



**BUDGET COMMITTEE
(STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ON BUDGET)
MINUTES
February 28, 2024**

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

REGRETS: Councillors: Paul Russell, Budget Committee Chair
Becky Kent

STAFF: Jerry Blackwood, Executive Director of Finance & Asset Management/Chief
Financial Officer
John Traves, K.C., CD, Executive Director of Legal & Legislative
Services/Municipal Solicitor/Chief Governance Officer
Catie Campbell, Legislative Assistant
Elizabeth Macdonald, Legislative Assistant
Olawumi Odeyinka-Apantaku, 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.

The meeting was called to order at 9:34 a.m., and recessed at 12:00 p.m. Budget Committee reconvened in at 1:00 p.m. Budget Committee adjourned at 4:49 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Deputy Mayor Deagle Gammon called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m. and acknowledged that the meeting took place in the traditional and ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq people, and that we are all treaty people.

1.1 Budget Adjustment List

The following was before Budget Committee:

- Handout titled "Budget Adjustment List Summary" dated February 28, 2024

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – February 2, 7, 9 and 13, 2024

MOVED by Councillor Cleary, seconded by Councillor Mason

THAT the minutes of February 2, 7, 9 and 13, 2024 be approved as circulated.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Additions: None

Deletions: None

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Stoddard

THAT the agenda be approved as presented.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Not present: Budget Committee Chair Russell, Mayor Savage, Councillors Hendsbee, Kent, Purdy, Austin

4. CALL FOR DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS – NONE

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Dr. Monika Dutt, Regional Medical Officer of Health, Central Zone, Nova Scotia Health Authority spoke in support of the Part B of the JustFOOD Halifax Action Plan. Dutt noted the plan addressed community food access and security, emphasized the shared priorities of Public Health, various initiatives by Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) and the importance of creating comprehensive plans and strategic partnerships to address food insecurity. Dutt explained the importance of action at the Municipal level to address food insecurity. Dutt encouraged Budget Committee to fund and implement Part B of the Action Plan. Dutt responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee regarding gaps in food insecurity.

Wendie Wilson, on behalf of the African Nova Scotian & Black Food Sovereignty Working Group spoke in support of Part B of the JustFOOD Halifax Action Plan and noted their role in food justice sovereignty. Wilson noted the group had provided recommendations to Part A and Part B of the JustFOOD Action Plan for the Halifax Region as it pertained to the African Nova Scotian Community. Wilson noted the data indicated higher rates of food insecurity in African Nova Scotian and Indigenous communities. Wilson spoke to the group's plan to hire an African Nova Scotian and Black Food

Coordinator and a food hub for the purpose of addressing food insecurity in African Nova Scotian Communities.

Paul Service, on behalf of Eastern Shore, Musquodoboit and Street Harbour Ground Search and Rescue noted funding had not changed since the inception and membership had increased. Service noted teams in the community had been providing mutual aid support as well as responding to calls in their own areas and faced challenges when it came to securing sustainable funding. Service suggested they were facing pressures and had immediate needs to replace vehicles and operational equipment. Service encouraged Budget Committee to allocate further funding for equipment, training, and community support. Service responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee regarding the volunteer services to the vulnerable persons registry.

Mayor Savage entered the meeting and assumed the Chair.

Sue Kelleher, Feed Nova Scotia spoke about the JustFOOD Halifax Action Plan and the importance of funding Part B of the plan. Kelleher noted challenges in implementing the JustFOOD Halifax Action Plan and ongoing collaboration with HRM staff. Kelleher encouraged Budget Committee to fully fund the plan.

Douglas Wetmore, on behalf of It's More than Buses HRM spoke to Halifax Transit's proposed budget and proposed service adjustments. Wetmore encouraged Budget Committee to reallocate resources from cancelled routes to where there was need. Wetmore responded to questions and clarification from Budget Committee regarding the Regional Transportation Tax the rural area has paid into since 2006.

