

Amanda R. Dunfield

February 10, 2025

West Hants Regional Municipality
ATTN. WHRM Council
76 Morison Drive
Windsor, NS
B0N 2T0

Good Evening Mayor and Council,

I am writing to express concern and urge Council reconsider the January 28, 2025 dated decision to dissolve the Municipality's recently appointed PACHAC and restructure the committee; a move that reduced citizen input opportunity from seven (7) citizen members to two (2) citizen members, while increasing Council input from three (3) to twelve (12) members.

I question whether due process was indeed followed and query violations under the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act R.S. c. 299 s.1, sections 3 and 4. It was also curious to me none supporting this amended motion were able to correctly identify the number of citizen members on the Committee during the very brief discussion which occurred prior to the vote. I can imagine these factors in combination could have muddled the waters for less experienced members and unduly influenced the vote.

The amalgamated West Hants is a large and diverse area and as such, it would seem a diversity of representation is essential to ensuring citizen input and a greater diversity of opinion is being adequately captured. This action to dissolve a newly appointed citizen committee is questionable, at best. Together with the Municipality's recent decision to turn off Facebook commenting, to cease the publication of Facebook live meeting videos, and December's discussions about whether public correspondence should continue to be published in meeting agendas - a message is being sent loud and clear. It seems input from the people who live and pay taxes here may no longer be welcome.

I must ask, what is next? What else would you like to get rid of? The Diversity and Inclusion committee? The Accessibility Committee? Perhaps the Audit Committee?

Municipal Council is the absolute grassroots access point to making our community sustainable in a myriad of aspects - and it can only be done through community involvement and input. For whatever reason, the people who elected this council are being shut out. The questions asked and points raised by a family friend and lifelong politician are: Why? What is the agenda of this council? Where is the four-year plan? Where is the engagement? Why promote inclusion when you do not want it? Please explain how this action reflects and promotes the inspiration in 'Inspire West Hants'. It is without exception a sad day when members of a community are stripped of their voices.

Council can and should be following along with all municipal matters. The meetings are open door. Anyone can attend in person, participate via Zoom, watch live or later on YouTube. However, as history has proven, not all Council representatives are created equal in their ability or desire to interact with their constituents, or in their level of engagement in matters not directly impacting their district. It may

even be reasonable to say not all elected to Council follow all matters before them in COTW and Council meeting agendas closely. Furthermore, a large percentage of correspondence often goes unaddressed. Increasing avenues for citizen input can function to serve as conduits of voice for communities; decreasing them not only stifles creativity and engagement, but it also builds resentment, anger and diminishes community pride. With regards to the importance of encouraging avenues for citizen dialogue and input, again the words of another well-respected politician "One complaint on an issue, maybe not a big deal. Two, that's your sign there is a challenge that needs a solution."

I want to live in the best, most successful version of West Hants going forward. If we continue down this path of reducing avenues for input from Municipal residents, we will undoubtedly miss this mark.

Respectively,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amanda', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Amanda Dunfield

"Self-determination of a conflict of interest is itself a conflict of interest."

Donald Kettl