



**HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES
February 3, 2016**

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

REGRETS: Councillor Linda Mosher

STAFF:
Ms. Amanda Whitewood, Director, Finance and ICT
Ms. Karen Brown, Acting Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Sherryl Murphy, Deputy Clerk
Mr. Liam MacSween, 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_2016-02-03_live.mp4.html

The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to Council are available online: <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/160203cow-agenda.php>

The meeting was called to order at 9:33 a.m., and recessed at 11:10 a.m. Council reconvened at 11:15 a.m. and adjourned at 12:02 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Savage called the meeting to order in Council Chambers, 3rd Floor City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – NONE

Councillor Outhit suggested that Items number 4 and 5 be moved up on the agenda as the first order of business. With the consensus of Committee of the Whole this change was agreed to.

3. Halifax Regional Police

This matter was addressed later in the meeting, please see page 5.

Ms. Whitewood left her seat to present with Mr. Mike Labrecque, Deputy CAO, assuming her seat.

4. Fiscal and Consolidated Accounts

The following documentation was before Committee of the Whole:

- A staff recommendation report dated January 25, 2016
- A staff presentation dated February 3, 2016
- A handout regarding Revised Attachment A to the staff report dated January 25, 2016
- A handout regarding the 16/17 COW Budget Consultation Parking Lot Items dated February 3, 2016

i) Presentation

Ms. Amanda Whitewood, Chief Financial Officer provided introductory remarks and invited Mr. Bruce Fisher, Manager of Financial Policy Planning to provide a presentation with respect to Fiscal and Consolidated Accounts.

Mayor Savage thanked Ms. Whitewood and Mr. Fisher for their presentation.

5. Review of Debt Strategy

The following documentation was before Committee of the Whole:

- A staff recommendation report dated January 25, 2016

i) Presentation

Ms. Amanda Whitewood, Chief Financial Officer and Mr. Bruce Fisher, Manager of Financial Planning gave a presentation with respect to the review of the Debt Strategy.

Mayor Savage thanked Ms. Whitewood and Mr. Fisher for their presentation.

ii) Public Submission Review of Debt Strategy and Fiscal and Consolidated Accounts

Mayor Savage called three times for members of the public to address Committee of the Whole with respect to the Review of the Debt Strategy and Fiscal and Consolidated Accounts. There were no speakers present.

iii) Debate Review of Debt Strategy and Fiscal and Consolidated Accounts

Mayor Savage requested questions of clarification from members of Committee of the Whole.

MOVED by Councillor Rankin, seconded by Councillor Nicoll

THAT Committee of the Whole

- 1. Direct staff to proceed to prepare the 2016/2017 Fiscal and Consolidated Accounts Budget 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.**

It is further recommended that Budget Committee of the Whole recommends that Halifax Regional Council:

- 2. Confirm that the 2016-17 target for Tax Supported Debt continue to be based on a 3% decline in the debt per home;**
- 3. Create a business case for Strategic Infrastructure Reserve, with an annual budget of \$10m, whose purpose includes repaying principle and interest and leveraging cost-shared infrastructure programs; and,**
- 4. Confirm that, final review pending, the 2016-17 average tax bill is to remain at same amount as in 2015-16**

In response to a follow up question from Councillor Rankin pertaining to solid waste resources Mr. John Traves, Acting Chief Administrative Officer advised that operating agreement at the Otter Lake Landfill is preceded by two conditions; the issuance of a transfer station permit, and the addition of the operator on the operating permit. He advised that staff does not believe that the two conditions will be a significant challenge, but advised that if it does not come to pass, staff will need to deal with a \$5.7 million budget pressure in the next years budget. He advised that staff is quite comfortable with budgeting on this basis.

Councillor McCluskey requested further information on the criteria utilized by staff when assessing property taxes for class "A" office buildings. Mr. Fisher advised that cross jurisdictional data is used by staff to determine assessments for office space in HRM.

In response to a question from Councillor Adams, Mr. Fisher advised that HRM is unable to pay down debt early as the municipality would incur penalties such as higher interest rates to do so.

In response to a question from Councillor Hendsbee, Mr. Fisher advised that the Harbor Solutions project was not supported by tax debt but rather paid for by water users.

Councillor Watts requested further information with respect to the business case for strategic infrastructure reserve.

Mr. Fisher advised that the potential reserve is intended as an aspirational infrastructure program. He advised that staff is recommending that reserve would be used specifically to pay off principle and interest balances of leveraged amounts for potential large scale infrastructure projects. He advised that the motion for Council to consider at the current time is to direct staff to create a business case to create the proposed reserve. He noted that the most critical part of the business case is the overall objective of the reserve which will determine the rationale for how the funds will be used.

Councillor Karsten noted that further information respecting transfer payments to the provincial government should be included in budget presentation when comparing average assessments with other jurisdictions.

