

17/11/2014

# Musquodoboit Harbour Vision Plan

*Community Check Back - 2014*

Vision Check-in Committee

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The Musquodoboit Harbour Vision Plan was the cumulative work of *Halifax Regional Municipality* Planning staff and Musquodoboit Harbour area residents in the mid-2000's. The Plan was before Council in 2007 and it was adopted as the guide to future Planning in the community. For more detail on the Plan see the **Musquodoboit Harbour Vision and Strategic Action Plan (Appendix A)**.

In consultation, the community identified ten general categories and thirty-four specific goals and objectives for Musquodoboit Harbour. The goals and objectives were further defined by identifying current conditions or situations, what needed to happen to achieve the objectives, stakeholders, and possible pitfalls. For a consolidated version see the **Action Plan (Appendix B)**.

Municipal Council Planning decisions in the Musquodoboit area are guided by the *Halifax Regional Municipality Regional Plan (RP)* and the *Eastern Shore (West) Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS)*. The RP guides Council's Planning decisions that impact the entire municipality, such as the environment, transportation, and development patterns. It does identify concerns at a local level, but only to the extent that they impact on regional objectives. The RP identified the need for a Secondary Planning Strategy in the Musquodoboit Harbour area and designated the community as a District Growth Centre to facilitate the secondary planning process. These plans are intended to be reviewed and updated every 5 to 10 years. The Regional Plan was last reviewed in 2014 and the Eastern Shore (West) Plan has been amended several times, but there has not been a comprehensive review since adoption in 1996.



The intent of the MPS is carried out in the *Eastern Shore (West) Land Use By-law*. The MPS and associated land use by-law are applied across the entire plan area and apply to the communities of Clam Bay, Clam Harbour, Debaies Cove, East Jeddore, East Petpeswick, English Point, Hartlin Settlement, Head Of Jeddore, Lake Charlotte, Little Harbour, Lower Ship Harbour, Musquodoboit Harbour, Myers Point, Ostrea Lake, Owls Head, Oyster Pond, Pleasant Point, Salmon River Bridge, Ship Harbour, Smiths Settlement, Southwest Cove, Upper Lakeville, West Jeddore, and West Petpeswick.

One key objective of the Vision Plan, as it was for the RP, was for the completion of a Secondary Planning Strategy (SPS) specifically for the village of Musquodoboit Harbour. The SPS is intended to address community needs and address

long range Planning goals and objectives over and above the general Eastern Shore guidelines. The Vision Plan is intended to be one of the supporting documents for the Secondary Plan review.

The creation of the SPS was not initiated and the community almost lost the District Growth Centre designation in the 2014 RP+5 review. Strong community support and participation in the public process encouraged Council to keep the designation and pending the allocation of Municipal staff resources, the path is now clear for the SPS process to proceed.

### ***History of the Musquodoboit Harbour and Area Community Association and Development of the Musquodoboit Harbour Community Vision***

The Musquodoboit Harbour and Area Community Association was originally known as the Musquodoboit Harbour Ratepayers and Residents Association (MHRRA). Its original purpose was to help represent residents' concerns in the area, and help set area tax rates under the old County of Halifax to support local fire stations. The organization was registered as a non-profit society in 2000.

In 2005, the organization initiated a strategic planning session to become more proactive than reactive as a community association. This initiative then found out the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) was looking to pilot a new community visioning process as part of development of HRM's new regional plan. Thus, through the advocacy of the MHRRA, Musquodoboit Harbour became the first rural community to undergo this process in HRM. In 2006, a Community Liaison Group (CLG) was formed to oversee a year-long consultation process to develop a community vision and action plan. In 2007, this plan was approved by Halifax Regional Council.

In 2008, implementation of this plan was begun – but the original Community Liaison Group soon ran out of steam and the visioning initiative within HRM was cancelled and resources re-assigned in 2009. In 2010, the MHRRA officially took oversight of the vision through a special resolution and work continued through focus groups that took over implementation of the vision. Through these groups, Musgo Rider, the Old School Community Gathering Place and Eastern Shore Mental Health were all established.

In 2013, the original MHRRA decided it was time to review its name and purpose and in 2014 the MHRRA became the Musquodoboit Harbour and Area Community Association (MHACA). The boundaries of the old MHRRA were changed to reflect Musquodoboit Harbour's status under Halifax's Regional Plan as a growth centre and the organization initiated a review of the Vision and action plans developed in 2006.



