not thought it necessary to deal with it as it is a matter of adjustment.

Cont. Murphy- It is to be assumed that within the restricted area there are lots where the houses would be assessed anywhere from \$1000 to \$1500. Assuming the class of structure it is proposed to construct, the lowest price they could put up a house there for, would be from \$2800 to \$3000. I understand from Mr. Rogers explanation that each house will be treated on its merits, but there must be some general principle in dealing with such cases. What is the policy to be when a man says he is not prepared to carry a mortgage; what option he has in retaining his lot within that restricted area.

T.S.Rogers - Of course it is quite impossible to pledge the Commission as to what its policy will be in any particular case. In fact, I am unable to say what we would do in an extraordinary case of this kind. If we meet cases like that we shall deal with them all on the same basis. They will have something better than they had. If a man says he is not prepared to accept a house such as we propose, we will do our best to satisfy him, but if he is within the restricted area, he must relinquish what he wants, for the general good, provided he will not accept a cash payment.

Ald. Kelly - You are not limiting the value of the houses in the restricted area? Provided the property is fireproof, he will not be compelled to pay for an expensive house?

T.S.Rogers- Undoubtedly - there will be many houses attractive in appearance and with modern conveniences, at small cost.

Ald. Parker- In having these matters arranged, would it be possible to meet the people in the district, instead of requesting them to come down to the office? If you can do that, it is going to facilitate matters wonderfully. If you could send out capable men and meet the people at their holdings.

T.S.Rogers- We have been doing so for six weeks. We were very glad to endeavor to take the hint. It has been impossible up to this date to disclose our plans. Now that our plans are known, we shall redouble our efforts to get in touch with the people. Of course there is a great deal of anxiety but our efforts to defer to these people have been met ~~with~~ very well indeed. The exact location of streets has not been fixed for obvious reasons and therefore it may not be practicable to deal with all those cases right away, but within ten days those street lines will be fixed.

Mayor Hawkins- There are numbers of people who own houses in the North end that were comfortable and were their homes - some of them had modern conveniences. They have gone to contractors and asked them what it would cost to put back their houses. Say the house originally cost \$2000 - they get a figure nearer \$4000, and they get an offer from the appraisal board for house and land, less than what the house cost them. The appraisal board do not seem to know the house they have appraised. Will you build the house for him and give it back to him with no burden on it?

T.S.Rogers- We will do the best we can under the circumstances. Of course the contractors at the present time are filled up with work and naturally their prices will be high. We have had no difficulty in dealing with any cases that have come to us.

Ald. Kelly- Do you know the average increase of the appraisal

value over the assessed value?

T.S.Rogers- I should think personal property about four times the assessment and real estate over double.

Rod Macdonald- Have you, up to this, been able to arrive at a correct estimate of the loss? Are you in a position to say what the losses amounted to and what sum you have in hand to meet those losses - what amount you intend to put on improvements and what fund the general improvements to the City will be provided from- will it be provided out of the fund voted for the sufferers?

T.S.Rogers- I wish I could answer Mr. Macdonald's question, but it will not be known until the appraisal board completes its work. Our estimates and first report to the Federal authorities were ~~passed~~ based on a hurried examination of all properties in the City and Dartmouth extending over a period of two weeks. Necessarily there could be no detailed appraisement of the damage caused. These details are now being dealt with by the appraisal board and reconstruction committee and until they are completed, it will be impossible for us to say what the damage has been. We are also eliminating at present the larger companies and the wealthier classes who are quite able to take care of themselves, so that it may be two or three years before the damages will be complete. Our administration of the fund is approved by those who granted the fund. The funds are those of the British and Federal governments and our appraisements have been submitted to them and have their approval. There is no engineer, citizen or architect who has examined that site and realizes what ought to be done to improve it, who has not concurred with the suggestions that have been submitted to this meeting to-day.

Meeting adjourned, 5.20