



**BUDGET COMMITTEE
(STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ON BUDGET)
MINUTES
March 1 and 8, 2023**

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

REGRETS: Councillors: Iona Stoddard (March 1)
 Becky Kent (March 8)

STAFF: Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer
 Jerry Blackwood, Executive Director of Finance & Asset Management/Chief Financial Officer
 John Traves, K.C., CD, Executive Director of Legal & Legislative Services/Municipal Solicitor
 Karen MacDonald, Acting Municipal Solicitor
 Iain MacLean, Municipal Clerk
 Annie Sherry, 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 9:31 a.m. and recessed at 11:41 a.m. Budget Committee reconvened at 11:45 a.m. and recessed at 11:58 a.m. Budget Committee reconvened at 1:00 p.m. and recessed at 2:50 p.m. Budget Committee reconvened at 3:05 p.m. and recessed at 4:04 p.m. Budget Committee reconvened at 9:32 a.m. on March 8, 2023, and recessed at 12:06 p.m. Budget Committee reconvened at 1:00 p.m. and adjourned at 1:57 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:31 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 March 1, 2023
- Handout titled, "Budget Adjustment List Summary" dated March 8, 2023

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – February 3, 8, and 10, 2023

MOVED by Councillor Deagle Gammon, seconded by Councillor Blackburn

THAT the minutes of February 3, 8, and 10, 2023 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 Lovelace, seconded by Councillor Outhit

THAT the agenda be approved as presented.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Not present: Councillors Hendsbee, Kent, Mason, Cuttall, Stoddard

4. CALL FOR DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS – NONE

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ben Hammer, Ecology Action Centre, spoke to their appreciation for the Moving Forward Together Plan, the realistic approach to budget planning with respect to ridership, operating expenses, and cost recovery within the proposed Halifax Transit 2023-24 budget and their concerns with the shortage of transit operators. Hammer highlighted that transit operators make less than the living wage of \$24 an hour as outlined by the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives and noted their support for increasing transit fares if revenue was used to increase salaries of transit operations, expand transit access programs and prioritize transparency on what is being done to recruit and retain more transit operators. Hammer responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee.

Paniz Khosroshahy, District 8, spoke to their concerns with cuts to services, the lengthy commute on the airport bus, proposed increases to transit fare within the proposed Halifax Transit 2023-24 budget, the

impact of fare increases on newcomers, racialized, and persons with disabilities, and noted that the housing crisis is exacerbated by unreliable transit. Khosroshahy thanked transit operators.

Lisa Litwack District 8, spoke to their experiences with transit use in other Canadian cities, highlighted that the inaccessibility of transit in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) made getting a driver's license necessary, outlined cities that have free transit, and their concerns with public safety relating to transit.

Shane O'Leary, President of the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 508, spoke to their concerns with low wages for transit staff, the lack of investment in recruitment and training from Halifax Transit and the HRM, transit staff working without a renegotiated collective agreement for the past two years, and highlighted several factors that have contributed to 14 staff resignations in 2023. O'Leary further noted that transit is an essential service, but transit staff have not been treated as essential, that the \$8.65 million in COVID-19 recovery funding from the Government of Canada had not being used to adequately compensate, train, or support transit staff, and their concerns with proposed reductions in funding and transit service alongside proposed increases to fares and property taxes.

6. REPORTS

6.1 Halifax Transit

The following was before Budget Committee:

- Staff report dated February 17, 2023
- Correspondence from Jon Huffman, Levi Guillena, Sarah Wilkins, Alison Zimmer, and Ben Hammer

Dave Reage, Executive Director, Halifax Transit gave a presentation and responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee.

MOVED by Councillor Mancini, seconded by Councillor Cuttell

THAT the Budget Committee:

- 1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to incorporate the Halifax Transit proposed 2023/24 Budget and Business Plan, as set out and discussed in the accompanying plan and supporting presentation to the staff report dated February 17, 2023, into the Draft 2023/24 Operating Budget.**
- 2. Approve the transit service modifications as proposed in the accompanying 2023/24 Annual Service Plan to the staff report dated February 17, 2023.**

MOVED by Councillor Mancini, seconded by Councillor Morse

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

- 3. Include an increase of \$379,000 to hire 4 (four) Service Supervisors, as outlined in the Briefing Note BN058 within the proposed 2023/24 Halifax Transit budget to the Budget Adjustment List as an expense over budget option for consideration.**

Phil Herritt, Director, Transit Operations responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee regarding the scope of and training for the proposed positions.

