

**West Hants Plan Review
Public Meeting
West Hants Planning Advisory Committee
Scotch Village Community Centre
November 14, 2002, 7:00 p.m.**

Revised **MINUTES**

PRESENT: Chairman Randy Matheson
Councillor Norm Clarke
Councillor Fred Horne
Councillor Gloria Shanks
Ms. Traci Curry

STAFF: Lynn Davis, Director of Planning
Jane Sodero, Planner
Clara J. Michelin, Secretary

OTHER COUNCILLORS:

Warden Dauphinee
Councillor Shirley Pineo

ABSENT: Councillor Reed Allen
Mr. Larry Frenette

GUESTS: Members of the Public - 11

Welcome and Introduction

Chair 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. She advised that the purpose of the plan review is to update all the Municipal Planning Strategies and Land Use By-laws and consolidate all four into one planning document for the entire Municipality. Ms. Davis explained that the Municipal Planning Strategy sets out Council's and the community's vision and policies for development of the Municipality. The Land Use By-law is a regulatory tool that puts the municipal planning strategy into effect. The Subdivision By-law is the other regulatory tool. Ms. Davis stated that over time, the documents may have become outdated because of changing demographics and residents' desires for their community and provincial regulations.

Ms. Davis explained the plan review schedule. Staff have been working for the past year on background research including reports such as the Statistical Profile, which outlines demographics and building trends, and a household survey. This meeting is one of a series of seven community meetings scheduled in West Hants to be completed by the end of November. The first community meeting was held in Poplar Grove on October 24th and tonight's meeting is the 4th. Ms. Davis said that the committee had met with developers and will also be meeting with the agricultural community in January. The next step in the process will be to use all the information from the public meetings and consultations to draft a strategy concept or vision which will be presented at a public meeting in February 2003. Staff will then be preparing a first draft of the planning strategy and land use by-law to be presented at community meetings next fall, and a second draft presented in January or February 2004. The final draft will be completed in the Spring or Summer of 2004.

Results of the Plan Review Survey

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

Approximately 8,000 surveys were sent out to every household in Windsor and West Hants. There was a 9.4 percent return rate for the West Hants respondents. Ms. Sodero advised that she had prepared a breakdown of communities of the West Hants survey and tried to bring out responses particular to each area.

The survey show that 36 percent of the West Hants respondents were retired. Of those that work, the residents in West Hants were retired. Of those who work, the majority of West Hants respondents work in West Hants and Windsor respondents work in Windsor.

In the Scotch Village area, 92 percent of respondents live in single family dwellings. No residents from Scotch Village who responded to the survey lived in 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% had lived in their current home for only one to five years.

The survey indicated that people live in this area because of the quiet rural atmosphere, cost of land, close family near by 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 area. 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, and there should be no apartment buildings. West Hants respondents feel a variety of non-residential uses such as home occupations and churches, are acceptable in residential neighbourhoods.

Respondents included many of the factors that influenced their decision to live in West Hants

as reasons why they like their community. Some dislikes were poor road conditions, lack of

water and sewer services, unsightly properties, derelict vehicles and speed of traffic.

When asked about commercial development and where respondents did their shopping, most West Hants respondents said they did their shopping in Windsor, although most clothing purchases are made in Halifax region. Most respondents suggested that new businesses should locate in existing buildings downtown, existing mall space and industrial parks. Garlands Crossing and Falmouth were also mentioned as possible locations 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 a need for a large retail store while others wanted to encourage small local businesses. There was also a desire to revitalize the downtown area. With regard to Industrial Parks, respondents felt a wide range of commercial and industrial uses should be permitted.

Over 60 percent of the respondents from West Hants and Windsor felt that residential development should be directed away from prime agriculture land and 27 percent felt there should be limited use of agriculture land for residential purposes.

When respondents were asked about municipal services, more than 60 percent were “somewhat satisfied” with most services and most were very satisfied with police and fire services. Recreation responses indicated low participation rates (only 20 percent responded) due to transportation, dates of activities and selection. For new recreational services, about 66 percent felt the need for a swimming pool, trails, parks, picnic areas, gardening, first aid and composting. Many respondents wanted more information about backyard composting.

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 felt these were important issue and more than 70 percent felt preservation of farmland is very important. When asked about limits to new developments, the majority of respondents felt development should be limited to serviced areas and limited in areas with poor water quality or quantity.

The question about a by-law limiting the use of pesticides for lawn care in Windsor found that over 60 percent of West Hants respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed”, with many adding that a by-law should also be considered for all of 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. About 38 percent of West Hants respondents felt the causeway should be removed; 48 percent of Scotch Village respondents felt the causeway

should be removed and 39 percent of Windsor respondents felt the causeway should not be removed.

Ms. Sodero said she was pleased with the results of the survey and asked if there were any questions.

A gentleman asked why there were no meetings held in the area from Burlington to Walton as the distance to travel is about 35 miles and meetings should be held somewhere between, otherwise, he felt that area is being neglected.

Ms. Davis said that in the next round of community meetings, different communities may be used.

Ms. Sodero said that the entire West Hants area was included in the household survey. Chair Matheson said other meetings will be held and maybe other locations can be considered.

The public meeting recessed at 7: 35 p.m.

