



West Hants

something inspiring awaits

**WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Municipal Climate Change Action Plan (MCCAP) Committee
September 13, 2023 – 11:00am
Sanford Council Chambers / Zoom**

PRESENT: Rupert Jannasch, Councillor (Chair)
Debbie Francis, Councillor
Scott McLean, Councillor
Mark Phillips, CAO
Sara Poirier, Director of Planning and Development
Alex Dunphy, Planning Designate
Diana Gibson, Financial Services Designate
Todd Richard, Director of Public Works
Mark Williamson, Resident Member
Jeremy Higgins, Resident Member

STAFF: John Ogilvie, Climate Action Coordinator
Vanessa Lake, Planning Assistant

PUBLIC: One (1) member of the public was present.

REGRETS: Shelleena Thornton, Protective Services Designate

Call to Order and Identification of Designates

Chair Jannasch called the meeting to order at 11:00am. Committee members identified their designation and welcomed new resident member, Jeremy Higgins.

Approval of Agenda and Additions

Moved by Debbie Francis and seconded by Mark Phillips that the agenda be approved as circulated. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes (April 12, 2023)

Moved by Todd Richard and seconded by Debbie Francis that the minutes be approved as circulated. Motion carried.

New Business

Information: MCCAP Committee 2024 Work Plan

John provided an information report to the Committee to assist with discussion on the 2024 Work Plan. A draft 2024 Work Plan and a dashboard list were attached; the dashboard provides the current status of action items within the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Reduction Local Action Plan. Many items added in the 2023 Work Plan have been completed, including hiring a dedicated GHG reductions employee and implementing electric vehicle (EV) chargers.

The Committee discussed current work plan and action items at length, and other items they would like to include. Implementing Level 3 EV chargers is a priority of the Committee. John mentioned that Nova Scotia Power (NSP) has applied for federal funding to install a Level 3 charger within the Municipality, likely on municipal land on the waterfront where it would be close to the highway. Putting this item on the Work Plan would give it more of a profile and would be easy to complete in collaboration with NSP. Charging or distance anxiety is a barrier for many people regarding EVs and higher-powered chargers for faster charging times may alleviate some of that anxiety.

Chair Jannasch asked about the status of solar projects, and John will provide this information later in the meeting. Debbie asked about budget allocation in 2024, and Sara replied that the Work Plan guides budget development for the Committee and identifies funding opportunities. Given recent flooding events, flood impact studies and the implementation of the data may be added to the Work Plan and budget considerations. Stormwater management remains a concern and priority. During discussion of municipally-lead action on flood prevention, Todd noted that Public Works can suggest actions on an ad hoc basis, but sustained inspections of private infrastructure would require more staff resources. Todd mentioned local action item 1.2: the promotion and celebration of energy efficient buildings. He asked if the Committee was aiming for net-zero, which may need to become a policy of Council. It was acknowledged that

there is a lot of collaboration between Public Works and MCCAP, and anything the MCCAP Committee can do to champion these projects is a priority.

Another priority of the Committee is committing to electric fleet conversion. This would require a new policy or amendments to an existing policy, i.e., the procurement policy when it comes to replacing or purchasing vehicles. It was noted that it is currently not feasible for certain vehicles such as pick-up trucks and heavy-duty vehicles used by Public Works to be replaced with an electric version; this must be acknowledged in any policy creation or amendments.

The Committee asked about building retrofits. John gave updates on ongoing projects. The PACE Program is not yet ready to launch, but staff are in the final stages of reviewing the Service and Funding agreements with the various partners. He is also currently working on a full application to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' (FCM) Community Building Retrofit Program. Council has allotted up to \$40,000 to support the application, which would make WHRM eligible for a maximum of \$160,000 from FCM to complete a feasibility study. He has recently started working with a Roving Municipal Energy Manager from Efficiency NS. At no cost to the Municipality, this individual will collaborate with John and Public Works to conduct a full forensic audit on municipal buildings. They are in the initial stages of gathering data which this individual will use to generate a plan to improve municipal buildings.

A full recommendation report will be brought to the Committee in November based on Committee feedback and additions. The final work plan will be passed on to Council to be placed on file.

Business Arising from the Minutes

Update: Committee Name

A Resident expressed difficulty in finding the Committee due to its name and staff were asked to investigate name changes. At the May 2023 Committee of the Whole meeting, one suggestion was brought forward, which was the "Earth Conservation Committee." The suggestion has been made to visit schools and ask students for ideas, but with so few staff resources, time would be better spent on other projects. The Committee discussed using either "Climate Change Committee" or "Climate Change Action Committee." Sara suggested bringing a recommendation report to the Committee in November for further discussion and a decision.

