



**COMMUNITY DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
May 8, 2019**

**PRESENT:** Fred Morley, Chair  
Gaynor Watson-Creed, Vice Chair  
Eric Burchill  
Christopher Daly  
William Book  
Reg Manzer  
Jenna Khoury-Hanna  
Councillor Sam Austin  
Councillor Lindell Smith  
Councillor Waye Mason  
Councillor Shawn Cleary

**REGRETS:** Dale Godsoe  
Rima Thomeh  
Councillor Richard Zurawski

**STAFF:** Eric Lucic, Manager of Regional Planning  
Kasia Tota, Principal Planner  
Luc Ouellet, Planner III  
Justin Preece, Planner II  
Sherryl Murphy, Deputy Clerk

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

*The agenda, reports, supporting documents, and information items circulated are online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca).*

**These minutes have received Administrative Approval in the interest of transparency**

*The meeting was called to order at 11:45 a.m. and the Committee adjourned at 12:10 p.m.*

## **1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order at the Harbour East Marine Drive Meeting Room, 40 Alderney Drive, Dartmouth

## **2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – NONE**

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

The agenda was accepted as distributed.

## **4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES – NONE**

## **5. CALL FOR DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS – NONE**

## **6. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – NONE**

## **7. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS**

Correspondence has been received regarding 8.1 and distributed to the Committee.

## **8. REPORTS/DISCUSSION**

### **8.1 Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law (Package A) – continued from April 10, 2019**

The following was before the Committee:

- A staff report with attachments dated April 3, 2019
- Memo from Fred Morley, Chair, Proposed Additions to Motion
- An e-mail from the UDI Center Plan Committee dated May 7, 2019

Fred Morley noted that an e-mail had been received from the UDI Center Plan Committee.

Morley went on to introduce the proposed additions to the motion and indicated that these matters could go forward in the form of a memo to the Community Planning and Economic Development Committee.

**MOVED by Christopher Daly, seconded by Eric Burchill that the contents of the memo be forwarded to the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee as part of the staff recommendation. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**MOVED by Councillor Austin, seconded by Gaynor Watson- Creed:**

**That the Community Design Advisory Committee recommend that the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council:**

- 1. Give First Reading and schedule a public hearing to consider the Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy, and the Regional Centre Land Use By-law, as contained in Attachments A and B of the April 3, 2019 staff report.**
- 2. Give First Reading and schedule a public hearing to consider the proposed amendments to the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, the Regional Subdivision By-law, the Dartmouth Municipal Planning Strategy, the Dartmouth Land Use By-law, the Downtown Dartmouth Municipal Planning Strategy, the Downtown Dartmouth Land Use By-law, the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy, and the Halifax Peninsula Land Use By-law, as contained in Attachments C to K of the April 3, 2019 staff report.**
- 3. Adopt the Regional Centre Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy, and the Regional Centre Land Use By-law as contained in Attachments A and B of the April 3, 2019 staff report.**

4. Adopt the proposed amendments to the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, the Regional Subdivision By-law, the Dartmouth Municipal Planning Strategy, the Dartmouth Land Use By-law, the Downtown Dartmouth Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy, the Downtown Dartmouth Land Use By-law, the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy, and the Halifax Peninsula Land Use By-law, as contained in Attachments C to K of the April 3, 2019 staff report.

AND

5. That Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee (CPED) and Halifax Regional Council consider the following observations and recommendations as they review the Centre Plan proposal:
  - The Regional Plan is arguably our best legacy document to reflect Halifax's long-term planning and growth priorities. The committee asks CPED to keep in mind the Regional Plan's vision and its first principle as it considers the Centre Plan.
    - a. Regional Plan Vision: *"HRM's vision for the future is to enhance our quality of life by fostering the growth of healthy and vibrant communities, a strong and diverse economy, and sustainable environment."*
    - b. Regional Plan First Principle *This plan provides a framework which leads to predictable, fair, cost-effective and timely decision making."*
  - The Centre Plan Package A and related documents are a plan to enhance the concentration of population in the regional centre and not a comprehensive growth plan. Without the incorporation Package B which will include land use guidance for treatment of economic development lands, institutional lands, parks and open space, neighbourhood planning and placemaking and other measures', the Centre Plan is not complete. The committee recommends that the Package B process be completed quickly and that the approval process be less complicated and much shorter than the one imposed in the final stages of Package A signoff. Nevertheless, the committee feels that completion of Package B should not delay approval of Package A.
  - In some cases, large lot developments would benefit from a development agreement approach. The committee recommends that this flexibility be put back into the language of the Plan. The development agreement option on large lots is viewed as a "must do" by the Committee.
  - The use of the term Density Bonusing has evolved since it was introduced to the committee. Initially, the concept reflected a value a developer needed to apply to affordable housing in a building if they added height beyond a pre-bonus height and below the height maximum. The current version of the planned bonus zoning charges a fee on any structure built in the regional centre over 2,000 square meters regardless of height or floor area ratios. 60% of that fee will be applied to an affordable housing fund. The committee feels the current approach is superior to the initial proposal, but that consideration must be given to applying the measure to all development in HRM. Also, the committee suggests that the municipality contribute an amount of incremental property tax equivalent to private sector contributions under bonus zoning to an affordable housing fund. Some committee members have expressed concerns that placing new fees on all development in the regional centre will reduce affordability as costs are passed on to renters and buyers of new properties. Other committee members feel that the fees are acceptable because they will be applied to newer – higher cost rentals only.
  - In most communities that have centre plans, they are accompanied by infrastructure plans that commit the municipality to the spending needed for the successful implementation of that centre plan. Halifax's proposed Centre Plan has no such infrastructure spending commitments, only recommendations to consider future spending. The committee recognizes that this shortfall is the result of restrictions imposed by the municipal charter. Nevertheless, the committee views the lack of an infrastructure plan as a serious limitation that that will hamper the effective implementation of Halifax's Centre Plan.