Ben Hammer, Halifax spoke to the proposed Halifax Transit Budget and Business Plan and noted concerns regarding transit operator's access to bathrooms. Hammer suggested incorporating bathroom access into route design which would improve road safety. Hammer responded to questions and clarification from Budget Committee regarding the recommendation on access bus.

Minh Tan, Halifax spoke to the proposed Halifax Transit and Business Plan and noted the need for transparency, public engagement, and accountability. Tan suggested there should be more accessible data.

Colin May, Halifax spoke on the housing crisis in Halifax and noted the need to address homelessness in Dartmouth. May noted the need for recreation areas close to schools, transit, and a shopping centre. May encouraged collaboration with government to gain ownership of the Brightwood Golf & Country Club. May responded to questions and clarification from Budget Committee.

6. ITEMS CONTINUED FROM A PREVIOUS MEETING – NONE

7. REPORTS

7.1 Halifax Transit

The following was before Budget Committee:

- Staff report dated February 28, 2024
- Correspondence from Wendy Thompson
- Staff presentation dated February 28, 2024

Dave Reage, Executive Director of Halifax Transit gave a presentation.

MOVED by Councillor Lovelace, seconded by Councillor Cuttall

THAT the Budget Committee:

- 1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to incorporate the Halifax Transit proposed 2024/25 Budget and Business Plan, as set out and discussed in the accompanying plan and supporting presentation, attached to the staff report dated February 28, 2024, into the Draft 2024/25 Operating Budget;**
- 2. Approve the transit service modifications as proposed in the accompanying 2024/25 Annual Service Plan to the staff report dated February 28, 2024.**

Reage, Philip Herritt, Director, Transit Operations, Patricia Hughes, Director, Planning & Customer Engagement, Jerry Blackwood, Executive Director of Finance & Asset Management/Chief Financial Officer and Mark Santelli, Manager, Technical Services responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee regarding Halifax Transit's Park & Ride program, collaboration with Regional Plan staff, safety on transit vehicles, route changes, Access-A-Bus services, washroom access at terminals, area rate revenue data, ridership data and targets, fleet expansion and diversification, review of the Rural Plan, the proposed pilot project for Rainbow Haven Beach, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes, fare increases and the HFXGO Transit application.

MOVED by Councillor Cleary, seconded by Deputy Mayor Deagle Gammon

THAT the motion be amended to include a new section that reads as follows:

- 3. That Committee of the Whole on Budget request a supplementary report on potential changes to timing, service hours, and/or routing for Bus Route #26 that might be feasible to increase ridership to levels previously seen on the predecessor Routh #5”.**

MOTION TO AMEND PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Not present: Budget Committee Chair Russell, Councillor Kent

MOVED by Councillor Cleary, seconded by Councillor Purdy

THAT the motion be amended to include a new section that reads as follows:

- 4. Budget Committee request a supplementary report on impacts in mitigating tactic that would allow Transit to avoid increase in fares in 2024-25.**

MOTION TO AMEND PUT AND PASSED. (14 in favour, 1 against)

In favour: Deputy Mayor Deagle Gammon, Councillors Hendsbee, Purdy, Austin, Mancini, Mason, Smith, Cleary, Morse, Cuttell, Stoddard, Lovelace, Blackburn, Outhit

Against: Mayor Savage

Not present: Budget Committee Chair Russell, Councillor Kent

The motion as amended now read:

MOVED by Councillor Lovelace, seconded by Councillor Cuttell

THAT the Budget Committee:

- 1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to incorporate the Halifax Transit proposed 2024/25 Budget and Business Plan, as set out and discussed in the accompanying plan and**

supporting presentation, attached to the staff report dated February 28, 2024, into the Draft 2024/25 Operating Budget;

2. Approve the transit service modifications as proposed in the accompanying 2024/25 Annual Service Plan to the staff report dated February 28, 2024;
3. Request a supplementary report on potential changes to timing, service hours, and/or routing for Bus Route #26 that might be feasible to increase ridership to levels previously seen on the predecessor Routh #5;
4. Request a supplementary report on impacts in mitigating tactic that would allow Transit to avoid increase in fares in 2024-25 Halifax Transit budget to the Budget Adjustment List as an over budget option for consideration.

