



**BUDGET COMMITTEE
(STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ON BUDGET)
MINUTES
January 29, 2020**

PRESENT: Councillor 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
Liam MacSween, Acting Deputy 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 9:34 a.m., and recessed at 12:01 p.m. Budget Committee reconvened in at 1:02 p.m. and recessed at 3:01 p.m. Budget Committee reconvened at 3:06 p.m. and adjourned at 4:12 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The following was before Budget Committee:

- A staff handout outlining the current over/under list

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m.

1.1 Assessment Update

The following was before Budget Committee:

- A staff presentation titled "Assessment Update"

Jane Fraser, Director of Finance & Asset Management/CFO provided an update presentation regarding the HRM assessment information and answered questions for Council.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – November 26 and December 10, 2019 and January 7, 2020

MOVED by Mayor Savage, seconded by Councillor Russell

THAT the minutes of November 26 and December 10, 2019 and January 7, 2020 be approved as circulated.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

Richard Vincent, a representative of the Blue Mountain Birch Cove Society, spoke to Council in support of the Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes Regional Park. The speaker stated that the society is actively pursuing efforts to support conservation activities in the Blue Mountain Birch Cove areas and the speaker congratulated the city for getting this far while noting that much work is still to be done. The speaker noted the society's support for other conservation proposals for the Sandy Lake Park and also noted the opportunity provided by the Nova Scotia Nature Trust's proposal regarding the conservation of a wildlife corridor. The speaker stated that these efforts and support from multiple co-aligned conservation societies show that HRM has ample justification and mandate to pursue parkland expansion. Through these plans, HRM can ensure livable cities for residents. Cities of all sizes around the world are acquiring parkland and expanding their urban forests as part of their sustainable economic development and climate priorities. The speaker stated that they hope that HRM will remain a member of the family of cities doing so, and this would be an excellent legacy for Council. In response to questions from Council, the speaker noted that the organization has grown since its formation in May of 2018 to have 500 current members. While the organization currently only provides anecdotal lake quality information, the society hopes to begin a substantive water quality monitoring program in the summer of 2020. The speaker identified major challenges including encroaching development. The speaker also reiterated the importance of support for conserving the Blue Mountain connector.

Cathleen Hall, a member and representative speaking on behalf of several organizations including the Williams Lake Conservation Company, the Backlands Coalition, and Our HRM Alliance, spoke in favour of parkland acquisition for conservation. The respective mandates of these organizations is to protect the health and environs of Williams Lake, to preserve undeveloped land between Williams Lake Road and Herring Cove Road, and to make HRM better for residents and keep the city green. The speaker stated

that it was a relief to the organizations when their concept for parkland acquisition was put into the Regional Plan. However, the current year funding commitment of \$500,000 is inadequate, and disproportionate to the price of undeveloped land in the area. The speaker stated that the municipality made a major investment in the Green Network Plan, and it remains to Council to value the plan by implementing it by setting aside conservation land. The speaker ended by saying that the vision of a green city must be realized.

Johnathan Tyson, a member of the Regatta Point Landowner's Association, spoke in favour of funding for the 2019 capital plan for the Regatta Point seawall preservation. The speaker noted that major work has already been done at the Dingle Tower and that the Regatta Point Park and seawall walkway is the last remaining part awaiting work. The Regatta Point Landowner's Association previously hoped that work would be scheduled for completion over last two years, however this did not occur. The speaker stated that the park walkway is an important community amenity which gives residents a chance to get out of bustle of the city and also provides a vital active transportation corridor toward the Armdale Roundabout used by walkers and runners. The speaker described damage to the existing seawall caused by Hurricane Dorian including cracked and broken concrete which continues to fail, and some fill material which has washed away. With the municipal focus on climate change and rising sea levels, it is imperative that the seawall be replaced. The speaker requested information regarding funds previously spent to maintain the current seawall over the last few years, to which several Councillors offered to request staff to provide this information.

Karen McKendry, an Ecology Action Centre member for wilderness protection, spoke in favour of parkland acquisition for conservation. The speaker echoed previous statements from speakers regarding the imperative to fund conservation land acquisition. The speaker identified conservation areas and detailed opportunities and threats related to them including encroaching development. The speaker stated that in the context of the climate emergency and diversity loss, land protection for forests and wetlands is a time-tested solution. The speaker implored Council to increase funding for parkland acquisition. Responding to questions from Councillors, the speaker stated that land acquisition is an important and cost-effective climate mitigation strategy which should be considered in conjunction with other recommendations arising out of the HalifAct 2020 policy. Another creative solution would be to pursue further parkland expansion in the Blue Mountain Birch Cove region through the offer from Nova Scotia Nature Trust. The speaker added that they work with many community groups to pursue nature protection and emphasized that ecology education is important. The speaker stated that as an educator they realize through their work that this education is not happening in their children's schools.

