

## Report on the advisability of instituting a standing CMC agenda item to allow attendees from the public to address the CMC Committee

*The Chair directed the Communications Advisor at the July 4, 2024 CMC Meeting to consider a proposal to institute a standing agenda item to allow any members of the public in attendance to give public input to the committee*

-----

It was proposed at the July 4, 2024 CMC meeting that the CMC should have a standing agenda item that invites any member of the public in attendance to provide input to the Committee.

The reasons given were two: to bring the CMC in line with other HRM committees and to serve as a good public relations gesture, even if the provision is rarely used in practice.

From a certain vantage point, the first argument might seem to undermine the CMC's long-held position that the Committee is unique among HRM committees. It is not the sole creation of the Regional Council, but the result of a contract between the Halifax Waste-Resource Society and the Halifax Regional Municipality. Therefore the CMC has argued in the past, notably in the recent dispute with HRM, that the regional municipality's committee model should not be imposed on the CMC since it wasn't a CMC committee, per se.

However, there is nothing to stop the CMC from voluntarily adopting useful practices or procedures followed by HRM committees that CMC members believe would be beneficial for their organization. That course of action would seem to be part of good governance.

In relation to the public relations argument, it has been pointed out that the public rarely attends CMC meetings, although they are open to the public. Based on my limited knowledge, no one from the community who has attended a CMC meeting has been prevented from addressing the CMC or indeed has sought to address the group. It is an

open question whether a standing item for public input would encourage more people to attend the meetings, take an interest in the CMC, or serve as a signal of the committee's openness to the community.

It is more likely that the community generally is unaware that CMC meetings are open to the public, although that fact is publicized on the website. Perhaps a greater effort should be made to spread the word if this is a committee concern. A standing agenda item to facilitate public participation is unlikely on its own to rectify the public awareness issue.

As a general rule, when citizens turn up at public meetings, often it is because they are concerned, dissatisfied or upset about an issue. Perhaps this phenomenon is what the proposer of the fixed agenda item had in mind: to ensure that if circumstances arose that caused public irritation with any aspect of the Otter Lake Landfill's operation, those affected would be guaranteed an opportunity to air their views during a CMC meeting and possibly help shape the CMC's response.

Conclusion: overall, the proposed measure appears to be a solution to a problem that has yet to materialize, although it could also be considered proactive. Certainly no harm is perceived in adding a standing item for public input on CMC meeting agendas. Adoption of this proposed measure from a communications point of view would likely have a neutral effect.

Betsy Chambers  
CMC Communications Advisor  
November 4, 2024