MOTION AS AMENDED PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Not present: Budget Committee Chair Russell, Councillor Kent

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Cleary

THAT Budget Committee request the Chief Administrative Officer prepare a supplementary report identifying options and challenges of permanently removing the proposed reinstatements on low performing express routes and reallocate those resources to address overloads and increase service on corridor routes.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED. (14 in favour, 1 against)

In favour: Mayor Savage, Deputy Mayor Deagle Gammon, Councillors Purdy, Austin, Mancini, Mason, Smith, Cleary, Morse, Cuttall, Stoddard, Lovelace, Blackburn, Outhit

Against: Councillor Hendsbee

Not present: Budget Committee Chair Russell, Councillor Kent

7.2 Community Safety

The following was before Budget Committee:

- Staff report dated February 28, 2024
- Correspondence from Sue Uteck
- Staff presentation dated February 28, 2024

Bill Moore, Executive Director of Community Safety gave a presentation and responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee.

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Cuttall

THAT the Budget Committee direct the Chief Administrative Officer to incorporate the Community Safety proposed 2024/25 Budget and Business Plan, as set out and discussed in the accompanying plan and supporting presentation, attached to the staff report dated February 28, 2024, into the Draft 2024/25 Operating Budget.

Mayor Savage stepped down from the Chair and Deputy Mayor Deagle Gammon assumed the Chair.

Moore, Amy Siciliano, Public Safety Advisor and Max Chauvin, Housing and Homelessness Director, responded to questions of clarification regarding mobile outreach initiatives, Emergency Management,

plans to start an Emergency Management Accreditation Program, providing power to designated encampment sites, homelessness statistics, the Mobile Outreach Program, servicing rural communities, Regional Search & Rescue teams and initiatives to address homelessness at the provincial level.

MOVED by Councillor Lovelace, seconded by Councillor Stoddard

THAT the motion be amended to include alternative motion 1 from the staff report dated February 28, 2024, as a new section that reads as follows:

- 2. Include alternative 1, an increase of \$250, 000 for Programs & Partnerships – Enhance Safe City Program as outlined in the Briefing Note (BN004) within the proposed 2024/25 Community Safety proposed budget to the Budget Adjustment List as an expense over budget option for consideration.**

MOTION TO AMEND PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Not present: Mayor Savage, Budget Committee Chair Russell, Councillor Kent

Moore and Siciliano responded to question of clarification from Budget Committee regarding the proposed increase to the 2024/25 Halifax Transit budget, the Public Safety Strategy as it related to youth, the Crossing Guard Program, and plans to develop a new stabilization centre.

Deagle Gammon stepped down from Chair and Councillor Austin assumed the Chair.

Deputy Mayor Deagle Gammon resumed the Chair.

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Blackburn

THAT the motion be amended to include a new section that reads as follows:

- 3. THAT the Budget Committee include alternatives 2,3,4,5,6 from the staff report February 28, 2024 as outlined in the Briefing Note (BN004) within the proposed 2024/25 Community Safety proposed budget to the Budget Adjustment List as an expense over budget option for consideration that reads as follows:**
 - a. An increase of \$70,900 for Programs & Partnerships - 1 FTE - Create Community Crisis Response model for the municipality;**
 - b. An increase of \$70,900 for Programs & Partnerships - 1 FTE - Mobile Outreach and Transportation Service;**
 - c. An increase of \$325,000 for Programs & Partnerships - Mobile Outreach and Transportation Service;**
 - d. An increase of \$60,000 for Housing and Homelessness - Diversion Plan, and;**
 - e. An increase of \$50,100 for Community Standards & Compliance for five additional Crossing Guards**

as outlined in the Briefing Note (BN004) within the proposed 2024/25 Community Safety proposed budget to the Budget Adjustment List as an expense over budget option for consideration.

MOTION TO AMEND PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Not present: Budget Committee Chair Russell, Mayor Savage, Councillors Lovelace, Kent

Siciliano, Chauvin and Moore responded to questions of clarification to Budget Committee regarding the proposed stabilization centre.

