

**West Hants Plan Review
Public Meeting
West Hants Planning Advisory Committee
Brooklyn District Elementary School
November 4, 2002, 7:00 p.m.**

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Chairman Randy Matheson
Councillor Norm Clarke
Councillor Gloria Shanks
Councillor Fred Horne
Mr. Larry Frenette

STAFF:

Lynn Davis, Director of Planning
Jane Sodero, Planner
Velma Macumber, Administrative Assistant

OTHER COUNCILLORS:

Councillor Tom Brown
Councillor Shirley Pineo

ABSENT: Councillor Reed Allen
Ms. Traci Curry

GUESTS: Members of the Public - 18

Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Matheson introduced members of the Planning Advisory Committee and Staff to the public. He explained the purpose of the public meetings was to receive ideas from the public for the plan review.

What is the Plan Review?

Ms. Davis thanked the public for attending the meeting. Ms. Davis advised that the Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) sets out Council's and the community's vision and policies for development of the Municipality. The Land Use By-law (LUB) is a regulatory tool that puts the Municipal Planning Strategy into effect. The third planning document is the Subdivision By-law which is the other regulatory tool. "Subdivision" means adding or taking from a lot, or creating one lot, as well as creating a hundred-lot subdivision.

Ms. Davis stated that over time the planning documents may have become outdated because of changing demographics and residents' desires for their community, and provincial regulations, and possible changes resulting from events such as the Highway 101 twinning. In this area, Area One, the MPS was last reviewed in 1991 and now the Committee is interested to find out if that is what the public still wants.

Ms. Davis explained the plan review schedule. Staff have been working for the last year on background research including reports such as the Statistical Profile which outlines demographics and building trends, and a household survey. Ms. Davis advised that the Committee is meeting with focus groups. The Committee met with developers and also will be meeting with the agricultural community sometime in January. All the input from the public meetings and consultations will be used to draft a strategy concept or vision which will form a framework for the new planning documents. Ms. Davis explained that the purpose of the plan review is to update all the Municipal Planning Strategies and Land Use By-laws and consolidate all into one planning document for the entire Municipality. The next step is to draft the Strategy Concept which will be presented at public meetings sometime in February 2003. The first draft of the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law is to be presented to all communities early next fall. The second draft will be presented in the early winter 2004. The final draft will be completed in the Spring or Summer 2004.

Results of Plan Review Survey

Ms. Sodero presented the results of the Plan Review Survey.

In June 2002, approximately 8,100 surveys were sent out to households in Windsor and West Hants. There was a 9.4 percent return rate for West Hants and a 12 percent return rate for Windsor for an overall return of 9.9 percent. Brooklyn, McKay Section, St. Croix, and Ardoise areas comprised approximately 20 percent of the total returns from West Hants.

In Brooklyn most of the respondents were between the ages of 45 and 54. The survey showed that 24 percent were retired and most of the West Hants respondents who worked, worked in West Hants, while others travelled to the Halifax area to work. A large number of St. Croix respondents worked in West Hants while more Wentworth Creek respondents worked in Windsor.

Single family dwellings were the most common type of dwelling for respondents from West Hants and the next most common type of housing was mobile homes.

About 35 percent of West Hants respondents had lived in the same house for twenty years or more, while in Windsor, about 40 percent had lived in their current home for only one to five years.

Respondents said the major influences in choosing to live in the Brooklyn area included: the quiet, rural atmosphere, closeness to family, the cost of land, and proximity to Halifax.

West Hants respondents expressed concerns regarding the condition of streets, roads and sidewalks, pedestrian safety, traffic and condition of buildings in their neighbourhood.

The survey asked about encouraging different types of residential development. Most West Hants respondents felt that only single family dwellings and senior housing should be encouraged. In addition, in the Brooklyn area, 40 percent said duplexes were acceptable. West Hants respondents felt a variety of non-residential uses such as home occupations and churches were acceptable in residential areas.

Respondents included many of the same factors that influenced their decision to move to West Hants as reasons why they liked their community. Some dislikes that were noted were: poor road conditions, lack of water and sewer services, unsightly properties, and speed of traffic.

When asked about commercial development and where respondents did their shopping, most West Hants respondents do their grocery shopping in Windsor. Most clothing purchases are made in HRM, but furniture, appliances and autos are generally purchased in Windsor. However, a greater percentage of respondents from McKay Section, and St. Croix area shopped in Halifax because of its proximity.