James Boyer, resident of District 12 and a Representative of the Canadian Association of Retired Persons and the Friends of Blue Mountain Birch Cove Society's Planning Committee. The speaker noted that the current budget projects a 75% reduction in parkland acquisition funding. Given that parks improve property values, the speaker stated that it seemed shortsighted to cut back in this area. The speaker stated that residents desire to live in a vibrant city with a wide range of active living options. Canadians are enjoying longer lifespans than ever before and the senior population is expected to double in the near future. For the taxpayer, it is a relatively cost-free strategy following the acquisition of park land. Furthermore, with climate change, it is time for Canada to take action. The speaker stated that the Canadian Association of Retired Persons' survey shows that preserving a green Canada for future generations is important to their members. In response to questions from Councillors, the speaker expressed agreement with the position that through supporting activities and volunteering opportunities for seniors, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons provides healthcare savings to multiple levels of government.

Jeffery Grantham, a resident and member of the Purcell's Cove neighborhood community and an artist who paints landscapes and seascapes, spoke in support of greater funding for parkland acquisition. A large body of the speaker's work was directly inspired from scenes in the Purcell's Cove Backlands. The speaker stated that urban wilderness areas are important areas for residents and should be cherished and preserved.

Jessica Needham, a resident and member of Trips-by-Transit, spoke in support of greater funding for parkland acquisition. The speaker stated that they are aware that the draft capital plan commits less funding than in previous years to parkland acquisition. The speaker stated that residents are fortunate to have surrounding wilderness and they support protection. As a young adult this was a reason that the speaker chose to stay in Halifax. Trips-by-Transit has supported and provided travel options for community members to access urban wilderness spaces. The speaker stated that if residents and Council do not continue to act to implement the Green Network Plan, the municipality will lose valuable urban wilderness spaces over time.

Bob MacDonald, a resident of Timberlea/Beechville and a representative of Our HRM Alliance, spoke in support of greater funding for parkland acquisition. The speaker stated that they will host an annual meeting at end of May in which participants will consider the importance of urban wildernesses. The speaker noted that the draft capital budget commits \$500,000 over the next three years to parkland acquisition which is a considerable decrease from previous years. The speaker supported increasing the budget to pursue further parkland acquisition. The speaker stated that Mayor Savage recently said that HRM's parklands are a major attraction for new residents by providing access to active living through urban wilderness areas. The speaker stated that looking at the draft budget there currently is no ability to implement the Green Network Plan.

Kim Thorne, a resident of Cole Harbour and a member of the Anchor City Rollers (an adult roller derby league), spoke in support of funding options for indoor dry land space for various recreation activities. Several sport leagues including those for floor hockey, ball hockey, lacrosse and cricket, experience challenges finding affordable dry land space to practice their sport. Together these represent about 2,000 athletes, are accessible to junior and senior athletes, and are welcoming spaces for LGBTQ communities and in case of lacrosse supportive of indigenous heritage. Several of these sports have leagues which host national and international level events. Currently, due to a lack of dry land space, they cannot grow and operate within a patchwork of spaces. The Anchor City Rollers currently spend about \$2,400 per year for space, and lacrosse pays much more. In several cases facilities, including HRM recreation and school gyms, were reluctant or outright refused to rent space to the league due to concerns about safety based on the inadequate facility amenities. In several arena facilities, the inability or refusal to remove ice restricts dry land arena space to off seasons. The speaker supported the creation of an informal sports committee to develop municipal policy over how to more equitably accommodate multiple sports needs including those requiring dry land space. In response to questions from Councillors, the speaker stated that they do not have a specific budget request but would like to encourage staff to continue to engage in conversations with the dry land space coalition to develop more equitable policies to alleviate current pressures.

The Chair called three times for any other members of the public wishing to speak on the matter, and there were none.

4. Transportation and Public Works

The following was before Budget Committee:

- A staff recommendation report dated January 21, 2020 with attached staff presentation entitled "Transportation and Public Works 2020/21 Budget and Business Plan Presentation"
- Correspondence from Paul MacKinnon, Patricia Cuttall Busby, Tim Rissesco, Sue Uteck, Karla Nicholson

Brad Anguish, Director of Transportation and Public Works, delivered a presentation on the Transportation and Public Works 2020/21 Budget and Business Plan and answered questions for Council.

