

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

GRANTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

June 1, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor Russell Walker, Chair
Councillor Peter Lund
Councillor Jennifer Watts
Councillor Barry Dalrymple
Mr. Andrew Higdon
Ms. Monica Jordan
Mr. David Woo

REGRETS: Councillor Jim Smith
Councillor Tim Outhit
Ms. Gina Byrne
Mr. Geoff Baker
Ms. Pamela Henley

STAFF: Ms. Peta-Jane Temple, Team Lead, Tax, Grants & Special Projects
Mr. Bruce Fisher, Manager, Fiscal & Tax Policy
Ms. Julia Horncastle, Acting Municipal Clerk
Mr. Mark Calvi, Legislative Assistant

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 2:37 p.m.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES - April 20 & May 11, 2009**

MOVED by Councillor Peter Lund, seconded by Councillor Barry Dalrymple, that the minutes of April 09, and May 11, 2009 be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED

3. **APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS**

Ms. Temple requested that item 6.2 (i) of the Agenda be moved to item 6.3.

There were added items to the Agenda regarding discussion of the St. Margaret's Centre, and the idea of a Revolving Loan Fund.

MOVED by Councillor Peter Lund, seconded by Councillor Barry Dalrymple, that the Order of Business, Additions and Deletions be approved, as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED

4. **DEFERRED BUSINESS** - None

5. **BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF MINUTES** - None

6. **REPORT**

6.1 **Community Grants Program 2009-2010: Recommended Awards**

Ms. Temple added into the main report information on canoe and sailing clubs in relation to taxes and grant requests, along with an information 'cheat sheet ' which gives further background information on sector scores, ranking, etc.

She discussed in detail the funding process and addressed the procedure for any individuals and groups that have been deemed ineligible for funding according to policy, and their options for appeal. Those not recommended for funding can make an appeal claiming errors were made in the process or providing new information. After Council reviews those recommendations not to fund, the groups have two weeks to file an appeal. Setting aside an amount of \$10,000 at the start of the review process will provide the capacity to deal with appeals.

The eligible candidates are sorted by sector (ie: Fire, Housing, etc.). Cheat sheets provide scoring information to assist reviewers that are given the files. The reviewers will then

meet after to go over scores, and then as needed, adjudicate and rank.

Ms. Temple stated that scores may not prove useful in determining overall amount of funding across different types of grants. For instance, project grants have a maximum of \$5000, whereas capital grants have a maximum of \$25,000, and a higher score under project grants may still receive a lesser amount than a lower score under capital grants.

A discussion ensued regarding the projects and groups currently recommended for funding:

Friends of Halifax Commons

There were concerns about the group's ability to create web site, given the money on hand, and whether the web site was currently up and running. Hence the Staff's conditional award recommendation.

Cole Harbour Parks and Trails Association

The tent is to be purchased, and a portable toilet and ride on lawn mower are rental items required.

Councillor Lund inquired as to procedure when only 50% of funding is received by a certain project. Ms. Temple clarified that amounts of funding given are based on the ability of individuals and groups to pay or raise money through independent means, and that screening for such self-help is regularly employed - if a grant is approved, what are the prospects of the group to come up with any remaining funds independently.

Appeals fall into three categories: ineligible; recommend grant; not recommended for funding.

Councillor Barry Dalrymple pointed out a correction on page 8, no. 17: the LWF Fireman's Association does not receive any funding from the LWF Rate Payers Association. The LWF Fireman's Association is primarily a social club, used by various community groups and with bar sales as the main source of funding.

Regarding the Dunbrack Housing Cooperative, Mr. Andrew Higdon asked for clarification of whether the \$4000 was listed for repairs. Ms. Temple clarified that this figure for repairs is correct and further explained how shopping list items are prioritized, first by the grant applicants according to their own needs, and then from this, the reviewer can determine which funding priorities to pursue in accordance with sector's budget allocation.

A brief discussion developed regarding the Neptune Theatre Foundation, (p. 23, no. 67), and Councillor Lund inquired as to whether a special grant application is applicable. In response Ms. Temple noted that any funding from the Grant Committee would actually be directed towards the smaller theatre productions, (and not the main stage), that is part of the Neptune complex. These smaller productions are usually more experimental in nature and have a broader function and benefit to smaller theatre groups. Targeting funding in

this area also allows the venue to be more affordable for these smaller groups. As a follow up to this, Ms. Monica Jordan inquired as to how eligibility for the \$20,000 was determined, and how this amount was derived for such arts programs. Ms. Temple replied that before amalgamation, this type of art funding was only granted to Neptune Theatre and Symphony Nova Scotia, as they were viewed as regional and provincial in scale. Over the past decade funding in this area has gone down from \$45,000 to \$20,000. Last year Staff presented the Grants Committee a report recommending moving professional art groups out of the Community Grants Program and suggested an approach comparable to events funding for these larger bodies. Amateurs and smaller groups would remain.

