

WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Special Council Meeting Agenda
January 30, 2024 – 6 p.m.
(also held via virtual via Zoom and Facebook livestreamed)



Agenda is subject to change due to additions that may not be able to be reflected until after the meeting.

1. Call to Order
2. Attendance
3. Announcements
4. Approval of the Agenda
5. Declaration(s) of Conflict of Interest
6. New Business
 - a) Housing Action Plan – Director Poirier
7. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment

WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Special Council Meeting Minutes

January 30, 2024 - 6:00 p.m.

Sanford Council Chambers, 76 Morison Dr, Windsor, NS

And virtually via Zoom (also Facebook Livestreamed)



West Hants

something inspiring awaits

1. Call to Order – Deputy Mayor P. Morton called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Attendance

Council:

Rupert Jannasch, Councillor, District 1

Scott McLean, Councillor, District 2

Mark McLean, Councillor, District 3

Jeff Hartt, Councillor, District 4

Debbie Francis, Councillor, District 5 (ZOOM)

Paul Morton, Deputy Mayor, District 8

Bob Morton, Councillor, District 6

Ed Sherman, Councillor, District 7

John Smith, Councillor, District 9 (6:01 p.m.)

Laurie Murley, Councillor, District 10

Jim Ivey, Councillor, District 11

Regrets:

Abraham Zebian, Mayor

Staff:

Mark Phillips, Chief Administrative Officer

Kathy Kehoe, Director Community Development

Todd Richard, Dir. Public Works

Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk

Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk

Sara Poirier, Dir. Planning & Development

Tim Leslie, Man. Building and Fire Officials

Regrets:

Carlee Rochon, Director of Financial Services

Shelleena Thornton, Municipal Ops Sup.

3. Announcements (6:00 p.m.)

Deputy Mayor P. Morton acknowledged that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People and that this land is governed by the treaties of Peace and Friendship signed in 1726.

4. Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions (6:01 p.m.)

Voting occurred by a show of hands.

**MOVED BY COUNCILLORS SHERMAN AND IVEY THAT THE 2024-01-30
SPECIAL COUNCIL AGENDA BE APPROVED. MOTION CARRIED**

5. Declaration of Conflict of Interest (6:01 pm) – None

6. New Business

- a) Housing Action Plan (6:02 p.m.)

Director Poirier presented the recommendation report highlighting the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) opened a new funding stream, the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF), in 2023 to encourage initiatives that increase housing supply and promote the development of

affordable, inclusive, and diverse communities that are low-carbon and climate-resilient. An application was submitted on August 16, 2023.

A response was received from CMHC on Monday January 29, 2024, to advise that the application was being reviewed and in order for them to move forward with the process they (CMHC) require Councils endorsement for the Housing Action Plan by the end of day tomorrow (Wednesday, January 31, 2024).

Part of the application process for the Housing Accelerator Fund was to submit a Housing Action Plan, which was created in consultation with the Director of Planning and Development, CAO and the Director of Public Works.

Within the plan, seven (7) actions were created to increase housing, specifically affordable housing within the region and three (3) actions that would support increased density within the serviced areas of the region. It was believed the actions identified were obtainable, with realistic outcomes.

Based on the calculation of new units being proposed in the Housing Action Plan, a total of \$1,081,886 was requested from the Housing Accelerator Fund. In order for CMHC to continue to evaluate the application, they require Councils' endorsement of the Housing Action Plan as submitted to CMHC. This funding represents 100% of the anticipated costs of the Housing Action Plan with no financial commitment from the Municipality.

Discussion Points:

- Removing R1 to permit R2' s was a best practice across the country to increase density in a realistic way for communities that were predominantly single unit residential. This would provide areas with large parcels of land, similar to Falmouth (predominately single with an opportunity to increase density at a realistic rate for the community.

Director Poirier reviewed the plan in greater detail.

Action 1 would allow greater density “as of right”.

- Increase density through rezoning Single Unit Residential (R-1) zoned properties to Two Unit Residential (R-2) within serviced areas.
- Allow increased number of units and number of storeys as-of-right in serviced areas instead of through a rezoning or development agreement process, which can be lengthy and costly to potential developers.
- Update the minimum zone requirements to permit development on smaller lots with smaller required setbacks.

