



**BUDGET COMMITTEE
(STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ON BUDGET)
MINUTES
February 7, 2024**

PRESENT: Mayor Mike Savage
Deputy Mayor Cathy Deagle Gammon
Councillors: David Hendsbee
Becky Kent
Trish Purdy
Sam Austin
Tony Mancini
Waye Mason
Lindell Smith
Shawn Cleary
Kathryn Morse
Patty Cuttell
Iona Stoddard
Pam Lovelace
Lisa Blackburn
Tim Outhit

REGRETS: Budget Committee Chair Paul Russell – Leave of Absence

STAFF: Jerry Blackwood, Executive Director of Finance & Asset Management/Chief Financial Officer
John Traves, K.C., CD, Executive Director of Legal & Legislative Services/Municipal Solicitor/Chief Governance Officer
Iain MacLean, Municipal Clerk
Andrea Lovasi-Wood, Legislative Assistant
Jamie D'Angelo, Legislative Assistant
Catie Campbell, 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 9:33 a.m., and recessed at 12:07 p.m. Budget Committee reconvened in at 1:06 p.m. Budget Committee recessed at 3:02 p.m. and reconvened 3:10 p.m. Budget Committee adjourned at 3:38 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:33 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.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – January 24, 2024

MOVED by Councillor Hendsbee, seconded by Councillor Kent

THAT the minutes of January 24, 2024 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 Stoddard, seconded by Councillor Mason

THAT the agenda be approved as presented.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. CALL FOR DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS – NONE

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Victoria Levack, District 7 spoke in opposition to Halifax Regional Police's (HRP) 2024/25 proposed operating budget. They proposed a list outlining where funds would be better spent, such as: after school programs, community theatres, community fridges, public libraries. They wanted to see community hubs to help people get back on their feet, community spaces, public housing, and more funds towards the public safety officer's budget. They noted funds should also go towards public transit, accessibility budget, and animal shelters.

Emerson Roach, Downtown Halifax spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget. They expressed concern with comments made by members of the Board of Police Commissioners (BoPC) towards the community. Roach spoke about the need to push for reform, transparency, and accountability and receiving push back regarding those requests. They spoke to studies that stated to deter crime that stable income for safe housing, early childhood interventions, more streetlights were needed. Roach called for de-tasking police regarding mental health calls. They also noted police's concern with attending mental health calls.

Joanne Hussey, District 10 spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget. Hussey asked the Budget Committee to reject the proposed budget. They spoke about studies that showed things such as net increases in spending towards the police budget were not related to a decrease in crime. They supported the "Subcommittee to Define Defunding Police" and the need to reform the police.

Hussey spoke about the Mass Casualty Commission Report, and the need to invest in mental health teams, and increase funding in youth programs. They wanted the Budget Committee to use an evidence-based decision making approach.

Jamie Livingston, Halifax spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget. They spoke about their career as a criminologist and their concerns with increasing the police budget. First, that the increase in spending was not effective or enhanced safety. Second, in March last year Council approved the Public Safety Strategy, that was informed by evidence and needs of the community, and increasing police budget would take resources away from other services. Third, the budget did not align with the need of the community.

Pat Bouchard, Ottawa, on behalf of the National Police Federation spoke in support of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Halifax Regional Detachment's (RCMP HRD) 2024/25 proposed operating budget. They spoke about hiring six more officers. They noted two would support intimate partner violence and four would become general officers. They proposed the rate of police officer per 100,000 population would be the lowest in the country by 2027. Bouchard addressed how low cop to pop ratios effect police officers' mental health, which reduces the number of police needed to attend calls.

Lou Campbell, District 8 spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget. They spoke to refunding social services and why raising the budget was not of good use. Campbell noted a University of Toronto study that showed there was no consistency in increased funds to the police and crime rates coming down. They also spoke to how desperation leads to crime. Campbell further spoke to the need of better mental health crisis responses, transit, snow removal, and a holistic response to homelessness.

Kevin Russell, Investment Property Owners Association of Nova Scotia Limited (IPOANS), Halifax spoke in support of HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget. Russell also spoke about IPOANS and their increased experience with violence that they stated are caused by bad tenants and the lack of enforcement responses for landlords.

Krista Loewen, Halifax spoke in opposition to the HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget. They were concerned about the surveillance approach used by police. They suggested the budget would have a harmful effect on the community.