### ***Reviewing the Musquodoboit Harbour Community Vision & Action Plans***

The MHACA initiated a review of the community's Vision and action plans because it was concerned that too much time had passed since the 2007 adoption of the Vision Plan by Council to say with relative certainty that the Plan still reflected the goals and objectives of the community. To determine whether the Plan was on-track, three public meetings were held to present the Plan to the area residents and solicit

feedback. Meetings were held in Gaetz Brook, Musquodoboit Harbour and Oyster Pond. 164 people attended these meetings and an additional 100 comments/likes were received on social media. A table of all comments received at the public meetings is attached to this report (**Appendix C**).

The timing of the public consultation coincided with an announcement by Kevin Murphy, MLA, about exploring the viability of a “Wellness Centre” in East Chezzetcook. As that proposal suggests moving the rink, Birches Senior Care Facility and the Eastern Shore High School from Musquodoboit Harbour those areas of the Vision Plan drew the most comment and concern. Those facilities are referenced in the Action Plan, but were not intended to be the focus of the meetings.

The MHACA has now completed their review of all comments received and has weighed them against the Strategic Action Plan to determine whether there has been any change since 2007 which would warrant further review and consultation. These findings, including all public comments will be provided to HRM Planning staff to assist in the creation of the Secondary Planning Strategy for Musquodoboit Harbour.



For simplicity, each topic area of the Vision Plan is listed in order of appearance in the **Musquodoboit Harbour Vision and Strategic Action Plan**. Comments will be generalized and a conclusion drawn as to whether the 2007 vision has changed. For a comprehensive list of comments and concerns see Appendix C.

## **VISION PLAN TOPIC AREAS**

### **1. Business/Economy**

**GOAL: MH is a self-contained, self-sufficient and sustainable community where most of residents' daily needs can be met.**

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE: A meeting was held to explore starting a Chamber of Commerce for the area, and a steering committee was nominated to help explore the idea further. The Old School was taken over from HRM and redeveloped to help encourage tourism through a greater range of events and attractions (key initiatives being a Summer Arts Festival and Gallery).**

The Eastern Shore (West) Municipal Planning Strategy advises that the majority of development is along Highway No. 7, where greatest concentration of commercial activity is in Musquodoboit Harbour and Smith's Settlement. These services support the smaller communities in the Plan Area.

The Vision noted that this goal ranked first in importance in the survey completed in 2007. The emphasis was on ensuring long term growth, maintaining and enhancing services to the greater community, developing incentives for new commercial growth and fostering an environment for success.

The workshops found that fundamentally this goal was unchanged. There were requests for better parking and concession stands at Martinique Beach, as well, a clean-up of the signage clutter at the community entrance, perhaps with a common sign. A number of requests were made for sewer and water servicing to promote economic development and there were renewed requests for a Secondary Planning Strategy.

For a comprehensive list of comments and concerns see Appendix C.

### **2. Public Transit & Sidewalks**

**GOAL: As a Rural Commuter District Centre, MH maintains its connection to the ~~Regional Centre and other communities~~ through a commuter and community transit system and excellent road conditions. It is a walkable centre that acts as a**

**hub of services that meets the needs of a welcoming, inclusive, self-renewing, multi-generational community.**

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE: Musgo Rider, a locally-based transportation service based out of MH and serving Porters Lake to Ship Harbour has been established.**

The Eastern Shore (West) Municipal Planning Strategy is silent on this subject and should be addressed in the Secondary Planning Strategy.

There were two specific goals arising from the 2007 Visioning exercise; an express commuter bus from Halifax/Dartmouth to Musquodoboit Harbour, the development of local transportation between communities and the provision of sidewalks in the village core. These two goals are still of primary concern for those at the workshops and there was frustration that the Metro Transit service was not provided.

It was also noted though, that the Musgo Rider (which came out of the visioning process) is now providing valuable service between communities and there was a call to expand the service, and to extend public transit not only to Musquodoboit Harbour, but further east. There was a new suggestion that bicycle lanes be provided within the community and from the Harbour to Martinique Beach. Strong support was received to connect the Musquodoboit Trail, Chezzetcook Trail, and a Porter's Lake trail, as well as extending a trail system further east.

For a comprehensive list of comments and concerns see Appendix C.

