

**Westwood Hills Residents' Association
Board Meeting**

Minutes of February 19th, 2020
St. Nicholas Anglican Church
29 Westwood Blvd.
7:30 – 9:30pm

APPROVED

Present: **Dustin O’Leary** (President), **Nick Horne** (Vice-President) **Trevor Magarvey** (Director), **Carol Grimmitt** (Director), **Melissa Nurse** (Director), **Natalie Jay** (Director), **Richard O’Fegan** (Director), & **Julie Gratzer** (Secretary)

Regrets: **Justin Ells** (Director), **Stephen Nurse** (Treasurer), **Penelope St. Laurent** (Director), **Debbie Whyte** (Director) and **Chris Turner** (Director)

20.02.01 **Approval of the Agenda**
 Nick/Richard *All approved* *Motion carried*

20.02.02 **Approval of January 15, 2020 Meeting Minutes**
MOTION to approve minutes as circulated
 Melissa/Nick *All approved* *Motion carried*

20.02.03 **Mid-Year Report**

- a) Traffic Calming (Dustin)
The board approved the purchase of a second radar sign as well as two battery packs. Justin Ells is currently overseeing this initiative and he is looking for a volunteer to help manage the locations and setup of the sign this year (moving the sign(s) around the subdivision and learning the ins/outs of the data collection and software. **Justin** will be putting out a FB poll in the coming weeks to see if there are any suggestions from residents as to where the sign(s) should be placed next, to assist in reducing speeding in that area.

- b) Community Sign (Dustin)
The new community sign by the mailboxes is finally up. If there are any special/not for profit messages that residents would like to see displayed on the sign, please contact Dustin.

- c) Scholarship Fund (Dustin)
At the 2019 AGM residents approved the development of a Scholarship Fund initiative however soon after the AGM there was a new mandate from HRM indicating a number of restrictions regarding the spending of the area rate funds. One of the policies within the new mandate stated that the funds couldn’t be use for scholarships/bursaries.

- d) Entrance sign (Dustin)
A number of months ago the Westwood Hills brick sign at the entrance to the subdivision was accidently damaged by a motor vehicle. Dustin reported that repairs to the sign are scheduled for the spring of 2020.

- e) Outdoor Movies (Dustin)
This will be discussed at the upcoming AGM. Feedback from residents regarding the previous movie events indicated that the movie starts too late for the young children to watch as it then runs well past bedtime. The Haliburton Residents Association is happy to loan/rent equipment to us. We need to discuss and decide a course of action going forward. (e.g. indoor options, Friday or Saturday night, movies for older kids/adults when outdoors, etc.)
- f) Community Events (Dustin)
Since the AGM the WWHRA has hosted the annual Canada Day celebration. The Remembrance Day ceremony was represented by Westwood Hills residents. The annual Deck the Hills event was well attended and Dustin thanked all those that assisted in the organizing of the events thus far.
- g) Fireworks – New Year’s Eve and Canada Day (Dustin)
This year due to weather conditions the New Year’s Eve fireworks were changed to New Year’s Day earlier in the evening. At the January 2020 board meeting the board members put forward a motion to change the fireworks to New Year’s Day in the evening instead. This motion was approved.
- h) Area Rate Funding (Dustin)
The description of the area rate funding as well as the history of the legacy surplus was explained in the latest WWH newsletter. See below.
- i) Community Newsletter (Dustin)
The newsletter for the first quarter of 2020 can be found on the WWHRA website. The 2019 Fourth Quarter newsletter was emailed on November 27 to the subscribed 191 residents. There were subsequently an additional 21 NEW subscribers on Nov 27-28 & 29.

20.02.04

Upcoming Business

- a) Park/Trail Development Plan (Dustin)
The legacy surplus in the WWHRA account is available for us to spend. There are 23 acres of land behind Giant Steps that are for us to develop. The suggestion was to ensure there was a child focused section in the park/trail. We can look into upgrading the existing trail system. Waste receptacles for the trail would be within the plan. There would be no motorized vehicles permitted. The idea would be that these would be natural trails.

MOTION to approve Cobequid Consulting to spend up to and no more than \$5,000 to engage with residents and using their ideas/wishes to develop a plan for the park/trails. This proposal to be developed in time for the May AGM for review and approval by residents.