Mike Burgess, North End Dartmouth spoke in support of to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget. They spoke about their time as a landlord for the past 40 years. They mentioned that an abundance of thefts had happened in the community, and that it was essential to give the police the resources to meet demands.

Jesse Hatch, District 7 spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget and the realities of de-tasking. They noted how hate crimes were being under reported. They spoke to solutions to the issues being faced in the community including crime prevention. Hatch provided examples of how to prevent crime by de-tasking police and decriminalizing the possession of drugs. Hatch responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee.

Trina James, District 7 spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget and their background supporting women, gender diverse people, and families who were unhoused. James noted their work experience and research has shown them that police were not equipped to respond to mental health calls. They also spoke to the municipality's needs to address food security.

Oyku Su Gurler, District 5 spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget. They noted the need to combat mental health crisis and housing crisis. They spoke about population increases which increased the mental health crisis, housing crisis, and crime rates. They suggested funds requested by HRP would not be used efficiently. Gurler wanted to see more alternative measure used for addressing the mental health and housing crisis.

Tynan Bramberger, District 10 spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget. They spoke on housing, food, and mental health. They noted 911 should not be called for mental health checks due to the disproportionate use of violence by police. They also suggested that police services were a public health crisis and that their sensitivity training was not effective.

Isaac Wright, District 4 spoke in opposition to HRP's and RCMP 2024/25 proposed operating budget. They raised the topic of police involvement in mental health calls and suggested that budget increases would increase deaths in mental health calls. Wright wanted to see funding diverted into housing and food crisis. They also wanted civilian based mental health teams and did not want to see other civil servants receiving cuts.

Willa Oaks, District 9 spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget. They noted some of the participants had spoken to this budget for a third time and they wanted to see public concerns being addressed. Oaks spoke about how one in five children lived in poverty, but there were budget increases going towards police salaries, out of town travel, clothing allowance, and advertisements instead.

Nancy Hunter, District 11 spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget. They expressed concern with censorship when speaking at a past BoPC meeting. They emphasized that public participation was critical. Hunter responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee.

Willa Oaks, on behalf of Enney Lapp, District 8 spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget. They stated public consultation was only a check box for the BoPC, who had a lack of respect towards public evidence. Oaks on behalf of Lapp noted that public consultation was inaccessible and essential services were struggling.

Ash Hinchey, District 8 spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget. They spoke about an open letter signed by many community members. They asked Council to reject the request for an increase in the police budget. They spoke about the Defund the Police Report and suggested there needed to be an improvement in public consultation.

Kay Macdonald, District 8 spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget and their personal experience from the August 18, 2021 incident. Macdonald spoke about the police's ineffective de-escalation tactics. They also spoke to the growth of police involvement violence rates.

Carmel Farahbakhsh, District 7 spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget. Farahbakhsh also spoke to their community engagement work. They spoke about how child poverty rose by 20.5 percent which was the biggest single year increase since 1989. They referenced studies that spoke to over criminalization of black and indigenous youth including the Wortley Report.

Amber Tucker, District 7 spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget and suggested funds be spent on social services. They spoke to the death rate from police encounters, of

which 68% experienced a mental health crisis. Tucker encouraged BoPC to consider consultations from stakeholders.

Rae Paul, Dartmouth, spoke on behalf of the Youth Project in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget and wanted Council to reject the recommendation to increase the police budget. Paul suggested funding go towards the food and housing crisis and more support for teachers. Paul stated that youth wanted police to be taken out of "safe space" programs and wanted to see more investment in community care.

Caitlin O'Neill, District 8 spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget. O'Neill noted that as a health care worker they valued evidence-based decisions. They stated there was a need to reduce poverty and loneliness to improve healthcare crisis. O'Neill wanted to see improvement towards putting priority onto the most vulnerable.

Lori Curtis, Dartmouth spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget and expressed concern with the public consultation process. They noted their appreciation and support to those who continued to speak on the matter and asked Council not to approve HRP's budget request.

Brody Weaver, Dartmouth spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget. They wanted support given to the quality of life and not the police. They spoke to their experience with the violence and injuries from the August 18, 2021 incident, and testimonies given by officers about that day.

Campbell McClintock, District 8 spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget and suggested preventative measures the funds could be used for, such as food security, transportation services, library warming stations, and housing. They see an increased risk to the community when police are responding to mental health calls. McClintock also spoke to the lack of informed trauma training being provided to police.

Sean MacGillivray, District 3 spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget and noted concerns with the police's involvement in mental health calls. They also spoke to concerns with the BoPC's exercise of their governance mandate.