### **3. Community Services**

**GOAL: MH is a self-contained, self-sufficient and sustainable community where most of residents daily needs can be met. Its population growth is capable of sustaining small business infrastructure, restaurants, social programs, education, medical, police and postal services, tourism, arts, culture and vibrant voluntary organizations. MH is a walkable centre that acts as a hub of services that meets the needs of a welcoming, inclusive, self-renewing, multi-generational community.**

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE: Eastern Shore Mental Health has been established, the library is now open more hours and there is also a new Women's Association in development.**

As anticipated, in response to the Community Campus proposal by the MLA, this topic generated a significant amount of input from those in attendance at all three workshops. There was overwhelming support for keeping the Birches and the services it provides in the community, with suggestions for expansion of the number of beds and an addition to the building. There was a request to provide better access to services for disabled persons and those with debilitating physical conditions.

More senior's and assisted living housing was requested along with a mix of housing types to provide for a more diverse demographic. Other suggestions were to move Canada Post "super boxes" closer to the residents and to protect them from the elements.

For a comprehensive list of comments and concerns see Appendix C.

#### **4. Recreation**

**GOAL: MH is a healthy community with sidewalks, trails, excellent sports facilities catering to adult and youth sport, offering year round athletic options and providing a positive focus for the region's youth. MH protects and capitalizes on its natural assets by protecting its coastline and water resources, while developing a range of opportunities for outdoor recreation and eco-tourism.**

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE: The Peace Park was upgraded with a new gazebo, picnic shelter, play equipment and overall grading to reduce flooding in the area.**

There was little change in the focus of the community since the Vision Plan of 2007. The community continues to express a desire for improvements and expansion of the rink and there was continued interest in a community pool and curling rink. It was noted that those uses would serve all ages.

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Maintaining the rink in Musquodoboit Harbour was strongly supported and it was suggested that a large, multi-use building would best serve the Eastern Shore if it were placed in the Harbour. A

facility similar to Cole Harbour Place in Cole Harbour, with rinks recreational facilities, meeting rooms, etc. all under one roof was put forward.

For a comprehensive list of comments and concerns see Appendix C.

## 5. **Environment**

**GOAL: MH protects and capitalizes on its natural assets by protecting its coastline and water resources, while developing a range of opportunities for outdoor recreation and eco-tourism.**

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE: A climate change grant paid for new bike racks to be put in the village including Martinique Beach, the Library, the Old School and the Playground to encourage more cycling in the community.**

The Eastern Shore (West) Municipal Planning Strategy referenced a NS Environment survey identifying septic tank malfunctions in the Musquodoboit Harbour and Jeddore Oyster Pond areas. The malfunctions were primarily due to the proximity of bedrock to the surface, slow percolation and soil saturation. Policy was adopted to encourage co-operation between the municipality and province to implement public education and information dissemination programs. The MPS also contains Policy respecting water quality, storm water management and protection of watercourses.

In 2007 there was expressed a desire to develop Musquodoboit Harbour as a green community. There was consensus that HRM should initiate environmental principles for development, expand and protect connected open spaces and enforce and strengthen existing regulations to protect the environment. This topic area is closely related to No. 6: Infrastructure.

In 2014 the desire was primarily unchanged, but there were some new suggestions, such as developing alternative energy sources, public education and mandatory septic system maintenance.

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For a comprehensive list of comments and concerns see Appendix C.

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## 6. Infrastructure

**GOAL: MH population growth is capable of sustaining small business infrastructure, restaurants, social programs, education, medical, police and postal services, tourism, arts, culture, and vibrant voluntary organizations – but its development also stays true to its nature as a ‘village’. MH protects and capitalizes on its natural assets by protecting its coastline and water resources. Development is clustered to support preservation of maximum open space.**

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE: A 2<sup>nd</sup> water shed study with local participation was done to assess potential for water and sewer in the area, and what different scenarios might cost – focusing mainly on services for the ‘core’ of the community.**

The Vision Plan 2007 called for the exploration of servicing options in the Harbour, recognizing the impact that providing piped water and sewer would have on other topic areas of the Vision, in particular to create a healthy, walkable community and protect the environment by preventing sprawl, and stimulate local economic development, but in a manner that contains development.

The public meetings were held shortly after the announcement that the community was going to be down zoned in the HRM Regional Plan, effectively quashing any incentive to provide water or sewer in Musquodoboit Harbour. The response of the community was overwhelming, and lead by the Musquodoboit Harbour and Area Community Association, HRM Council maintained the necessary designation. The 2014 workshops reinforced that sentiment and at all three locations there was support for servicing the community.