Most respondents suggested that new businesses should locate in existing buildings downtown, existing mall space and industrial parks. Respondents from this area also chose Brooklyn as a possible location for new businesses.

When asked about downtown Windsor, West Hants respondents were somewhat satisfied with most aspects of downtown Windsor. A considerable number, however, were not satisfied with parking, condition of buildings, and condition of streets and sidewalks.

Most of the comments from West Hants about commercial development included development in the Town of Windsor, since West Hants respondents view Windsor as their town as well. Some respondents felt there was a need for a large retail store while others wanted to encourage smaller local businesses. There was also a desire to revitalize the downtown area. Concerning Industrial Parks, respondents felt a wide range of commercial and industrial uses should be permitted like those which are available in Bayers Lake and Burnside.

Over half of the respondents from West Hants and Windsor felt that residential development should be directed away from prime agricultural land.

When respondents were asked about municipal services, respondents were “somewhat satisfied” with most services. In the Brooklyn area, respondents were not satisfied with the conditions of roads and streets, and business development.

The survey included questions about recreation programs and composting. West Hants respondents had a low participation rate in recreation programs linked to awareness, location and transportation.

There were five different questions on planning issues in the Windsor-West Hants area. These included protection of heritage buildings, downtown architectural standards and Downtown Windsor revitalization. Most respondents from West Hants felt that these were important issues, and the preservation of farmland was also very important.

With regard to future development of Windsor-West Hants, 71 percent of respondents either “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that development should be encouraged in serviced rather than unserviced areas. In the Brooklyn area, 15 to 30 percent disagreed.

With regard to residential development being limited in areas with poor well water or inadequate ground water supply, respondents from this area “strongly agreed” or “agreed.” 26 percent of the respondents from Brooklyn disagreed.

The question about a by-law limiting the use of pesticides in Windsor found that more than 60 percent of West Hants respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed,” with many adding that a by-law should also be considered for West Hants.

The question concerning the Avon River Causeway was not a yes or no question and Ms. Sodero had to gauge whether a response was a yes or no. Overall, 38 percent of West Hants respondents suggested that the causeway should be removed and 39 percent of Windsor respondents felt it should not be removed. Most respondents from this area felt it should be removed.

There were no questions from the public about the results of the survey.

The public meeting recessed at 7:29 p.m.

The public meeting reconvened at 7:46 p.m.

Existing Planning Documents

Ms. Davis explained the existing planning documents. She advised that Area 1 includes the Brooklyn area and the area south of the Kennetcook River extending from the eastern boundary of the Municipality, and including the Highway 101 corridor area as far as Windsor. Area 2 is north of the Kennetcook River and covers the Shore area. Area 3 is the southwest part of the Municipality extending past Windsor on Highway 14 toward Martock, Windsor Forks and Vaughan and the county line. There is a separate Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law for Falmouth and another separate one for Upper Falmouth.

The Falmouth MPS was designed was to address the rapid residential growth that Falmouth was experiencing in the 1970's and 80's. The intent of the planning strategy is that Falmouth is to develop as a predominately residential community within very defined servicing boundaries.

The Upper Falmouth MPS and LUB were adopted at the request of farmers in the area in 1989. Its intent is to protect prime agricultural land in Upper Falmouth.

The Area 2 & 3 MPS and LUB were adopted in 1994. It is a very simple two-issue strategy developed to protect the Falmouth Water Supply Area and prevent undesirable land uses, namely landfills, from coming into the area. There is a water supply zone and a general use zone. The general use zone permits everything but landfills.

The Area 1 MPS was adopted in 1982 and last reviewed in 1991. This is the most complex MPS and LUB. There are 31 zones in the LUB. The planning strategy makes a clear distinction between urban and rural. The urban designation is the Growth Centre which applies to the Three Mile Plains/Hillcrest Drive serviced area. The idea is that most of the more intensive non-resource uses will be directed to the Growth Centre. The rural designation applies to the Village designation of Brooklyn, and eight Hamlets including Ellershouse, Newport Corner, Newport Station, St. Croix, and Newport Landing. The remainder is the resource areas. The intent of the MPS is to concentrate development in the serviced Growth Centre, and to a lesser extent in the Village and Hamlets, thereby protecting the resource areas, and preventing scattered development.