Discussion Points:

- Within the HAF, an excel spreadsheet (package circulated prior to 5 p.m.) explained how funding was determined based on the number of units proposed. Base funding was provided for the number of units that the housing stock was increased by and additional funding was offered if it was identified affordable or multi-unit housing.
- It was estimated there would be 10 units, the majority of these would be Two-Units based on the zoning being changed from R-1 to R-2 and permitt more “as of right” units to be built. The application required WHRM to look at the entire three years of the funding program and determine the base number of units that was expected to be permitted

without the funding and then calculate how many units would be approved with the funding.

- The application was submitted prior to the consultant being engaged to complete the Planning Review. The HAF was expected to cover costs associated with resources being put into the plan review, any changes would be incorporated into the plan review process. Any changes proposed to planning documents would come back to the Planning and Heritage Advisory Committee and Council for consideration and approval. It was thought the Action items 1-3 would have been part of the Regional Planning Review process, if they were not, then funds could be used to complete the addition work/service and funding may be able to be applied to the expense that was originally municipally funded.
- The plan identifies goals that WHRM was working towards to meet the target of 40 new units based on allowing greater density as of right. There was flexibility in what that meant through the planning documents. WSP, Council, the Planning and Heritage Advisory committee and public will be engaged. There may be alternate options that were able to meet the growth targets instead of rezoning from R1 to R2. The target was to have a total of 40 new units by 2027.
- The Housing Needs Assessment completed by the province identified WHRM will need 560 new units by 2027. With the support of HAF, the number of permits issued over a three-year period could increase to 370.

Action 2 would create affordable housing policy requirements that would look to incentivize affordable housing through multi-unit developments, such as bonus zoning or accepting money rather than the required provision of affordable housing in the Municipal Planning Strategy. This was thought to be done through the regional planning review.

Discussion Points:

- Part of funding used for public engagements would be to connect with developers to determine what/if any impacts would be felt (slow down development) if they were to pay money instead of having an affordable housing component within their proposed development.
- It was attributed that two (2) of the 40 units in a multi-unit development under 5 stories in height would be affordable housing units and two (2) units within the municipality.

Action 3 looked at reducing parking regulations.

Current planning documents require 1.5 parking spaces for any dwelling containing three or more units. Staff will review the current parking requirements and amend the planning documents to reduce these in serviced areas. It was expected that this amendment would allow the creation of two (2) additional units over the three (3) years of the HAF.

Discussion Points:

- It was expected that the suggested ratio for parking would be 1:1.

Action 4 looked to remove permit fees for accessory dwelling units. The current planning documents allow attached and detached secondary suites accessory to any single or two-unit dwelling. Since 2020, 7 secondary suites have received occupancy. To encourage increased development of secondary suites, staff propose removing the fees associated with the required

development and building permits for secondary suites within the time period of the HAF program. This would encourage conversion of existing accessory buildings and the construction of new accessory buildings specifically to be used as secondary suites. It was assumed that eight additional secondary suites would be established within the HAF three-year timeframe.

Discussion Points:

- The plan review included a review of the entire planning documents including all parking requirements and would likely refer to best practices. The number of secondary suites may increase even more if additional parking was not required.
- Staff would be looking at all considerations (including the need for off-street parking in the architectural district in the former town of Windsor area) related to parking concerns through the plan review process.

Action 5 promotes infill development in serviced areas. Staff would look to map all vacant or underutilized properties in the Municipality to determine what land may be suitable for infill development. Staff would then engage and collaborate with identified properties and connect interested property owners with potential developers to encourage infill development. It was suggested that four (4) new units would be created through this initiative.

Discussion Points:

- Discussions were not specific to public lands; it was of an inventory of privately owned lands within serviced areas that had potential for development.
- In addition, VREN were also doing work to provide an inventory of commercial/industrial.

Action 6 promotes alternative housing forms.

Promoting alternative housing forms such as boarding houses or single room occupancy did not meet the CMHC criteria, staff are adjusting the proposal to include pre-approved building designs (off the shelf ideas) for multi-unit or multi-unit under 5 stories to make it more affordable/appealing for developers to do infilling and develop their properties.

