



**HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES
October 31, 2017**

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

REGRETS: Councillor Shawn Cleary

STAFF: Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer
John Traves, Municipal Solicitor
Sherryl Murphy, Deputy Clerk
Sheilagh Edmonds, 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 10:03 a.m. and adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Savage called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

Councillor Whitman rose on a point of privilege and addressed comments he made on social media recently and apologized to colleagues and Regional Council.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – NONE

3. The Capped Assessment Program in the Halifax Region

The following was before Council:

- A staff report dated September 15, 2017.
- A PowerPoint Presentation entitled, Review of the Assessment Cap, October 31, 2017.

Bruce Fisher, Manager of Financial Policy and Planning, and Andre McNeil, Senior Financial Consultant, Financial Policy provided a presentation on the capped assessment program in the Halifax Regional Municipality, explaining how it works, and the impacts of the program in regard to taxation, new homes, home sales and renovations; housing affordability, and assessment stability and predictability.

The presenters concluded by highlighting the following points:

- the cap is a factor in new home sales;
- the cap has an impact on affordability of homes
- the cap is popular because of its predictability, but it is short term in nature
- the cap functions as a tax on economic growth, and damage to the economy hurts everyone

MOVED by Councillor Adams, seconded by Councillor Mason

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Mayor to write the Province of Nova Scotia and request it examine possible solutions to the unintended consequences of the Assessment Cap, including its detrimental impact on the economy through declining property sales and its negative impact on housing affordability.

Council discussed the matter with Bruce Fisher and Andre MacNeil responding to questions. A friendly amendment was put forward by Councillor Karsten that the letter be directed to the Minister of Municipal Affairs with a copy to all cabinet ministers rather than the Province of Nova Scotia, **to which Council agreed**. As well, there was a concern expressed that the term 'detrimental' was negative and unnecessary and Council agreed to remove this term from the motion.

The motion now reads:

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Mayor to write the Minister of Municipal Affairs, copying all cabinet ministers and request it examine possible solutions to the unintended consequences of the Assessment Cap, including its impact on the economy through declining property sales and its negative impact on housing affordability.

MOVED by Councillor Mancini, seconded by Councillor Mason

THAT the motion be amended to add the following:

“including consideration of a method(s) to protect against spikes in assessment, an easily understood program in light of the complexity of the existing program and a seniors/low income program and, further, the changes be phased in over seven (7) years.”

THE AMENDMENT TO THE MOTION WAS PUT AND PASSED.

The amended motion now reads:

That Halifax Regional Council direct the Mayor to write the Minister of Municipal Affairs and a copy to Cabinet members and request they examine possible solutions to the unintended consequences of the Assessment Cap, including its impact on the economy through declining property sales and its negative impact on housing affordability including consideration of a method(s) to protect against spikes in assessment, an easily understood program in light of the complexity of the existing program and a seniors/low income program and further the changes be phased in over seven (7) years.

THE MOTION AS AMENDED WAS PUT AND PASSED.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

Kevin Arjoon
Municipal Clerk