

Municipal Housing Working Group

March 25, 2024

Staff Present:

- John Woodford, Director of Planning & Development
- Rachel Gilbert, Manager of Planning
- Graham Scott, Manager of Economic & Business Development

Committee Members Present:

- Councillor Garden-Cole
- Councillor MacPhee
- Councillor Moussa
- Andrew Bone
- Linda Wood
- Paul Mombourquette
- Brad Ross
- Jacob White via Zoom (arrived late - during Background Information presentation)

Regrets:

- Tracy Williams

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7pm.

John Woodford explained that at this meeting background material and information will be provided before the committee starts their work at the next meeting.

COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

John Woodford presented the Terms of Reference for the committee.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION & WORKPLAN

John Woodford gave a presentation on Background Information and presented the Workplan for the committee.

Several Questions and Comments were raised by committee members and some of these have been summarized below.

- When a developer is forced to provide social or affordable housing this is a tax on other home purchases or renters. Unless it's government funded it's a tax which gets passed on.
- Mobile homes are one way to provide affordable housing.
- Traditional mobile home parks are not an affordable housing option anymore.
- Would like to talk about provincial surplus land.

- Infrastructure costs of development are very high and it's putting off developers. It was clarified that this is not due to East Hants specific infrastructure charges.
- Paving costs are very high.
- Tightly regulated land development is more expensive.
- Commercial development is needed in communities to provide amenities to residents so they don't have to travel to access these amenities.
- Suggestion to look at flag/hockey stick lots.
- Suggestion to look at parking requirements for residential development.

Following the comments and questions raised by the working group, John Woodford mentioned there will an opportunity to discuss these comments when reviewing the reports that planning staff will be preparing over the next few months.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at around 8:50 pm.

Municipal Housing Working Group

April 22, 2024

Staff Present:

- Rachel Gilbert, Manager of Planning
- Graham Scott, Manager of Economic & Business Development
- Debbie Uloth, Community Planner II
- Tippy Scott, Geomatics Coordinator

Committee Members Present:

- Councillor Moussa
- Councillor MacPhee (Vice Chair)
- Councillor Garden-Cole (Chair)
- Brad Ross
- Tracy Williams
- Paul Mombourquette
- Linda Wood

Regrets:

- John Woodford, Director of Planning & Development
- Jacob White
- Andrew Bone

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm. Round table introductions.

SELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Councilor Garden-Cole and Councilor MacPhee were nominated for, and accepted the roles as Chair and Vice Chair, respectively.

No other nominations were brought forward.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilor Garden-Cole moved to the approve the agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

HOUSING ACCELERATOR FUND

Debbie Uloth gave a presentation on the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) initiatives.

A number of questions and comments were raised by committee members as described below:

- Look into the whole building permit process being online in the future.
- Incentive for homes to be built on slabs/above ground to mitigate the risks of flooding.
- A future initiative, outside of the HAF, to allow accessory dwelling units on properties zoned R2.
- Committee members wondered how the units on CN Road, Shubenacadie were going ahead prior to the availability of additional sewer capacity. To be reviewed with the Development Officers.

- Allowing apartment buildings on un-serviced lots could increase units, but might reduce overall density due to the large land requirement to support the septic.
- Cluster septic systems could be investigated as an option if the number of units could be reasonably supported.
- Staff confirmed that the initiatives that were presented were already set, but that the committee may recommend more to be done through the Housing Strategy.

ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

Rachel Gilbert gave a presentation on accessible housing initiatives.

The following discussion and questions were raised by members of the committee:

- Special Care Homes are in zones that do not align, would be allowed to be rebuilt as a non-conforming use.
- The number of bedrooms, residents, and staff in a Special Care Home are regulated by the province.
- Small options homes would fall under the definition of Special Care Homes, along with a variety of other scenarios.
- Existing buildings, such as duplexes may be able to be converted into Special Care Homes by converting to a single unit residential, provided they were able to meet building and fire code regulations for special care homes.
- The number of existing facilities that might be impacted by the proposed changes would be small.
- Consideration should be given to the existing make-up of a community before allowing for facilities with a certain number of residents.
- Committee members discussed whether staff presentations should be followed by a discussion prior to any drafted recommended motions being presented. Staff mentioned that motions could be tabled if the working group were not ready to decide on the motion. Staff discussed the process of the working group, PAC, and Council.
- Different strategies from other municipalities were discussed regarding Special Care Facilities.

