



**BUDGET COMMITTEE  
(STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ON BUDGET)  
SPECIAL MEETING  
MINUTES  
January 20, 2021**

PRESENT:                   Councillor       Paul Russell, Chair  
                                  Mayor            Mike Savage  
                                  Deputy Mayor   Tim Outhit  
                                  Councillors:   Cathy Deagle Gammon  
  David Hendsbee  
  Becky Kent  
  Trish Purdy  
  Sam Austin  
  Tony Mancini  
  Waye Mason  
  Lindell Smith  
  Shawn Cleary  
  Kathryn Morse  
  Patty Cuttell  
  Iona Stoddard  
  Pam Lovelace  
  Lisa Blackburn

STAFF:                    Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer  
                                  Jane Fraser, Executive Director of Finance & Asset Management/Chief Financial Officer  
                                  John Traves, Municipal Solicitor  
                                  Iain MacLean, Municipal Clerk  
                                  Simon Ross-Siegel, Legislative Assistant

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

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

*The meeting was called to order at 9:33 a.m. Budget Committee adjourned at 12:05 p.m.*

## **1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m.

## **2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – NONE**

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

## **4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Elizabeth Cummings, a resident of Cole Harbour, spoke before the Budget Committee. The speaker referred to a CBC article indicating interest among some Councillors in considering a proposed property tax increase as well as some interest in exploring options to providing relief to commercial taxpayers by shifting the proposed increase to residential taxpayers. The speaker stated they do not support this option and expressed concern that tax increases will adversely impact property owners currently struggling as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The speaker stated that it did not seem appropriate to fund special projects outside of the ordinary budget process and expressed a view that several projects appear to be aspirational in nature. The speaker said that if initiatives which shift the tax responsibility from commercial to residential property taxpayers do not effectively distinguish between big-box retailers and small businesses, these initiatives will not equitably assist residents who are struggling due to the pandemic. The speaker also noted that many small business owners are also residential property owners. The speaker noted that there has been a historic increase in home sale prices in HRM and proposed that increases in the deed transfer tax may be a possible alternative means of funding budget increases.

## **5. Strategic Initiatives Funding Plan**

The following was before Budget Committee:

- A staff recommendation report dated December 29, 2020 with revisions dated January 14, 2021
- A staff presentation dated January 20, 2021 entitled “Strategic Initiatives Funding Plan”
- Correspondence from Terry Cross

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer, and Jane Fraser, Executive Director of Finance & Asset Management/Chief Financial Officer, provided an overview of the Strategic Initiatives Funding Plan.

MOVED by Councillor Cuttell, seconded by Councillor Cleary

**That Budget Committee direct the Chief Administrative Officer to:**

- 1. Include in the 2021/22 to 2024/25 Operating Budget dedicated funding for strategic initiatives in the form of an annual budget allocation to Reserves, including the Principal and Interest Reserve Q631 that is used to fund debt payments for initiatives directly linked to advancing the objectives of HalifACT2050; advancing the Rapid Transit Initiative, and renovations to the Ragged Lake Bus Terminal; and advancing the Integrated Mobility Plan and other projects as identified by Regional Council that are deemed to be strategic initiatives;**
- 2. Return to Regional Council no later than June 2021 with a revised Reserve strategy including a review of all reserve business cases, recommendations on the number and classification of reserves and their relationship to Strategic Initiatives; and,**
- 3. As part of the Fiscal Sustainability Strategy return to Regional Council with revised debt levels and measurement and their relationship to the Strategic Initiatives.**

Jane Fraser and Jacques Dubé answered Budget Committee questions regarding the Strategic Initiatives Funding Plan. John Traves, Municipal Solicitor, answered questions regarding Regional Council's obligations regarding the budget process.

Brad Anguish, Executive Director of Transportation and Public Works, answered questions regarding street recapitalization and noted that staff is aiming to return to the Budget Committee with further data with the Capital Budget discussion.

**MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Not present: Councillor Cleary

**6. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Iain MacLean  
Municipal Clerk