Councillor Dalrymple inquired about the hotel tax grant and whether it falls under special events or the Grants Committee, and stated that he would like to ensure some type of continued support for Neptune Theatre and Symphony Nova Scotia. Ms. Temple's recommendation was to differentiate these two larger bodies using different criteria than for smaller groups, based more on economic impact rather than a social development model. She stated that the main focus of the Grant Committee could be directed more towards a variety of community art projects.

Councillor Lund had an inquiry regarding funding for Halifax Regional Search and Rescue and whether the grant recommendation in question was applicable to the four divisions of this volunteer organization across HRM, or only one in particular. It was confirmed that this grant applies to one division.

Councillor Watts asked for clarification of the grant recommendation for item no.11 p. 7, Social, Cultural, Recreational Inclusion Society. Ms. Temple replied that only half of the requested amount is recommended and that this is a case where the organization would be able to apply for the remainder in the following year. Funds were approved for the purchase of sound equipment and not the cooking equipment, as the former applies more to an integral equipment deficiency, and the latter pertains more to social functions.

MOVED BY Councillor Dalrymple, seconded by Councillor Lund, that the List of Recommended Grants by Sector 2009/2010 be approved as listed in the Committee Report. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Attention of the Committee was then directed towards the recommendations regarding groups not funded because of either program budget or project merit. The submissions that are not recommended total a combined amount of over \$200,000.

Environment

St. Paul's United Church

Initially the group had contacted the Committee wanting to have a parking lot paved. Once told that the Committee does not fund congregational activities, they continued to inquire

about other possibilities for funding in relation to food bank functions and community gardens. They were advised to direct their efforts to obtain a grant towards a community environmental project. Ultimately, their submission was lacking in detail and had no direct link to an environmental project. It was suggested that they link their project to a local park, trail system or leisure project (trail, community garden, etc.).

Recreation and Leisure

Halifax Cycling Coalition

This was a huge project in need of either scaling back its phases or securing more funding to confirm it will proceed in this fiscal year.

Halifax Rowing Club

Although some provincial recreational funding has been granted, there is concern over the group's inability to raise funds independently to match the balance and move forward. This project is narrow in scope but high in benefit for a select few participants.

Riverlake Community Cemetery Society

This group applied for a grant to cover professional fees for landscaping of the cemetery and trail system. They have received a \$5000 grant from Councillor's Discretionary, but may still be in the planning phase for further developments for this year. Land was donated by HRM in lieu of a building that is set to be demolished, but no work has commenced.

Sack-A-Wa Canoe Club

In terms of priority, the submission score as high as other candidates in the same sector. The application was in relation to a land clearing. There may be potential for a joint project with the Gymnastics Club in the same location, but this was not addressed in the submission.

St. Andrew's Parish

This group was looking for funding to cover the costs of signage. This was considered low priority.

St. George's Youthnet

This was considered high risk as there has been no further commitment or development from the feasibility study for the church hall that was done a number of years ago where funds were granted. It is unclear if they plan to move forward and tear down the church hall and build a new community centre facility which could impact site use.

Sheet Harbour Rockets

This submission related to flood lights used by a baseball team in the area. There is a possibility that HRM would be taking over this.

Ecology Action Centre

The grant application was for a tools and training program and was deemed low priority with the potential for self-help.

Micmac Amateur Aquatic Club

An appeal may be pending. Based on financial statements, this group may have the capacity to fund themselves.

Royal Nova Scotia Yacht Squadron

There may be a basis for appeal. The plans are to rebuild their facility to create a Centre of Excellence for sailing, instructional classes, etc. The submission may be more appropriately classified under children and youth programs. More detail may be required.

Affordable Housing & Shelter

Habitat for Humanity

Purchase of safety equipment would probably be required by labour law and insurance.

Society for Women in Healing

This application was for the purchase of private land, but there were no specific development plans related to the acquisition of this land for housing and therefore this was given low priority.

Emergency Assistance

Faith Tabernacle Church

No confirmation has been given that the facility is in fact accepted as an official comfort centre with HRM EMO.