Nick/Natalie

All approved

Motion carried

- b) Community Skate (Dustin)
The community skate is currently scheduled for Saturday March 14th, 2020. It was raised that this is the first Saturday before March Break and so may not be the best date for this event to be held. An alternative date would be Saturday March 21st. **Dustin** will post the final date via FB, as well as through the website.

c) 2020 Annual General Meeting

The AGM this year is scheduled for Wednesday May 27th 7:00pm at the Tantallon Public Library. The proposal for the development of the trail as well as outdoor movies will be on the agenda. The meeting notice and a formal agenda will be sent around closer to the date of the meeting. There will be positions open on the board for Directors. Dustin encouraged residents to consider joining the board. Residents are strongly encouraged to attend in person, however there will be an option to join the meeting via FB Live if residents are unable to join in person.

20.02.05 Other Business

a) Business ads on the website – to be discussed at the next board meeting.

20.02.06 Adjournment

MOTION to adjourn the meeting

Richard /Melissa

All approved

Motion carried

Meeting adjourned 8:10pm

Respectfully submitted by,
Julie Gratzner, Secretary

Explaining the WWHRA's Legacy Surplus:

In recent years, the WWHRA board presentations routinely involve a budget recap and there is always one budget line that says 'surplus'. Until recently, that surplus has stood at over \$100,000 and many are rightfully taken aback when they see that amount money sitting in our account. In this article we will try to explain how the association's account got to this point, if anything has changed in recent years, and how we move forward.

The Legacy Surplus – How did we get here?

The Westwood Hills Residents Association was formed at a time where the subdivision was still growing rapidly. The mandated area rate created by HRM Regional Council at that time was \$50 per household per year. As the neighbourhood grew, so did the amount of area rate monies collected and deposited in the WWHRA account.

Previous WWHRA boards had created some priorities for features/recreational structures to construct for neighbours, but the bandwidth of the board and the variety of projects they had the ability to take on was limited and the amount of money being received from area rate funding kept growing.

In the past decade, spending money from area rate funds began to get more complicated as the municipal government began to exert more planning control over the areas previously referred to as 'the county'. For years after amalgamation, the area rate funds for areas associations residing in the former county could spend the monies received from the area rate for features (playgrounds, tennis courts, trails, etc.) as they saw fit. As HRM began to create municipality-wide plans for recreational features, neighbourhood association's discretion to spend funds on community infrastructure became limited.

The Legacy Surplus – The last five years

In recent years, the WWHRA budget surplus is not a year-over-year surplus, it is a legacy surplus that previous recent boards have had difficulty spending.

At present, the WWHRA receives approximately \$36,000 per year in area rate funding and over 95% of those funds are committed and spent as part of the association's annual budget. The WWHRA budget is publicly

available and funds items like community celebrations, neighbourhood beautification projects and creation/maintenance of the neighbourhood website.

The challenge of the WWHRA board has been to find an appropriate way to spend the legacy surplus of previous boards in a way that meets all municipal criteria and benefits as many residents as possible. In 2019-20, part of the legacy surplus was spent on the creation of a new community message board at the beginning of Westwood Boulevard. The question remains of what to do with the remainder of those funds.

The Legacy Surplus – How to move forward

The WWHRA has managed its budget well for a number of years, however, the legacy surplus has been difficult to spend based on the requirements of HRM. At this time, any major infrastructure expenditures for recreational features needs to meet the municipality's needs assessment criteria. As an example, there has been much discussion about constructing another playground in Westwood Hills. Based on the criteria of the municipality after consultation with municipal staff, Westwood Hills residents are considered to have an appropriate number of playgrounds for a neighbourhood of our size.

The option the municipality will provide is that the association can go out unilaterally and build infrastructure of their own. The two major fallbacks of doing that relate to maintenance and insurance. The area rate for the WWHRA has been stable but it is still a decision within the discretion of Halifax Regional Council and therefore committing to additional year-over-year costs of any kind is not a practice of good financial management. To simplify, if we build a tennis court but Council decreases our area rate dramatically, we could end up with a neighbourhood feature that is not being maintained and would provide no coverage to someone injured while using it.

Moving forward, the Westwood Hills Residents Association has been working with municipal representatives to ensure that any plans to spend that surplus meet their needs assessment for the subdivision and therefore would be maintained and insured by the municipality. In the weeks ahead, the WWHRA board will be developing a plan to receive assent from neighbourhood residents for a path forward that commits money for the usage of surplus and provides a useful recreational feature to the neighbours of Westwood Hills.