Discussion Points:

- CMHC confirmed the proposed change would meet their criteria if Council were in support of the application.
- This initiative was specific to new designs/builds.
- It was felt that Pallet houses would not meet the criteria for CMHC, the funding applies to new permanent units.

Action 7 was to upgrade permit software.

Currently all development and building permit applications are required to be submitted in person or via mail, resulting in no opportunity for applicants to submit applications online or make payments for a permit online. Upgrading the permit software to allow applicants to submit applications and payment online would reduce the time for both the applicant and staff to review and receive completed applications. It was expected that this initiative would see ten (10) additional units be brought forward.

Action items 1-7 were the items submitted by staff that met CMHC requirements. The remaining action items may be eligible for funding through the HAF should any funds be left over from the original proposed actions.

Action 8 looked at hiring a Housing Support Worker.

This was added in the proposal/application to showcase that WHRM was thinking ahead and what this would look like for our region.

Discussion Points:

- Proposed funding allocated to this action item was associated with a two (2) year term for staffing.

Action 9 looked to develop an integrated resource master plan.

The plan would look to produce an optimal servicing strategy for the overall wastewater, treatment / collection and water supply, treatment, fire storage /supply and distribution networks to ensure sufficient service to existing developments and to support future capacity in development.

Discussion Points:

- It was felt that the lower density and infilling being promoted was attainable and could be achieved within the 5-year Capital plan that Public Works has created regarding investing in infrastructure. Public Works were striving towards the integrated resource plan to ensure that they could meet the capacity demand moving forward. More conversations need to be had with respect to multi-units, but it was felt that it was not outside the scope of the was currently being serviced.

Action 10 looked to develop a Rural Transit Feasibility Study.

This was identified as an action item in collaboration with the Director of Public Works as it would serve to support any new housing developments being encouraged within the region.

Action items 8-10 were not required to be funded through the plan but were added as additional suggestions.

Concern was raised about the short timeline Council was provided to review and approve the application. It was understood that the intent of the accelerator program was to create more housing options in Canada. It was understood the requests from larger urban centres had been reviewed and any financial commitments to them had been made; now they have moved on to a second round of funding for smaller regions.

Staff felt the deliverables within the application were low and very achievable at 40 new units. Staff were only advised of the potential funding and need for Councils endorsement on Monday, resulting in the same information being provided to Council on Monday as well.

The funding opens up opportunities to explore growth through potential policy changes (which must be approved by Council) that may not have been otherwise discussed. With the overall objective to increase the housing stock by 40 units, it was felt the risk was low.

It was thought that if the application was supported and as projects progressed, any funding left over may be able to be utilized towards additional action items identified or additional items not yet thought of.

The housing need assessment completed for West Hants was optimistic, it indicated West Hants would not be as short on housing compared to other municipalities. When the application was submitted, it did not require Councils endorsement, which was why it was not presented to Council previously. The Director apologized for this oversight. A request was made to extend the deadline until the next meeting date, which was denied. The deadline for a response was tomorrow.

It was identified that the first three (3) action items would have been included under the plan review. The remaining items were not expected to be done within the plan review. The funding provides the ability to accelerate actions that would likely be presented to Council in the coming years for approval, with someone else paying the bill.

The action items that require policy amendments would still be presented to the Planning and Heritage committee and Council for final approval. There will be an opportunity for citizens to be engaged and have a voice. The intent was to meet the unit goals, how the

Payments would be dispersed into four (4) equal payments (entire amount divided). The first payment would be received once confirmation of the endorsed application was received and the contract was signed. The remaining payments would be received annually over the next three (3) years, most likely every April.

MOVED BY COUNCILLORS MURLEY AND FRANCIS THAT COUNCIL APPROVES THE HOUSING ACTION PLAN AS SUBMITTED TO CMHC AND DIRECTS STAFF TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTION PLAN. MOTION CARRIED.

Nays: Hartt

MOVED BY COUNCILLORS B. MORTON AND SHERMAN THAT THE MEETING ADJOURN AT 6:56 P.M. MOTION CARRIED

7. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment – February 13th, 2023 Committee of the Whole Meeting 6 p.m.

Deputy Mayor Paul Morton (Chair)

Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk