



**BUDGET COMMITTEE
(STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ON BUDGET)
MINUTES
December 10, 2019**

PRESENT: Russell Walker, Chair
Mayor Mike Savage
Deputy Mayor Lisa Blackburn
Councillors: Steve Streach
David Hendsbee
Bill Karsten
Lorelei Nicoll
Sam Austin
Tony Mancini
Waye Mason
Lindell Smith
Shawn Cleary
Stephen Adams
Richard Zurawski
Matt Whitman
Paul Russell
Tim Outhit

STAFF: Jane Fraser, Director of Finance & Asset Management/CFO
John Traves, Municipal Solicitor
Kevin Arjoon, 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.

The meeting was called to order at 9:35 a.m. Council adjourned at 11:56 a.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Councillor Walker called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. in Council Chamber, 3rd Floor City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – October 29, 2019

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Mayor Mike Savage

THAT the minutes of October 29, 2019 be approved as presented.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. 2020/21 Capital Budget Recommendation

i) Public Participation

ii) Debate

The following was before Budget Committee:

- A staff recommendation report dated October 31, 2019
- 2020/21 Draft Capital plan
- A supplementary staff report dated December 5, 2019
- A briefing note on the Keshen Goodman Library
- Correspondence from Mort and Judy Jackson and Karen Robinson

The Chair reviewed the rules of procedure for public participation and invited anyone wishing to speak to come forward.

Megan Doucette, a resident and volunteer with the Halifax Cycling Coalition, stated they were encouraged to see the prioritization of active transit in the budget process. The speaker supported the goals of the Integrated Mobility Plan but noted the importance in backing the plan up through the budget. The speaker supported the aim of shifting thirty percent of all transit in the municipality to alternative transportation, and stated they were very much in support of the spirit of the motion though the speaker would prefer a measurable target. The speaker spoke in favour of prioritizing cycling, reducing carbon emissions, and reducing congestion.

Greg Cross, a resident and member of the Eastern Shore Lifestyle Centre Society, provided an update on the status of the Lifestyle Centre's redevelopment project. The speakers indicated the society will need ongoing support from Council to prioritize the project. The speaker stated they were aware of some outstanding motions of Council waiting to receive reports related to this project. The speaker gave no comments as of this time with regard to these but noted that the library has submitted a letter suggesting they want to work with the Lifestyle Centre. The speaker stated that members believe this will be a great opportunity for both partners. The speaker noted that Fire Chief Stuebing has been active in working with the society in working for site planning for a new fire station on the Lifestyle Centre, and the society is thankful for the municipality's support. The society has been trying to find matching funds from municipal and provincial partners for the construction of the building. The speaker also spoke about several business opportunities and recent events in the area and stated that it is important for the Lifestyle Centre to demonstrate that residents share a lively community with opportunities for growth.

A representative of the Sheet Harbour Chamber of Commerce for Civic Affairs, provided an update on the Sheet Harbour Chamber of Commerce's activities and priorities and presented a powerpoint presentation. The speaker stated that Sheet Harbour is the economic and social hub of the Eastern Shore in HRM and noted that part of the Millbrook first nation resides in Sheet Harbour. Regarding social wellbeing, the speaker stated that sidewalk construction remains important. The speaker also spoke

regarding the redevelopment planning for the marina. The speaker identified current Chamber of Commerce projects including skills development training, the Sheet Harbour Entrepreneurial Weekend, as well as a branding initiative, self-service initiatives, doctor recruitment, and advocacy efforts to support broadband internet and cellphone service development. Regarding the impact of efficient rural internet, the speaker noted that internet service is crucial to the lobster trade in the area and that the port of Halifax runs the port of Sheet Harbor and companies currently cannot upload their new software to the port systems. Current rural internet service limits the growth of the area's e-economy. The Chamber of Commerce is working with the province to pursue rural broadband internet expansion, and members are hopeful their community will be prioritized soon for service expansion.

Kent Smith, president of the Musquodoboit Harbour Chamber of Commerce, spoke in support of sidewalk expansion projects in the Musquodoboit Harbour area. The speaker stated that after two years of funding advocacy, the Musquodoboit Harbour Chamber of Commerce entered into a planning pilot project with a rural planning team and worked with ekistics to develop a community development plan. The Chamber of Commerce performed several community consultations and feedback received identified three priorities, one being sidewalks in the core of Musquodoboit Harbour. A local survey company this year helped the Chamber of Commerce to assess how much land they would need to complete the redevelopment. In November of 2019, with much happiness residents were informed that their community was listed as a priority for HRM, however by the end of November residents learned that staff had drafted a briefing note recommending the projects should be delayed. The speaker asked that Council disregard staff's briefing and move forward with next steps including completing engineer drawings for sidewalks in Musquodoboit Harbour.