MOVED by Councillor Adams, seconded by Deputy Mayor Blackburn

THAT the Budget Committee direct the Chief Administrative Officer to prepare the Transportation and Public Works 2020/21 Budget and Business Plan, incorporating Regional Council's fiscal direction as per the January 7, 2020 Budget Committee meeting and as proposed in the accompanying presentation, and furthermore to prepare Over and Under items for that Plan as directed by Regional Council's Committee of the Whole on Budget.

The Budget Committee agreed by consensus to vote separately on each operating over and under budget item outlined in the January 21, 2020 staff report.

MOVED by Councillor Cleary, seconded by Deputy Mayor Blackburn

THAT the Budget Committee add an increase in parking fines \$25 to \$35 (-\$350,000) to the parking lot as an operating under budget option for consideration.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Not present: Councillor Streach

In response to a question raised on the status of traffic calming projects and prioritization, Council discussed the possibility of receiving information which might enable staff to prioritize traffic calming projects adjacent to school zones.

Moved by Councillor Nicoll, seconded by Councillor Austin:

THAT the Budget Committee request a supplemental report outlining options for traffic calming measures for school zones in 2020/21 and include in the parking lot for consideration.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED. (15 in favour, 1 against)

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

Against: Councillor Whitman

Not present: Councillor Streach

MOVED by Councillor Mancini, seconded by Deputy Mayor Blackburn

THAT the "Parking Ban Enforcement Contract" \$34,000 be added to the Parking Lot as an operating over budget option for consideration.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Not present: Mayor Savage, Councillor Streach

MOVED by Councillor Austin, seconded by Deputy Mayor Blackburn

THAT the "Tree Planting / Pruning" \$200,000 be added to the Parking Lot as an operating over budget option for consideration.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED. (8 in favour, 6 against)

In favour: Deputy Mayor Blackburn, Councillors Hendsbee, Nicoll, Austin, Mancini, Mason, Adams and Zurawski

Against: Mayor Savage, Councillors Cleary, Walker, Whitman, Russell and Outhit

Not present: Councillors Streach, Karsten and Smith

In response to questions from Council, Brad Anguish agreed to provide additional information outlining options for new providers to continue delivery of the senior snow removal program.
Council

Budget Committee voted on the main motion as follows:

THAT the Budget Committee direct the Chief Administrative Officer to prepare the Transportation and Public Works 2020/21 Budget and Business Plan, incorporating Regional Council's fiscal direction as per the January 7, 2020 Budget Committee meeting and as proposed in the accompanying presentation, and furthermore to prepare Over and Under items for that Plan as directed by Regional Council's Committee of the Whole on Budget.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED. (13 in favour, 1 against)

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

Against: Councillor Whitman

Not present: Councillors Streach, Karsten and Smith

5. Parks and Recreation

The following was before Budget Committee:

- A staff recommendation report dated December 23, 2019 with attached staff presentation entitled "Parks and Recreation 2020/21 Budget and Business Plan Presentation"
- Added Slide No. 17 and Revised Slide No. 22 for the staff presentation entitled "Parks and Recreation 2020/21 Budget and Business Plan Presentation"
- Correspondence from Karen Robinson, Jonathan Tyson and Ken Kelly, Chelsea Hanoun, Mike Crosby

Denise Schofield, Director, Parks & Recreation delivered a presentation on the Parks and Recreation 2020/21 Budget and Business Plan and answered questions for Council.

MOVED by Mayor Savage, seconded by Councillor Nicoll

THAT the Budget Committee direct the Chief Administrative Officer to prepare the Parks & Recreation 2020/21 Budget and Business Plan, incorporating Regional Council's fiscal direction as per the January 7, 2020 Budget Committee meeting and as proposed in the accompanying presentation, and furthermore to prepare Over and Under items for that Plan as directed by Regional Council's Committee of the Whole on Budget.

The debate for this item was deferred to the January 31, 2020 meeting of the Budget Committee.

6. Planning and Development

The following was before Budget Committee:

- A staff recommendation report dated January 29, 2020 with attached staff presentation entitled "Planning and Development 2020/21 Budget and Business Plan Presentation"

This item was deferred to the January 31, 2020 meeting of the Budget Committee.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:12 p.m.

Sherryl Murphy
Acting Municipal Clerk