After the discussion the following motion was made:

Motion

The Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- The Accessibility Advisory Committee be requested to review the draft Housing Strategy and advise regarding accessibility issues and opportunities.
- The definition of Special Care (Residential Care Facility, Home for Special Care or Group Home) be amended so that the number of individuals living in the facility be 8 or less and be considered a single unit dwelling, as outlined in the staff report.

Councilor Moussa moved to approve the motion. Councilor MacPhee seconded. A vote was held and the motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:40pm.

Municipal Housing Working Group

May 27, 2024

Staff Present:

- John Woodford, Director of Planning & Development
- Debbie Uloth, Community Planner II
- Lee-Ann Martin, Planner/Development Officer

Committee Members Present:

- Councillor Moussa
- Councillor MacPhee (Vice Chair)
- Brad Ross
- Tracy Williams
- Paul Mombourquette
- Linda Wood
- Andrew Bone

Regrets:

- Councillor Garden-Cole (Chair)
- Rachel Gilbert, Manager of Planning
- Graham Scott, Manager of Economic & Business Development
- Jacob White

CALL TO ORDER

Councillor MacPhee, acting as Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:35pm.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

On the motion of Councillor Moussa and Councillor MacPhee:

Moved to the approve the agenda.

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On motion of Councillor Moussa and Tracy Williams:

Moved that the minutes of the Municipal Housing Working Group meeting of April 22, 2024, be approved.

MOTION CARRIED

LOT SIZES

The Community Planner II gave a presentation regarding lot sizes.

The following discussion and questions were raised by members of the committee:

- Trend in Halifax is much smaller lots:

- 275m² & 9.7m wide lot - single
- 230m² - semi
- 185m² to 130m² townhouse
- Small lot singles are happening now in R2 zone (link dwellings on 6m wide lots).
- 12.2 m wide R1 lots would be more palatable in this area.
- Rural areas? Size of lot with on-site services.

After the discussion the following motions were made:

On the motion of Tracy Williams and Brad Ross:

Moved that the Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to the Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- ***Lot sizes in unserviced areas be reviewed with the intent of reducing the lot area and frontage requirements to what is technically feasible while accommodating septic and well service.***

MOTION CARRIED

On the motion of Paul Mombourquette and Andrew Bone:

Moved that the Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- ***Serviced R1 lots sizes be reduced to 12.2m of frontage and 372m² of area.***

MOTION CARRIED

On the motion of Paul Mombourquette and Linda Wood:

Moved that the Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- ***Small lot single unit dwellings be permitted on an R2 lot where the R2 lot meets the minimum provisions for the lot to be subdivided under Section 6.6.1 of the LUB.***

MOTION CARRIED

MANUFACTURED HOUSING

The Community Planner II provided a presentation on manufactured housing.

The following discussion and questions were raised by members of the committee:

- What about mini homes in serviced areas?

- Banning from serviced areas is a mistake.
- Need to enable mini homes in serviced areas by policy as opposed to as-of-right.
- Why aren't mini homes permitted as accessory dwelling units?

On the motion of Andrew Bone and Paul Mombourquette:

Moved that that the Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- ***Mini homes be permitted across the municipality as an affordable housing option with an emphasis on permitting mini homes in serviced areas.***

MOTION CARRIED

On the motion of Councillor Moussa and Paul Mombourquette:

Moved that that the Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- ***The Mini-Home (MH) Zone regulations be amended to permit mobile homes on free-hold (individual) lots.***

MOTION CARRIED

SHORT TERM RENTALS

The Planner/Development Officer gave a presentation on short term rentals.

The following discussion and questions were raised by members of the committee:

- Should we be proactive and have regulations now?
- Only issues would be nuisance complaints as opposed to concern about the housing stock.
- No complaints in East Hants to date.

On the motion of Linda Wood and Councillor Moussa:

Moved that that the Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- ***No changes be made to the current regulations applicable to Short Term Rentals.***

MOTION CARRIED

MULTI-UNIT HOUSING

The Community Planner II gave a presentation on multi-unit housing.

