

Extract of Regional Watersheds Advisory Draft August 9, 2017 Minutes

9. REPORTS/DISCUSSION

9.1 STAFF

9.1.1 Watershed Management and Water Quality Monitoring Program Review – continuation

The following was before the Board:

- Extract of Regional Watersheds Advisory Committee draft minutes dated July 12, 2017

Cameron Deacoff, Environment Performance Officer, gave a brief update to the Board. There was a staff meeting in July and work continues on the project charter. A presentation was also delivered last week identifying that a review is underway with the project deliverables being prepared for Regional Council by year end.

The Board asked for clarification on how the approval process will work. Cameron Deacoff explained that the project is focused on addressing the needs and mandate of planning and development where program managers confirm key requirements, plans and outcomes. Once these are approved the Charter is amended and then sent to the director.

The Board discussed the definition of Watershed Management. Specific watersheds need to be identified as a starting point. There are 9 Primary and 44 secondary watersheds mapped in HRM. These are included in the State of the Landscape Report. Four types of watersheds were identified: developed, undeveloped, seasonal and permanent. Each has unique needs based on size, levels of threat and stress on the watershed. It was suggested that one definition may not fit all. It would be a benefit to focus on protecting the undeveloped watersheds. There have been 10 studies to date done on planning areas or geographic watersheds which were under development pressure. Watershed management must include the management of development. There appears to be a disconnect between the science from the watershed and water quality studies and how the city manages development. Development objectives must be integrated holistically with the findings of the studies.

Cameron Deacoff explained that recommendations from these studies do not presently form part of policy which planning applications legally consider, therefore gaps can exist. The watershed review needs to find a way to integrate these findings for the studies to be effective. They would need to be adopted into Land Use Policy before they have any legal impact on development agreements.

A question was raised whether the Board could play a role in providing updates to the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee when studies are completed to share key findings. The Board is presently consulting on the over-arching Green Network Plan and the Watershed Review and Water Quality Monitoring, which will influence secondary planning policy, regional policy and land acquisition moving forward. The Green Network is a policy document with broad applicability and the board's input and contributions can be included in the final document. The timing of this work is very important as it will be finalized by the end of September to be ready for Council by the end of November. It was suggested that an annual review of water issues for Council could become a best practise to keep these concerns front of mind. It is critical to make the link between stressors on watershed, best practises from science and monitoring of study and test results and policy sets where decision making frameworks are supported by forward thinking policy which guides secondary planning and any regional plan updates.

The Board then discussed Water Quality Monitoring. The Board felt that HRM's water quality standards need to be better than the lowest acceptable level. The Board asked which areas would be chosen for monitoring and what criteria would be used? The Green Network Plan should highlight the diverse landscapes in HRM and that these flow across several individual watersheds. It would be important to analyse the state of each watershed; for example, the remediation and contamination of the watershed and any threats to protected areas. Specific watersheds of concern could be highlighted, setting standards and targets to achieve. The Board discussed how their advice and recommendations are best

shared with HRM to be effective. The topics of Watershed Management and the Green Network Plan can be seen as separate or that the Board's recommendations are best achieved through the Green Network Plan. The water quality monitoring and watershed planning review are responding to specific programs that are active now. This will then be connected to the broader policy framework of the Green Network Plan. The timing is challenging as these two large pieces of work are happening at the same time. Comments and suggestions for review need to be outcome based to be effectively added to the Green Network Plan.

MOVED by Russell Dmytriw, seconded by Rose Featherstone

THAT the Regional Watersheds Advisory Board recommends that the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council request a staff report on implementing and integrating watershed management planning on a watershed by watershed basis.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

The Board also discussed reinstating water quality monitoring for all watercourses. They explained that this is needed for the protection of the environment and the public. It also provides an opportunity for the Municipality to be a leader in protecting the local environment, aquatic life and its watercourses.

MOVED by Kelly Schnare, seconded by Derek Vallis

THAT the Regional Watersheds Advisory Board recommends that the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council request a staff report on reinstating and expanding the watercourse quality monitoring program and fund it appropriately.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.