Tammy Ewing and Claudette Cauley, residents of East Preston played a video entitled "East Preston - The 7" and spoke to Council regarding the importance of prioritizing traffic calming measures and pedestrian infrastructure in East Preston and presented a video regarding these concerns. The speaker stated that while Canadians' values say everyone deserves prosperity, the speakers' community has faced significant challenges, one of which includes underfunding in community health. The speakers expressed that pedestrian safety is intimately related to community health in East Preston where a 70km per hour highway cuts through and divides the community. This prevents children in East Preston from being safe and also prevents residents from being healthy by pursuing active transportation options. The speaker asked Council to take action to prioritize traffic mitigation and pedestrian infrastructure to address these challenges. In response to questions from Council regarding possible actions and next steps, the speakers asked Council to support prioritizing active transportation plans currently underway in East Preston for a multi-use greenway as part of the budget process.

Martin Williams, a resident and pedestrian, spoke to Council regarding the dedication of \$1.3 million toward the road safety improvements budget. The speaker stated that children, older people, and those with disabilities deserve infrastructure that prioritizes their safety. The speaker expressed dissatisfaction with the funding process for road safety improvements which tends to approve good programs but then returns with funding shortfalls at the budget stage. The speaker stated that the infrastructure which currently exists is still quite dangerous and the municipality continues to experience a high number of crosswalk collision incidents, even where pedestrians are doing the right things, such as using crosswalks and making themselves visible. As the problem has continued, collisions have become normalized and drivers making errors and mistakes is a large contributing factor to continuing collisions. The speaker stated that only four percent of collisions are caused by pedestrian error. The speaker stated that a friend with visual impairments is currently housebound due to concerns regarding pedestrian safety. The speaker stated their hope is that the municipality will do everything required in the road safety plan and also prioritize the creation of a crosswalk safety plan. The speaker encouraged Council to budget appropriately to support these plans. The speaker identified concern with several crosswalk designs and supported the construction and installation of additional rapid flashing beacons and pedestrian refuge islands.

The Chair called three times for any other for members of the public to come forward for public participation, and there was none.

The following motion from the November 26, 2019 meeting of the Budget Committee reads:

MOVED by Councillor Whitman, seconded by Councillor Nicoll

THAT the Budget Committee recommend Halifax Regional Council to:

- 1. Approve the capital budget for 2020/21, and approve in-principle the 2021/22 and 2022/23 capital budgets as per Attachment 1 of the staff report dated October 31, 2019;**
- 2. Approve the schedule of 2020/21 reserves withdrawals as per Attachment 2 of the staff report dated October 31, 2019;**
- 3. Approve the schedule of multi-year projects as per Attachment 4 of the staff report dated October 31, 2019; and**
- 4. Approve an increase in debt funding for 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 capital projects as described in the staff report dated October 31, 2019.**

The Chair and Council discussed the multi-year projects for addition to the parking lot in order to wait for further information following the completion of the operating budget for 2020/21. In response to questions from Council, Jane Fraser, Director of Finance & Asset Management/CFO clarified that items added to the parking lot may be funded through various sources including residential tax increases, debt or reserve funding.

In response to questions from Councillors as to how the figures demonstrating increases to the average residential tax bill in 2020/21 and subsequent years were arrived at Bruce Fisher, Manager of Financial Policy and Planning, stated that these figures were calculated by taking the total cost of the projects contained in the supplemental report and dividing the costs across the assessment base. Staff also noted that these figures will likely change when staff receives the most recent assessment rolls. Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer, added that the estimate of the increase assumes that Council were to choose to finance the projects through a tax increase. If Council were to fund the projects through debt financing, the potential impact on the tax rate would likely be lower.

Councillors discussed an interest to prioritize funding for the Downtown Dartmouth Infrastructure Renewal by adding this project to the parking lot. Regarding the Dartmouth Cove redevelopment costs, Peter Duncan, Manager of Infrastructure Planning, stated that staff would intend to recover fifty percent of costs from the local developers within the Dartmouth Cove area and are confident staff will be successful in pursuing this strategy.