- The committee recognizes that the design manual that was part of the previous draft has been replaced by a series of comprehensive new bylaw proposals. However, in the likely event some future development may incorporate great design but violate the letter of relevant bylaws, some additional guidance to staff would be useful. The committee recommends that the criteria for allowable variations be expanded to accommodate changes recognized as positive and that a design manual or similar document be incorporated into the final Plan with that manual to be used as the basis for evaluation and variations from bylaws.
- The economic development section of Package A is weak despite attempts by the committee to boost content. The committee expects that Package B will require a stronger articulation of economic development principles to make the overall Plan consistent with the Economic Strategy and the vision of the Regional Plan. For example:
  - The economic development section of Package A relies heavily on light commercial activity and retail as economic drivers of the regional centre. This perspective understates the impact of the real drivers of Halifax's economy including financial services, universities, health sciences, transportation and logistics, manufacturing, exporting industries and government services.
  - Recent trends suggest a hollowing out of the government/business employment and service base of the regional centre in favour of suburban business park locations. There are no measures indicated in the Plan for retention and expansion of employment and needed services in the regional centre.
- It is the view of the committee that Package A should communicate how the Centre Plan represents a substantial and measurable improvement over previous development approval processes used in the regional centre. The new Plan should clearly articulate how it is consistent with the first principle of the Regional Plan. The committee recommends that this information be provided as part of the presentation to CPED and Council.
- The governance model for approval and appeal of Regional Centre projects is a crucial element of the Plan's successful implementation. In deciding on the appropriate governance model, CPED and Council must balance local input, with the Regional Centre's role in driving citywide economic growth. The committee is of mixed opinion on the role of local committees vs. regional council.
- The committee feels that policy language is important. However, if the language is so vague that Council is not obliged even consider a policy it has no place in the Plan. This is too low a bar. The committee recommends that any statement of "may consider" should be replaced by "will consider." The committee further recommends that if this language cannot be changed, any statements containing "may consider" should be removed from the final Plan.
- Unlike plans from other jurisdictions reviewed by members of the committee, the Plan in its current form does not establish protection for economic development uses, a financial/office district, suitable protection of marine industry, protection of industrial lands, protection of university lands, protection of health sciences lands, etc. The committee recommends that this be strongly considered in Package B to make the overall Centre Plan consistent with the economic vision of the Regional Plan.
- Connections between critical documents such as the development plan, the transportation plan, etc. are suggested but not mandated. The committee recommends that business plans of various departments be required to show linkage to the Centre Plan.
- The Committee views the Keesmaat Report (attached) as a very relevant and widely supported review of the Centre Plan process and measures. The committee feels that critical concerns identified in that Report are not adequately addressed. The committee recommends that CPED request further comments on the Keesmaat Report from staff and industry sponsors as part of their deliberations. The committee wishes to highlight the following Keesmaat recommendations:
  - Collaboration with other levels of government. While there are suggestions of the need for cooperation with other levels of government, it is observed that

government at all levels have been shifting services and employment out of the regional centre in recent years. The Plan in its present form does not address this issue.

- The Plan is mostly silent on the obligations of the public sector. The language of the Plan (may and may consider) does not commit Council to act in ways that are complementary or equivalent to the requirements imposed on the private sector.
- Level the playing field between suburban and urban development by providing more resources to the Regional Centre. Bonus Zoning seems to favour suburban development while potentially making development costs in the regional centre more expensive.
- Develop a comprehensive, data-driven analysis of economic development opportunities. The Plan's description and understanding of economic development issues and drivers are incomplete

**MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Wednesday, May 22, 2019**

The Committee agreed that a meeting on Wednesday, May 22, 2019 would be unnecessary and requested that staff cancel the meeting.

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

Sherrill Murphy  
Deputy Clerk