Community History

Icelandic Memorial Society of Nova Scotia

This group was declined for funding last year but meetings to provide feedback took place. They are leasing land from the province and want to build a replica log cabin on these lands. There were concerns of operational costs, liability issues and of the small margin of net revenues. As this would be in the realm of tourism and public domain, potential risk must be examined with respect to issues such as sustainability and insurance.

Halifax Citadel Army Museum

From financial statements provided, this submission had sufficient capacity to cover recent unexpected equipment purchases. The purchase appears to have been executed in prior years.

Diversity

Dartmouth Learning Network

Although the subject matter is African Canadian and Aboriginal, there was no information about the composition of the learners. Reviewers determined this was a literacy program irrespective of subject matter.

Arts & Crafts

Aeolian Singers

The submission appears to relate to the production of a CD for breast cancer fund raising. The program does not fund fundraising.

Nova Scotia Mass Choir

This application was a capital grant for new gowns and track suits. The submission contained little detail as to quotes and cost sharing. Feedback may be provided. Uniforms or personal clothing is not eligible.

There was brief discussion regarding funding and merit for funding. Overall the Committee was satisfied with the results of the recommendations.

MOVED BY Councillor Lund, seconded by Mr. Higdon, that the Applications Not Recommended for Funding 2009-2010 be approved as listed in the Committee Report. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

6.2 By-Law T-200 Tax Exemption for Non-Profit Organizations: Implications of Budget 2009-2010: Discussion of Options (Verbal)

(i) Briefing Report

The scope of the report was to outline a basis of recommendations and alternatives for Council's consideration. It was estimated that \$200,000 would be needed for renewal and \$350,000 for new applicants; the 2009-2010 budget approved May 25th does not contain sufficient additional capacity to address renewals and those organizations making new applications. An approach to deal with this shortfall will be brought forward by the Committee to Council. Several options were set out by Staff in the briefing report.

Staff suggested one option would be to put any additional funding into renewal, which would cover such costs as increases in assessment, higher tax rates, and any upgrades. Also it was suggested to limit the dollar value for each group so as to match the previous year's amount.

Pending the re-design of the *Non-Profit Tax Exemption Program* Staff recommended deferral of all non-profit housing cooperatives.

The waiting list for the 63 new applicants should be prioritized in the following order:

- Change of Ownership / Location (2);

- Payment of Commercial tax (9);
- Resource (2);
- Residential (5);
- Leased (14);
- Increase in level of exemption (3);
- Non profit housing coops (28) - defer to next year;

Discussion ensued regarding these items in terms of tax issues such as exemption, tax rates for a particular complex; ownership issues, such as transferable title and leasing; income generated and how this relates to the type of housing and amount of tax paid.

The discussion continued in relation to funding for coop housing, its structure and the wider implications involved, in terms of how tenants share the risk and benefits with shared ownership, and whether certain approaches may result in giving non profit cooperatives financial incentives to take lower income and if this is in the best interest of the public. Councillor Walker proposed that this information come forward in the form of a report for the next meeting, as to rational behind recommendations.

Ms. Temple noted that the St. Margaret's Centre Grant, Community Facilities Partnership Fund Division and the Feed Nova Scotia Supplementary would be discussed at the next meeting.

There was discussion regarding funding for renewals and whether any annual increases are automatic based on raised assessments, or whether annual renewal is required. Ms. Temple noted that this is not automatic, legislation requires renewal.

Revolving loan funding was briefly discussed.

A summary of issues was noted:

- Rent and lease are being used interchangeably and suggested the introduction contain a definition;
- There are too many examples listed on page 12, noting there should only be a few well thought out examples;
- Is there an overall capacity that has to be maintained and is there a listing of the amounts;
- Business Occupancy Tax is being phased out and there should be some reference to that;
- Need to address equatability;
- Set some standards to lease;
- Wording should not be as restrictive;
- There should be wording that there is proof of insurance;
- HRM should be flagged if insurance is cancelled or revoked on a HRM property;
- Training certificates should this be part of HRM 's responsibility;

6.3 Briefing Report - Circulated June Meeting

It was agreed to defer discussion of less than market sales for the July meeting.

7. ADDED ITEMS - NONE

8. NEXT REGULAR MEETING DATE

The next meeting will take place at the Finance Boardroom, 3rd Floor Duke Tower, on July 6, 2009 at 1:00 p.m.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:26 p.m.

Mark Calvi
Legislative Assistant