Councillor Craig suggested the following amendment:

MOVED by Councillor Craig, seconded by Councillor Hendsbee,

THAT Halifax Regional Council, as part of the ongoing budget process undertaken in 2017-2018 and the following years, a much broader view that looks at the underlying fiscal and economic assumptions and critical key decisions such as; the level of the overall capital budget, debt, tax levels, reserves and the capacity to undertake service enhancements.

Councillor Craig advised that the proposed amendment will assist in planning for the 2017-18 budget process and will provide council with a better picture of the fiscal and economic assumptions earlier in the process for the next year.

MOTION TO AMEND PUT AND PASSED.

The motion before Council now reads:

MOVED by Councillor Rankin, seconded by Councillor Nicoll

THAT Committee of the Whole

- 1. Direct staff to proceed to prepare the 2016/2017 Fiscal and Consolidated Accounts Budget 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.**

It is further recommended that Budget Committee of the Whole recommends that Halifax Regional Council:

- 2. Confirm that the 2016-17 target for Tax Supported Debt continue to be based on a 3% decline in the debt per home;**
- 3. Create a business case for Strategic Infrastructure Reserve, with an annual budget of \$10m, whose purpose includes repaying principle and interest and leveraging cost-shared infrastructure programs; and,**
- 4. Confirm that, final review pending, the 2016-17 average tax bill is to remain at same amount as in 2015-16.**
- 5. As part of the ongoing budget process undertake in 2017-2018 and the following years, a much broader view that looks at the underlying fiscal and economic assumptions and critical key decisions such as; the level of the overall capital budget, debt, tax levels, reserves and the capacity to undertake service enhancements**

AMENDED MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

5. Review of Debt Strategy

This matter was dealt with concurrently with Item No. 4 - Fiscal and Consolidated Accounts. Please see pages 2-4.

3. Halifax Regional Police

The following documentation was before Committee of the Whole:

- A recommendation report from the Board of Police Commissioners dated February 3, 2016 with attached staff presentation dated February 3, 2016

i) **Presentation**

Commissioner Russell Walker, Chair of the Board of Police Commissioners introduced Chief Jean-Michel Blais, Halifax Regional Police who provided a presentation with respect to the Proposed 2016/17 Halifax Regional Police Budget and Business Plan.

Mayor Savage thanked Chief Blais and Commissioner Walker for their presentation.

ii) **Public Submission**

Mayor Savage called three times for members of the public to address Council on the proposed 2016/17 Halifax Regional Police Budget and Business Plan. There were no speakers present.

iii) **Debate**

Mayor Savage requested questions of clarification from members of Committee of the Whole with respect to the proposed 2016/17 Halifax Regional Police Budget and Business Plan.

MOVED by Councillor Adams, seconded by Councillor Craig

THAT Committee of the Whole direct staff to proceed to prepare the 2016/2017 Halifax Regional Police 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 Adams noted that the budget was before the Police Commission at least three times before it has come to Council. He advised that the Chief and HRP staff had put forward a great deal of work in preparing the budget.

In response to a question from Councillor McCluskey, Chief Blais advised that HRP has a working group which is reviewing the issue of body worn cameras and noted that a report to the Board of Police Commissioners will likely be ready by the summer which will include a recommendation from HRP on whether or not to proceed with their implementation.

Councillor Watts requested further information with respect to the recruitment and retention of crossing guards. Chief Blais noted provisions in the budget to hire permanent employees to supervise crossing guard programs. He advised that many individuals who work as crossing guards do so on a part time basis and commented that there have been challenges in the past with respect to retention. He noted his hopes that permanent employees will be able to find consistencies within the hiring practices. Chief Blais provided further information with respect to victim support services, and advised that a new initiative on human trafficking will be announced in the coming days.

In response to a question from Councillor Karsten, Chief Blais advised that the legislative framework for the usage of red light cameras is under the jurisdiction of the province. He noted that the implementation of the technology would be decision of Council.

Councillor Nicoll inquired if HRP staff plans on reviewing crosswalk staffing.

Chief Blais advised that HRP staff have undertaken a thorough review of crosswalk staffing levels two years ago. He advised that a great deal of data mining had been placed in the current staffing model and advised that it is working effectively.

In response to a follow up question from Councillor Nicoll, Chief Blais clarified that HRP still has school liaison officers which have a presence in HRM schools. He advised that that one of HRP's seconded

positions within the Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB) was no longer required from HRSB which is reflected in the budget.

In response to a question from Councillor Craig, Chief Blais noted that the HRP budget does not include the funding from the municipality to pay for the policing services provided by the RCMP.

In response to a question from Councillor McCluskey, Chief Blais noted several initiatives with respect to dealing with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder amongst HRP staff such as the Road to Mental Readiness Training program. In addition to this, he noted that HRP has instituted a wellness committee and commented on collaborative activities with his counterparts in the RCMP in this regard.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Mayor Savage thanked Ms. Amanda Whitewood and Finance staff for the work which had been undertaken in bringing the budget to Committee of the Whole. He advised that an additional Committee of the Whole meeting will be scheduled to deal with Parking Lot Items from the overall budget process.

6. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:02 p.m.

Kevin Arjoon
Municipal Clerk