As set out in section 34 of Administrative Order One, *Respecting the Procedures of the Council*, a motion was required to extend the time of the meeting.

MOVED by Councillor Outhit, seconded by Councillor Stoddard

THAT Budget Committee extend the time of the meeting past 4:00 p.m.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Councillor Austin, seconded by Councillor Mancini

THAT the motion be amended to include a new section that reads as follows:

- 4. THAT Budget Committee request a briefing note on the cost of:**
 - a. Providing running water, daily garbage collection, and power at all designated encampment sites and;**
 - b. Staffing for compliance officers to manage numerous large designated and undesignated encampment sites given the potential reality that we could easily have hundreds people living rough in HRM this year.**

Moore and Chauvin responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee regarding the need for a harm reduction-based shelter, safety concerns in the pallet villages, sector capacity and the possibility of a professionally managed encampment.

John Traves K.C., CD, Executive Director of Legal & Legislative Services/Municipal Solicitor/Chief Governance Officer and Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee regarding policy changes regarding encampment sites in HRM.

Councillor Mason proposed "as an option over budget on the budget adjustment list (BAL) for the Budget Committee to consider in the 2024/25 Budget" be inserted. As provided for in section 53 (2) of Administrative Order One, *Respecting the Procedures of the Council*, the amendment was accepted as friendly.

MOTION TO AMEND PUT AND PASSED. (11 in favour, 2 against)

In favour: Deputy Mayor Deagle Gammon, Councillors Austin, Mancini, Mason, Smith, Cleary, Morse, Cuttall, Stoddard, Blackburn, Outhit

Against: Councillors Hendsbee and Purdy

Not present: Mayor Savage, Budget Committee Chair Russell, Councillors Kent, Lovelace

Leticia Smillie, Planner III responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee regarding the JustFOOD Halifax Action Plan, maximizing current assets, advocacy and utilizing community gardens to address food insecurity.

The motion as amended now read:

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Cuttell,

THAT the Budget Committee:

1. **Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to incorporate the Community Safety proposed 2024/25 Budget and Business Plan, as set out and discussed in the accompanying plan and supporting presentation, attached to the staff report dated February 28, 2024, into the Draft 2024/25 Operating Budget;**
2. **Include alternative 1, an increase of \$250, 000 for Programs & Partnerships – Enhance Safe City Program as outlined in the Briefing Note (BN004) within the proposed 2024/25 Community Safety proposed budget to the Budget Adjustment List as an expense over budget option for consideration.**
3. **Include alternatives 2,3,4,5,6 from the staff report February 28, 2024 as outlined in the Briefing Note (BN004) within the proposed 2024/25 Community Safety proposed budget to the Budget Adjustment List as an expense over budget option for consideration that reads as follows:**
 - a. **An increase of \$70,900 for Programs & Partnerships - 1 FTE - Create Community Crisis Response model for the municipality;**
 - b. **An increase of \$70,900 for Programs & Partnerships - 1 FTE - Mobile Outreach and Transportation Service;**
 - c. **An increase of \$325,000 for Programs & Partnerships - Mobile Outreach and Transportation Service;**
 - d. **An increase of \$60,000 for Housing and Homelessness - Diversion Plan, and;**
 - e. **An increase of \$50,100 for Community Standards & Compliance for five additional Crossing Guards; and**
4. **Request a briefing note outlining the cost of:**
 - a. **Providing running water, daily garbage collection, and power at all designated encampment sites and;**
 - b. **Staffing for compliance officers to manage numerous large designated and undesignated encampment sites given the potential reality that we could easily have hundreds people living rough in HRM this year as an option over budget on the budget adjustment list (BAL) for the Budget Committee to consider in the 2024/25 Budget.**

MOTION AS AMENDED PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Not present: Mayor Mike Savage, Budget Committee Chair Russell, Councillors Kent, Lovelace, Stoddard, Mason, Mancini

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:49 p.m.

Catie Campbell
Legislative Assistant