Update: Coastal Protection Act – Response to letter sent by Council

Council had sent a letter to the Province to ask about the status of the Coastal Protection Act regulations and they received a response at the end of June. The provincial government is currently engaging with the public before finalizing the regulations. They hope to complete the consultation by the end of the year and will then develop plans to proceed.

Sara noted that the Province, through the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing, has engaged Dillon Consulting to perform a flood study on the Minas Basin. The study should be completed by March 2024 and will help to inform provincial legislation in the future. Sara has requested that the Municipality receive a copy of this study.

Floodplains are a major concern to the Committee. Currently, only marshlands have restrictions on building and development. The Committee would like to see regulations to restrict building and development in floodplains as well. This is something staff have been looking into.

Following data collection, the intent is to develop the regulations and investigate other impacts such as property values. The regulations would require further discussion with this Committee and with Council. Mark Phillips noted that the Plan Review is still ongoing, which provides an opportunity to include these regulations in the MPS/LUB. Sara added it would be good for the MCCAP Committee to be involved in this process. The Committee would like to add it to the 2024 workplan; John will include it in November's recommendation report.

Update: NS Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund and Solar Power

The Municipality applied for this funding in April but was unfortunately unsuccessful.

The municipality also applied for the Low Carbon Communities fund through the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities for a solar feasibility study. Staff have not heard anything back yet. The study would focus on open lands the Municipality currently owns.

Sara noted that there is a line item in the Capital Budget for a solar project and \$50,000 in the MCCAP budget for projects. If further applications are unsuccessful, the Municipality will establish a small solar project without external funding.

Roundtable Discussion

Alex received an informational grant letter in the mail advertising a one-time grant opportunity to put in a charging station. He did not know if this was only advertising to Halifax Regional Municipality. John thinks it may have been from the Clean Foundation, as they have recently opened a request for proposals for another EV Boost Program.

Mark Phillips mentioned the considerable number of wind farms being developed and considered. He asked if the Committee would be interested in inviting a group to present at a meeting. He acknowledged that there should be a discussion on how many turbines is "too many."

Mark Phillips would also like to get John's face and the Committee's information out there, by collaborating with Kathy Johnston-Isenor for video promotion.

Mark Williamson had worked with the Ellershouse wind project, and noted their community fund, which has been used to construct solar on select community buildings.

Sara informed the Committee that the Benjamins Mill Wind Farm was approved by Council, and the Bear Lake wind farm group presented to Council recently for their potential project. She said that Bear Lake plans to support the community they inhabit with bursary funds, community liaison, road improvements, et cetera. Mark Phillips informed the Committee that Bear Lake is holding another open house at the Southwest Hants Fire Station on September 26. Sara has reached out to the Department of Environment regarding the number of wind farms. Jeremy suggested contacting Natural Resources and Renewables as well. He hopes to see more action in West Hants regarding climate change adaptation.

Todd informed the Committee that Dalhousie University has reached out to Public Works with hopes to partner, at no cost to the Municipality, with engineering students for their term projects. The suggested study would involve investigating municipal water sources in Hantsport and Windsor and supplementing these sources.

Sara mentioned that Nova Scotia Power is investigating battery storage options outside of Dartmouth, and this may be a new land-use trend or environmental project going forward.

Sara and John met with the Clean Foundation to discuss the Community Climate Capacity Program a few weeks ago. The program offers municipalities two years of free staff within climate operations to provide expertise. They are planning to apply to this program when it rolls out in the Fall.

Scott asked if there are any updates on tidal energy. Mark W. said a different company has put another prototype in for testing. John added that they are currently experiencing issues floating the anchors for the turbine. The anchors are currently on the bed of the Minas Basin offshore of Walton. As John understands it, the turbine will be on the surface, and the anchors will hold it in place, the issue is getting the anchors to the desired location. The current company also must pay to remove the existing turbine, which may prolong the process.

Next Meeting Date / Adjournment

The next meeting is scheduled for November 8, 2023 at 11:00am. The Committee and the public will be notified of any changes. Moved by Debbie Francis and seconded by Mark Phillips that the meeting be adjourned at 12:39pm. Motion carried.

Chair's Signature