The public meeting reconvened at 7:50 p.m.

Existing Planning Documents

Ms. Davis explained the existing planning documents. She advised that the intention is to consolidate all four separate documents into one simpler and more consistent Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-Law for the whole Municipality. Area 1 covers the area south of the Kennetcook River extending from the eastern boundary of the Municipality, and includes 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. There is a separate municipal planning strategy (MPS) and Land Use By-law (LUB) for Falmouth and another separate one for Upper Falmouth.

The Falmouth MPS was first adopted in 1976 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 Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law were adopted at the request of farmers in the area in 1989. Its intent is to protect prime agricultural land in Upper Falmouth.

Area 2 and 3 have the simplest plans. There were two main issues - the protection of the Falmouth water supply area and to prevent undesirable land uses, namely landfills, from coming into the area. There is a water supply zone and a general use zone. There is no identification of

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good agricultural land and no protection for it except for dykeland; however, there are restrictions on intensive livestock operations and setbacks from watercourses.

Area 1 has a complex Land Use By-law that has 31 zones. Area 1 has very sound planning

principles and attempts to distinguish between rural and urban. 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 MPS' rural designation applies to a Village designation, Brooklyn, and eight Hamlets, and the remainder of resource area. The idea 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.

There are three Agricultural Priority areas; AR-1, AR-2 and AR-3 whose purpose is to protect agriculture land.

Priority 1 Agriculture zone primarily found in the Avondale, Belmont and Martock and Brooklyn areas. There are restrictions that apply including only one lot permitted to be subdivided per calendar year on existing roads. No new roads area permitted.

Most of the Scotch Village agriculture land is Priority 2 which is less restrictive than AR-1 and protects agriculture land. Two lots can be subdivided per calendar year, and new roads can be built.

AR-3 zoning is less restrictive with no restrictions on number of lots developed. In all 3 Priority Agriculture zones, non-resource, commercial and industrial uses can be permitted by a development agreement. The development agreement is a contract which allows Council more control over the size and form of development, and allows public input through public hearing process.

AR-1 must have an environmental study indicating that the land is Class 4 or less; AR-2 has no requirement for an environmental study. A rezoning to allow for residential subdivision can be considered in AR-2, provided there is no adverse effect on agriculture operations; although there is no rezoning on more than 25 acres.

There is also Mineral Resource (as in the gypsum plant) and Forestry Resource Combined Resource zones.

Questions and comments from the Public

A public member asked whether Home Occupations required permits. Ms. Davis answered yes, they do. He asked who enforces these permits. Ms. Davis replied that it is difficult given the large area involved and one Development Officer on staff; however, when staff see something that may require a permit, they do act on it.

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Keith Pierce commented on the survey. He felt that many people may not know the answers to a particular question; however, they may have an opinion on that question. Consequently, opinions should be sought, not always answers to questions.

There was a general opinion that tax breaks could help develop the downtown Windsor area as

well as the waterfront in attracting business.

He notes that he was with Friends of the Avon River and asked what will be done with the information collected. Ms. Davis said that the survey is one tool used to gather information; and these public meetings are another tool. All of the information will be used to come up with a first draft of the new Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law.

Mr. Pierce asked what extent does the Land Use Plans depend on the health of the Avon River.

Ms. Davis explained that zoning itself reflects particular types of land use. The role of the river and its tides may have an impact on micro-climate that can affect land use, particularly agriculture. She said that if the causeway was removed, the dykes above the causeway would have to be rebuilt. Mr. Pierce felt there is a need to study the environmental impact of the Causeway.

There was a question as to what other rules and regulations the Province may have that can affect what the Municipality does. Ms. Davis said the Municipal Government Act defines what can be regulated in the Land Use By-laws. The Province also has Provincial Interest Statements such as one on Agriculture Lands which states that Municipalities must identify good agriculture lands and protect them.

It was noted that the Department of Environment regulations also have an effect on development and that the Provincial Government regulations supercede Municipal regulations.

A citizen said that the Municipal Office has no control on the Gypsum Company located in Mantua. Ms. Davis agreed that mining is regulated by the Province.

She asked whether people felt that the regulations on agriculture uses are too restrictive.

There was concern on where barns can be built; that there should be more flexibility as there are many factors which dictate where barns can be built, and a general feeling that the regulations should not be more restrictive. It was also noted that care should be taken with allowing huge intensive livestock operations, and perhaps there should be special requirements for them. It was questioned whether they are even appropriate in this area. Suggestion was to look to other areas of the Province and outside the Province to see what others are doing with this issue.

There was concern that in Kings County, subdivisions were approved near agriculture lands and now the residents of that subdivision want no agriculture activities near them, as in pesticide

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spraying. It was felt that farm land will no longer exist if this trend continues.

It was noted that the Agriculture zone in the serviced area allows for existing agricultural uses. It was felt that farmers in these areas will be squeezed out of their lands. Ms. Davis said that although there is some protection for existing farms, over time farming could be phased out as land becomes more in demand for development in the serviced areas.

There were no more questions from the public. Chair Matheson thanked everyone for coming, for their thoughts on the process and said this information will be used to develop the new planning documents which will be presented to the public for their input.

The public meeting adjourned at 8:52 p.m.