The Planning Strategy states that the Village of Brooklyn services as a focal point for the surrounding countryside and functions as a service centre. Brooklyn is not expected to grow at the same rate as the Growth Centre since municipal water and sewer services are not provided. In the last plan review, in 1991, Brooklyn's designation was changed from Growth Centre to Village because of concerns over rapid growth. The current MPS says water and sewer services will not be considered in a Village designation. However the Village could be redesignated as a Growth Centre allowing for municipal services.

Within the Village core there is a Village Commercial zone and Residential/Commercial zone. The Residential/Commercial zone allows for residential uses, home occupations and specialty commercial uses such as antique shops, delis, flower shops, and cottage crafts. The Village Commercial zone applies to the existing commercial uses.

Outside the Village Core, new Highway Commercial and Village Commercial uses may be considered by rezoning, but only on arterial roads, like Highway 215. New industrial uses are not permitted. In addition, there is an Institutional zone and an Agriculture/Resource zone. There are two residential zones, Village Residential, which allows for single family dwellings, mini homes, two units, and existing mobiles. No new mobiles are permitted. The Single Detached Residential zone allows single family dwellings.

Outside of Brooklyn there are the Hamlets. The Hamlets are smaller communities which offer locally oriented services, such as churches, community halls, and schools, and limited residential development. The intent is to maintain the rural nature of these areas. The Hamlet Commercial zone allows commercial uses such as hair dressing shops, convenience stores, restaurants, and craft shops. There is a limit on the size of businesses which is 1,000 sf of floor area.

The Hamlet Industrial zone allows light industrial uses along with accessory residential uses. Agricultural industries, sawmills, sheet metal shops and similar uses are permitted. Outside the Hamlets, there are Resource zones where residential uses are permitted, but where resource activity is considered of primary importance. There are three Agricultural Priority zones; AR-1, AR-2, and AR-3, whose purpose is to protect agricultural land. In the Brooklyn area most of the agricultural zoning is AR-2 and AR-3, although there is also some AR-1 land. The most stringent regulations are in Agricultural Priority 1 (AR-1). The AR-2 zone is less restrictive and the AR-3 zone is less restrictive still. The idea of the agricultural priority zones is to protect prime agricultural land and active farms. The Forestry Resource zone allows for some residential uses and forestry uses. There is a Mineral Resource zone that is intended to apply to active mine areas. The Combined Resource zone is quite open and allows forestry and agricultural uses.

Ms. Davis asked the public for comments.

Questions and comments from Public

A question was asked about where the Forestry Resource zone is located. Ms. Davis stated much of the Forestry Resource zone is located in the southern part of Area 1, around the lakes, and outside of Ardoise and Ellershouse.

Hilda Dimock asked if Curry's Corner and Garlands Crossing were considered part of the Growth Centre of Three Mile Plains. Ms. Davis replied that Curry's Corner and Garlands Crossing are part of the Three Mile Plains/Hillcrest Drive Growth Centre. Ms. Dimock noted that sewer services are needed in Brooklyn and it should be designated as a Growth Centre also.

Peter McClare asked if there was a formula in place about the growth rate versus the tax rate. Ms. Davis said there was no formula in place. Mr. McClare commented that the areas with the highest population would have the higher tax rates. He expressed concern about how people enjoy the quiet rural atmosphere of Brooklyn, and that it may disappear once sewer services are provided. He questioned whether people thought about the consequences of putting in services in Brooklyn.

Ms. Davis stated once Brooklyn gets services, the lot size requirements will decrease and so will lot frontages allowing for more dense development. She said the people need to look at what types of commercial uses could be attracted to the area. The Highway Commercial zone is the same zone that applies to the Growth Centre. It allows for a wide variety of uses such as Big Stops, theatres, shopping centres, etc. Once Brooklyn gets services, the village could get those businesses. What the public said in 1991 was that Brooklyn had a notable sense of community and they were concerned about rapid growth. They seemed to want boutiques, antique shops, flower shops and the like, which were attractive and gave a “village” feel, not shopping centres.

Ms. Davis asked the public if they wanted Brooklyn to have the same requirements as the Three Mile Plains Growth Centre or something a little bit different or more restrictive. Hilda Dimock commented that she wanted to see the requirements for Brooklyn tailored to their needs.

Ms. Davis advised that the purpose of the meeting is to see if there is something new wanted from the public.