In response to questions from councillors regarding prioritizing property acquisition, Jane Fraser, Director of Finance & Asset Management/CFO, stated that while there are some specific reserves for parkland acquisition and business parks, there are no dedicated property acquisition reserves for the current project. However, Fraser noted that the capital opportunity reserve may be a possible source of funding for property acquisition stages of the Downtown Dartmouth Infrastructure Renewal project. Staff suggested Council wait for further information from staff regarding possible funding options when they return with other items Council may add to the parking lot.

MOVED by Councillor Austin, seconded by Councillor Mason

THAT the Downtown Dartmouth Infrastructure Renewal project be added to the parking lot.

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MOTION PUT AND PASSED. (16 in favour, 1 against)

In favour: Mayor Savage, Deputy Mayor Blackburn, Councillors Streach, Hendsbee, Karsten, Nicoll, Austin, Mancini, Mason, Smith, Cleary, Walker, Adams, Whitman, Russell and Outhit

Against: Councillor Zurawski

Councillors discussed an interest to prioritize funding for the Regatta Point Seawall by adding this project to the parking lot. Several Councillors expressed support for the project as it relates to achieving goals

identified in the Integrated Mobility Plan, climate mitigations strategies and Regional Plans. Several Councillors noted concern that project seawall heights may not be sufficient to achieve climate mitigation goals and expressed a desire to wait for staff to complete Halifax2050.

MOVED by Councillor Cleary, seconded by Councillor Adams

THAT the Regatta Point Seawall be added to the parking lot.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED. (14 in favour, 2 against)

In favour: Mayor Savage, Deputy Mayor Blackburn, Councillors Streach, Hendsbee, Nicoll, Austin, Mancini, Mason, Smith, Cleary, Adams, Zurawski, Whitman, Russell and Outhit

Against: Councillors Karsten and Walker

Councillors discussed an interest to prioritize funding for the Lucasville Greenway by adding this project to the parking lot. During further discussion, Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer, noted that if it is not moved to the parking lot funding for the Lucasville Greenway still will likely return to Council in the next budget cycle as part of the Green Transit Plan. Following further discussion, Council opted to wait for the Green Transit Plan.

Councillors discussed an interest to prioritize funding for a \$250,000 recreation facility possibly including splashpad in the Musquodoboit Valley area by adding this project to the parking lot. Several Councillors discussed whether a motion to prioritize funding for the municipal aquatics strategy should be included as part of the same motion or as a separate motion. Following discussion, Council decided to address both items separately.

MOVED by Councillor Streach, seconded by Councillor Outhit

THAT \$250,000 for a scaled playground facility be added to the parking lot.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED. (16 in favour, 1 against)

In favour: Mayor Savage, Deputy Mayor Blackburn, Councillors Streach, Hendsbee, Karsten, Nicoll, Austin, Mancini, Mason, Smith, Cleary, Adams, Zurawski, Whitman, Russell and Outhit

Against: Councillor Walker

MOVED by Councillor Whitman, seconded by Councillor Zurawski

THAT \$500,000 for splashpads in accordance with the aquatic strategy be added to the parking lot.

Staff confirmed for Councillors that if the land is purchased for a price lower than the listed price, savings would be carried over to the project costs.

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MOTION PUT AND PASSED. (14 in favour, 3 against)

In favour: Mayor Savage, Deputy Mayor Blackburn, Councillors Streach, Hendsbee, Nicoll, Austin, Mancini, Mason, Smith, Cleary, Adams, Zurawski, Whitman and Outhit

Against: Councillors Karsten, Walker, and Russell

Budget Committee agreed to defer the remaining discussion of this item to the January 7, 2020 meeting.

4. Integrated Mobility Plan and Infrastructure Projects

i) Public Participation

ii) Debate

The following was before Budget Committee:

- A report from the Transportation Standing Committee dated September 27, 2019 with attached Councillor Request Form from the September 26, 2019 meeting of the Transportation Standing Committee
- Correspondence from Catherine Dreesbeck, Shixin Shen, Marcia DeSantis, Holly Gillis, and Norm Collins

This item was deferred to the January 7, 2020 meeting of the Budget Committee.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:56 a.m.

Kevin Arjoon
Municipal Clerk