For a comprehensive list of comments and concerns see Appendix C.

## 7. Housing/Seniors Development

**GOAL: Development in MH builds on its seascape and rural village charm, its natural and built heritage through architectural guidelines that promote compact, small business development and a range of housing that supports aging in place, and is clustered to support preservation of maximum open space.**

There was little change in the focus of this topic area from 2007. There were a significant number of requests for affordable housing options to provide the ability to age-in-place in the community and very strong support for maintaining, enhancing or expanding the Birches Senior's Care Facility.

There were suggestions of a seniors' "buddy" system, to check in on those seniors who decide to stay in their homes as long as possible, as well as the concept of "Adopt a Grandparent" to encourage seniors to have an active and involved lifestyle.

For a comprehensive list of comments and concerns see Appendix C.

## 8. **Youth**

**GOAL: Musquodoboit Harbour is a healthy community with sidewalks, trails, sports facilities catering to youth and adult sport, offering year-round athletic options and providing a positive focus for the region's youth. MH is a welcoming, inclusive, multi-generational community where children, youth, seniors and families feel safe, appreciated and have opportunities to be part of the community.**

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE: Redevelopment of the Old School in the Harbour included development of a youth centre and a variety of new youth-oriented programs including a Youth Arts Festival, Rock the Shore, Battle of the Bands and other family, multi-generational programming.**

The 2007 Vision emphasized the desire to develop sports facilities and a youth centre, as well as maintaining education opportunities all intended to involve and retain youth in Musquodoboit Harbour. The 2014 workshops confirmed that this topic area is on track. It should be noted that re-development of the old elementary school in the area (re-named the Old School Community Gathering Place) also took on this goal as a means to increase opportunities for youth. Other programs for youth also included a Battle of the Bands and Rock the Shore music event, and more are being developed - especially programs and events for families to get past the challenges youth face with transportation.

In response to the concept of the Community Campus concept in East Chezzetcook, which proposes relocation of the Eastern Shore District High School, there was a significant emphasis on maintaining and enhancing the school. There was a call for summer recreation programs and creating year round recreational activities.

For a comprehensive list of comments and concerns see Appendix C.

## 9. Looks/Aesthetics

**GOAL: Development in MH builds on its seascape, rural village charm, natural and built heritage through architectural guidelines that promote compact, small business development and a range of housing options. MH is a village with population growth capable of sustaining small business infrastructure, restaurants, social programs, education, medical, police and postal services, tourism, arts, culture and vibrant voluntary organizations.**

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE: The Old School (built in 1924) has been secured from HRM after it was decommissioned by the School Board, now has heritage status and hosts a variety of arts and culture events and attractions for residents and visitors alike.**

The Eastern Shore (West) Municipal Planning Strategy noted the growing concern of citizens about the proliferation of signage on Route No. 7 and a strong desire to create and strictly enforce regulations. The MPS calls for uniform signage and proposed directional signage suitable for the area.

Vision 2007 proposed a number of community beautification programs, such as installing streetlights, developing a town square, planting trees, and removal of sign clutter. There were a large number of comments about signage and some very good ideas regarding improvements to the village core. Fundamentally the goals of 2007 remain unchanged.

For a comprehensive list of comments and concerns see Appendix C.

## 10. Community Organization

**GOAL: There were no specific goals identified in the Vision and Action Plans of 2007 for this category but it was recognized that support for community organizations is critical to achieving all other priorities. To that end...**

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE: As part of the Old School's redevelopment, lifetime members of the Old School are able to book space for non-profits they are a member of to meet there and the Old School tries to support as many community initiatives as it can as sort of an 'umbrella' organization supporting other organizations (ie. helping Eastern Shore Mental Health to apply for grants, hosting after party for local Parade of Lights, and hosting a variety of other community events).**

This was not a topic area at the 2014 workshops.

The newly created Musquodoboit Harbour and Area Community Association is a community organization taking steps toward achieving the Vision. MHACA has a mandate to actively support, promote and champion the goals and objectives presented in the Strategy Plan. Working with the public at large, other associations and HRM Regional Council, Province of Nova Scotia, and federal government, MHACA intends to be an advocate for Musquodoboit Harbour and the Eastern Shore.

The topic areas of the Vision Plan remain relatively unchanged from 2007. The citizens who participated in the process continue to support the goals and objectives and a number of insightful suggestions have been made about the rink, Birches and school, which need to be explored in greater detail.

**Submitted November 17, 2014 by:**

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