Dave Reage, Executive Director, Halifax Transit, responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee regarding ongoing work with Legal & Legislative Services to develop the by-law to support the scope of work of the proposed positions, and noted that if the positions were approved, staff would provide the Transportation Standing Committee with an evaluation of their implementation and impact.

John Traves, K.C., CD, Executive Director of Legal & Legislative Services/Municipal Solicitor responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee regarding the scope of the *Motor Vehicle Act* and noted that the HRM has authority to develop a by-law to implement the proposed positions.

MOTION TO AMEND PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Not present: Councillor Stoddard

Reage responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee and noted that Key Performance Indicators could be included in a forthcoming report to the Transportation Standing Committee on recruitment and retention of transit operators.

Patricia Hughes, Director, Planning & Customer Engagement, and Britt Wilson, Acting Executive Director, Human Resources & Corporate Communications responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee.

MOVED by Councillor Hendsbee

THAT the motion be amended to include alternative motion 1 from the staff report dated February 17, 2023, as a new section that reads as follows:

- 4. Include alternative 1, a reduction of \$847,000 for a fare increase of \$0.25 as outlined in the Briefing Note BN055 within the proposed 2023/24 Halifax Transit budget to the Budget Adjustment List as a revenue under budget option for consideration.**

Dave Reage, Executive Director, Halifax Transit, and Patricia Hughes, Director, Planning & Customer Engagement responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee.

As set out in section 65(1) of Administrative Order One, *Respecting the Procedures of the Council*, all motions shall be seconded before being debated or voted on. As there was no seconder, the motion was lost, and debate resumed on the main motion.

MOVED by Councillor Lovelace, seconded by Councillor Cuttell

THAT the motion be amended to include alternative motion 2 from the staff report dated February 17, 2023, as a new section that reads as follows:

- 4. Include alternative 2, a reduction of \$1,650,000 for cancelling the final network changes of the Moving Forward Together Plan, as outlined in the Briefing Note BN056 within the proposed 2023/24 Halifax Transit budget to the Budget Adjustment List as an expense under budget option for consideration.**

Dave Reage, Executive Director, Halifax Transit responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee regarding the details of route cancellations if the proposed amendment passed.

John Traves, K.C., CD, Executive Director of Legal & Legislative Services/Municipal Solicitor responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee and noted that if the proposed amendment passed, section 2 of the consolidated motion would need to be deferred until after consideration of the Budget Adjustment List.

Councillor Lovelace proposed to add a new section to the beginning of the motion reading as, "Defer section 2, 'Approve the transit service modifications as proposed in the accompanying 2023/24 Annual Service Plan to the staff report dated February 17, 2023, and;.'" As provided for in section 53 (2) of

Administrative Order One, *Respecting the Procedures of the Council*, the amendment was accepted as friendly.

The motion now read:

MOVED by Councillor Lovelace, seconded by Councillor Cuttell

THAT the motion be amended to include new sections that read as follows:

- 4. Defer section 2, "Approve the transit service modifications as proposed in the accompanying 2023/24 Annual Service Plan to the staff report dated February 17, 2023," and;**
- 5. Include alternative 2, a reduction of \$1,650,000 for cancelling the final network changes of the Moving Forward Together Plan, as outlined in the Briefing Note BN056 within the proposed 2023/24 Halifax Transit budget to the Budget Adjustment List as an expense under budget option for consideration.**

MOTION TO AMEND PUT AND DEFEATED. (3 in favour, 12 against)

In favour: Councillors Hendsbee, Purdy, Lovelace

Against: Budget Committee Chair Russell, Deputy Mayor Austin, Councillors Deagle Gammon, Kent, Mancini, Mason, Smith, Cleary, Morse, Cuttell, Blackburn, Outhit

Not present: Mayor Savage, Councillor Stoddard

Reage and Hughes responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee.