Colleen Boyles advised that she moved from Halifax because of the rural, quiet atmosphere of Brooklyn. She stated she was willing to haul water to keep that rural setting. Ms. Boyles expressed concerns about perhaps Brooklyn becoming another Tantallon. In Tantallon there is heavy traffic due to the result of rapid development. She commented that Brooklyn is a beautiful area to live.

Ms. Davis advised that one reason for pushing the plan review now is that Highway 101 twinning could result in development pressure. It is important to think about where the people are going to go and how they are going to be accommodated. How do you want Brooklyn to develop?

One resident commented that there is a need to stabilize taxes. Chairman Matheson noted that in the last two years the tax rate had decreased. A question was asked that if there is no growth will tax trends continue. John Miller advised that a larger population may lighten the tax rate, however the value of assessments in the community may increase. Mr. Miller asked if anyone had tried to find out the impact of the Highway 101 twinning. Ms. Davis stated it is very difficult to quantify. There are many factors that could affect population growth. She advised that one of the things that affects development here is what HRM is doing and how costly development is there. Ms. Davis advised that we have to be prepared for growth above what has been experienced in the last few years.

It was noted that Mount Uniacke has not had an increase in growth since the Highway twinning. But Mount Uniacke had been experiencing growth for twenty years or so prior to the twinning.

Ms. Davis advised that there are different ways of dealing with the concerns regarding the lack of water and sewer services in areas. One possibility is to provide sewer services just to a small concentrated area where people are having problems. The policies would have to be drafted to reflect that Brooklyn remain in the Village designation, but water and sewer services are provided to help correct the environmental problem. She said it depends on what people want. Another possibility is that there could be two types of Growth Centres with different requirements. Hilda Dimock said the residents want to keep it as rural as possible, and do not want to see McDonald's, Burger King, or large industrial uses, and they want better air quality.

Discussion was held regarding Brooklyn possibly being designated as a Growth Centre. Ms. Davis asked people to try to get beyond the term "Growth Centre" and think instead about the types of uses they wanted in Brooklyn.

Valerie Murphy advised that she operated a daycare in Brooklyn. She chose Brooklyn because when doing her business plan, Brooklyn was the community that most needed childcare. Ms. Murphy said she is now faced with a problem with her daycare license because of the environmental situation. She said she did not want to leave Brooklyn, but because of the smell she may have to locate somewhere else. Ms. Murphy advised that the stench of the sewer is everywhere in Brooklyn.

A person who works at the Post Office commented that there is a sulfur smell.

One person asked if any studies had been done. Ms. Davis advised that the Brooklyn Village Water and Sewer Committee was looking into the matter. Chairman Matheson advised that currently it is before the Environment Committee. Cost of sewage treatment is a big issue.

Councillor Pineo clarified that the residents of the area serviced pay the cost, not residents of the whole Municipality.

John Miller asked whether the existing zoning would be enough to control development if services were put in. Ms. Davis said if there are sewer services, there will be a revision of the MPS and LUB. The current zoning requires relatively large lots. Ms. Davis noted that there are some undersized lots that could not meet the current zoning requirement or Department of Environment's lot sizes for on-site sewage systems. Some of the larger lots might not meet DOE's setback requirements to water courses. Ms. Davis advised that any new lots have to meet DOE requirements for lot size for septic systems.

Ms. Davis noted that once services are provided in one area, requests are often received to extend the services and development tends to spread out.

Peter McClare said he was in favour of localized systems as long as they localize development.

Peter McClare asked how active agricultural land is defined. Ms. Davis advised that the current MPS used soil capability mapping, location of active farm land and improved lands. Mr. McClare said there is a lot of potential agricultural land and asked what protection there is

for their potential resource. Ms. Davis stated care must be taken with agricultural land as development pressures increases. Improved lands normally get converted quickly to residential development. The current planning documents do have some protection in place. The Agricultural Priority 1 & 2 zones limit the number of lots that can be created in a year. She stated that the Committee is trying to work with the Department of Agriculture and improve mapping.

A question was asked about question # 15 of the survey pertaining to Industrial Parks. It was noted that the expansion of the West Hants Industrial Park is restricted because of Fundy Gypsum Company. What is being done to facilitate industrial growth? Is there a plan to develop a new park? Chairman Matheson stated there were no new plans to develop a new park but Council would like to extend the park. He said that extending it on the Fundy Gypsum Company side is difficult.

Adjourn

Chairman Matheson thanked the members of the public for attending the meeting.

The public meeting adjourned at 8:59 p.m.