The following discussion and questions were raised by members of the committee:

- Larger developers are not interested in smaller projects - economics are just not there.
- Current regulations have permitted significant development approval - seems to be working.
- Change to Village Core zone seems ok.

On the motion of Andrew Bone and Councillor Moussa:

Moved that that the Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- ***The as-of-right density permitted in the Village Core (VC) Zone be increased from 12 to 16 units.***

MOTION CARRIED

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:44pm.

Municipal Housing Working Group

June 24, 2024

Staff Present:

- Rachel Gilbert, Manager of Planning
- Debbie Uloth, Community Planner II

Committee Members Present:

- Councillor Garden-Cole (Chair)
- Councillor Moussa
- Councillor MacPhee (Vice Chair)
- Tracy Williams
- Linda Wood
- Andrew Bone
- Jacob White

Regrets:

- John Woodford, Director of Planning & Development
- Graham Scott, Manager of Economic & Business Development
- Brad Ross
- Paul Mombourquette

CALL TO ORDER

Councillor Garden-Cole called the meeting to order at 6:35pm.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved to approve the agenda.

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved that the minutes of the Municipal Housing Working Group meeting of May 27, 2024, be approved.

MOTION CARRIED

TRANSPORTATION AND TRANSIT

The Manager of Planning gave a presentation regarding Transportation and Transit.

The following discussion and questions were raised by members of the committee:

- Discussion on the services that the East Hants Community Rider provides.
- Some committee members indicated that it would be useful to have a community transit system that connected to the Halifax system and that

there should only be one fee charged for the entire ride.

- More density is required to have a true TOD to justify the transit; instead the East Hants planning documents should refer to “transit-friendly design”.
- There is a lack of crosswalks in East Hants, which makes walkability difficult. Council members of the working group explained issues that the Municipality are having with NSPW.
- Could an underpass under Highway 2 be considered instead of crosswalks?
- Has East Hants looked at developing micro transit? Similar to the service provided in Bridgewater.
- Transit should be 100% funded by the government in order to make the system work.
- Any transit should look at making connections from Halifax to Truro.

After the discussion the following motions were made:

Moved that the Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to the Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- ***The Municipal Housing Working Group supports transit options which assist in affordability and access housing.***

Six (6) voting in favour and one (1) voting against; Councillor Garden-Cole voting nay.

MOTION CARRIED

Moved that the Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- ***a discounted fare program be investigated if transit services are offered in East Hants.***

Six (6) voting in favour and one (1) voting against; Councillor Garden-Cole voting nay.

MOTION CARRIED

Moved that the Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- ***a future project be added to the Municipal Projects and Studies section of the Municipal Planning Strategy. The project would be to review existing policies of the Municipal Planning Strategy to identify where land use policies and regulations could be amended or developed to take advantage of a new transit service.***

MOTION CARRIED

BONUS AND INCLUSIONARY ZONING

The Community Planner II provided a presentation on Bonus and Inclusionary Zoning.

Linda Wood left the meeting at 7:15 pm.

The following discussion and questions were raised by members of the committee:

- Inclusionary zoning just pushes the cost onto purchasers/renters of market housing.
- The cost of construction is affecting new construction starts in East Hants.
- Inclusionary zoning is not working in Quebec.
- It's important that if you're adding a 'bonus' that you don't take something away to add the bonus - e.g. don't remove a floor to add the additional bonus zoning floor.
- Concern about adding bonus zoning adjacent to existing low-density areas (e.g. adding in Village Core Zones).

After the discussion the following motions were made:

Moved that that the Municipal Housing Working Group recommends to Planning Advisory Committee that Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that:

- ***Council consider offering a height and/or unit bonus to developers who are offering a federal or provincial affordable housing program.***

Five (5) voting in favour and one (1) voting against; Councillor Garden-Cole voting nay.

MOTION CARRIED

Moved that that the Municipal Housing Working Group

- ***Does not recommend inclusionary zoning at this time based on the local market and the potential impact on housing costs.***

Five (5) voting in favour and one (1) voting against; Jacob White voting nay.

MOTION CARRIED

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.

DRAFT