Eloise Brunet, District 5 spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget. They suggest that social and public care make for healthy communities and urged the Budget Committee to analyze the narrative that more policing creates safer communities.

Collins Ellison, Halifax spoke in opposition to HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget. Ellison spoke with the aid of displayed documents to concerns regarding the number of people experiencing homelessness including the disproportionate rate of racial homelessness, low-income assistance rates and high rents. They noted that the disproportionate rate of incarceration of black and indigenous people and the increased cost of housing inmates. They also spoke to concerns regarding police demographic reports and race based data.

Jason Snow, on behalf of Halifax Regional Police Association (HRPA), District 12 spoke in support of HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget. They talked about the impacts of an increasing population on police which resulted in increased overtime costs. They supported the need for additional full-time staff to alleviate overtime costs and explained the need for assistance for officers returning to work after a leave of absence.

Sergeant Phil Powers, District 6, Treasurer, HRP spoke in support of HRP's 2024/25 proposed operating budget. They spoke to the occupational stress that police experienced. They explained the need for additional recruitment.

6. REPORTS

6.1 Halifax Regional Police and Royal Canadian Mounted Police Halifax Regional Detachment

The following was before Budget Committee:

- Staff report dated January 24, 2024
- Correspondence from Isaac Wright, Jamie Livingston, Brian Sauvé, Jordan Roberts, Ursula Prosegger, Tynan Rhea Bramberger, Collins Ellison
- Staff presentation dated January 24, 2024
- Halifax Regional District Royal Canadian Mounted Police presentation dated January 24, 2024

Mayor Savage stepped down from the Chair and Deputy Mayor Deagle Gammon assumed the Chair.

Commissioner Becky Kent, Chair, Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality gave a presentation.

John Traves, K.C., CD, Executive Director of Legal & Legislative Services/Municipal Solicitor/Chief Governance Officer spoke to the procedural process and options for hearing presentations. Traves responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee.

Acting Chief Don MacLean, Halifax Regional Police and Deputy Chief Reid McCoombs, Halifax Regional Police gave a presentation and responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee. Acting Chief MacLean noted proactive budgeting, police response to specific events, role of Community Response officers and highlighted the Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality's priorities. Deputy Chief McCoombs noted the importance of the Police Science Program and need for more resources to cover sick leaves.

Jerry Blackwood, Executive Director of Finance & Asset Management/Chief Financial Officer responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee regarding revenue from summary offence tickets.

As provided for in section 90 of Administrative Order One, *Respecting the Procedures of the Council*, the motion was separated for the purpose of hearing presentations.

MOVED by Councillor Kent, seconded by Councillor Blackburn

THAT the Budget Committee:

1. **Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to incorporate the Halifax Regional Police (HRP) proposed 2024/25 Budget and Business Plan, as set out and discussed in the accompanying plan and supporting presentation attached to the report dated January 24, 2024, into the Draft 2024/25 Operating Budget;**

Mayor Savage resumed the chair.

Acting Chief MacLean and Deputy Chief McCoombs responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee. Acting Chief MacLean noted intimate partner violence officers, the "cop to population" ratio and response options for mental health calls. Deputy Chief McCoombs highlighted the full-time wellness coordinator and psychological assessment criteria.

Blackwood and Traves responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee regarding living wage and an outstanding report for the Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality.

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Mancini

THAT Budget Committee defer item 6.1 until after the Community Safety business unit presentation and pending receipt of a supplementary report that outlines implications of and updates the costs of fully funding Alternative 1 of the March 1, 2023 staff report entitled Halifax Public Safety Strategy 2023-24 to 2025-26, to potentially be funded by a reduction in the proposed Halifax Regional Police and RCMP budgets and if passed refer this to the Board of Police Commissioners for consideration.

Traves noted procedural implications.

As provided for in section 66 of Administrative Order One, *Respecting the Procedures of the Council*, the motion was withdrawn with consent of Budget Committee.

Blackwood and Traves responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee regarding the Budget Adjustment List (BAL) process and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Halifax Regional Detachment budgeting process.

Acting Chief MacLean responded to questions of clarification from Budget Committee regarding requirement for legislative changes to address officers' hospital response.

Budget Committee agreed to continue Item 6.1 Halifax Regional Police and Royal Canadian Mounted Police Halifax Regional Detachment at a future meeting.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:38 p.m.

Iain MacLean
Municipal Clerk