The question was called on the main motion:

MOVED by Councillor Mancini, seconded by Councillor Cuttell

THAT the Budget Committee:

- 1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to incorporate the Halifax Transit proposed 2023/24 Budget and Business Plan, as set out and discussed in the accompanying plan and supporting presentation to the staff report dated February 17, 2023, into the Draft 2023/24 Operating Budget;**
- 2. Approve the transit service modifications as proposed in the accompanying 2023/24 Annual Service Plan to the staff report dated February 17, 2023; and**
- 3. Include an increase of \$379,000 to hire 4 (four) Service Supervisors, as outlined in the Briefing Note BN058 within the proposed 2023/24 Halifax Transit budget to the Budget Adjustment List as an expense over budget option for consideration.**

MOTION AS AMENDED PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Not present: Councillors Kent, Stoddard

6.2 Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency

The following was before Budget Committee:

- Staff report dated February 10, 2023
- Correspondence from Jon Huffman and Tom Silver

Chief Ken Stuebing, Fire Chief/Executive Director, Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency gave a presentation and responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee.

MOVED by Councillor Cleary, seconded by Councillor Mancini

THAT the Budget Committee direct the Chief Administrative Officer to incorporate the Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency proposed 2023/24 Budget and Business Plan, as set out and discussed in the accompanying plan and supporting presentation to the staff report dated February 10, 2023, into the Draft 2023/24 Operating Budget

Stuebing responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee regarding full-time equivalent staffing numbers, efforts to reduce overtime, the dispatch process for emergency response, and the scope of the Medical First Responder Program. Stuebing noted that staff would provide further details to Budget Committee on firefighter staffing by region, as well as the number and age of HRM-owned fire trucks.

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee, noted that a discussion on service standards could happen in tandem with the Regional Plan update in the fall, and that staff would work with Halifax Water to provide Regional Council with additional information on fire hydrant servicing standards.

Dave Meldrum, Deputy Chief, Performance & Safety responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee regarding the number of staff on long-term disability, mental health supports, and strategies for recruitment and recognition of volunteer firefighters.

MOVED by Councillor Deagle Gammon, second by Councillor Lovelace

THAT the motion be amended to include alternative motion 3, option 1, as amended, from the staff report dated February 10, 2023, as a new section that reads as follows:

- 2. Include alternative 3, option 1: an increase of \$137,100 to increase staffing by 15 firefighters to convert Middle Musquodoboit (Station 38) to a 24/7 Career Composite Station while maintaining all E Platoon Stations as outlined the Briefing Note BN061 within proposed 2023/24 Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency budget.**

Chief Ken Stuebing, Fire Chief/Executive Director, Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee and noted that the proposed increase would result in the servicing of Middle Musquodoboit and surrounding areas.

MOTION TO AMEND PUT AND PASSED. (11 in favour, 5 against)

In favour: Councillors Deagle Gammon, Hendsbee, Purdy, Smith, Cleary, Morse, Cuttell, Stoddard, Lovelace, Blackburn, Outhit

Against: Budget Committee Chair Russell, Mayor Savage, Deputy Mayor Austin, Councillors Mancini, Mason

Not present: Councillor Kent

Stuebing responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee and noted that staff would return to a future meeting with information on responsibilities for building inspections and fire inspections with respect to a landlord registry in the HRM.

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer, and Dave Meldrum, Deputy Chief, Performance & Safety responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee.

The question was called on the main motion:

MOVED by Councillor Cleary, seconded by Councillor Mancini

THAT the Budget Committee:

- 1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to incorporate the Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency proposed 2023/24 Budget and Business Plan, as set out and discussed in the accompanying plan and supporting presentation to the staff report dated February 10, 2023, into the Draft 2023/24 Operating Budget.**
- 2. Include alternative 3, option 1: an increase of \$137,100 to increase staffing by 15 firefighters to convert Middle Musquodoboit (Station 38) to a 24/7 Career Composite Station while maintaining all E Platoon Stations as outlined the Briefing Note BN061 within proposed 2023/24 Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency budget.**

MOTION AS AMENDED PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Not present: Councillor Kent

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:57 p.m. on March 8, 2023.

Iain MacLean
Municipal Clerk