

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

GRANTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

October 5, 2009

- PRESENT:** Councillor Russell Walker, Chair
Councillor Peter Lund
Councillor Jennifer Watts
Councillor Jim Smith
Ms. Gina Byrne
Mr. Andrew Higdon
Mr. David Woo
Mr. Geoff Baker
Ms. Pamela Henley
- ABSENT:** Councillor Barry Dalrymple (regrets)
Councillor Brad Johns (regrets)
Ms. Monica Jordan (regrets)
- STAFF:** Ms. Peta-Jane Temple, Team Lead, Tax, Grants & Special Projects
Mr. Bruce Fisher, Manager, Fiscal & Tax Policy
Ms. Cathie O'Toole, Director, Finance
Mr. Andre MacNeil, Financial Consultant, Finance
Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant
Ms. Krista Tidgwell, Legislative Assistant

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 1:03 p.m. in the MacLennan Room, 3rd Floor Duke Tower, Halifax.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES - September 14, 2009**

MOVED BY Mr. Andrew Higdon, seconded by Councillor Jim Smith, that the minutes of September 14, 2009, as presented, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Additions:

7.1 Membership Update - Ms. Peta-Jane Temple

MOVED BY Councillor Peter Lund, seconded by Mr. Andrew Higdon, that the order of business, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. **DEFERRED BUSINESS**

4.1 **Property Matter - Less than Market Value Sale, 9 Spring Street Bedford - Hospice Society of Greater Halifax**

- A Supplementary Information Report dated September 21, 2009 was before the Committee.
- A Report dated August 4, 2009 was before the Committee.

Ms. Peta-Jane Temple, Team Lead, Tax, Grants and Special Projects, presented the reports.

Ms. Temple presented the Heritage Advisory Committee's recommendation, dated August 26, 2009, to the Committee. She explained that the Heritage Advisory Committee had recommended that Halifax Regional Council approve entering into an Agreement of Purchase and Sale for the sum of \$1 and the \$5,000 offered by the society be redirected into the fabrication of an outdoor interpretation panel of a minimum value of \$5,000 to be completed within two years from the date of sale.

MOVED BY Councillor Jim Smith, seconded by Mr. Andrew Higdon, that the HRM Grants Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council enter into an Agreement of Purchase and Sale whereby the property located at 9 Spring Street, Bedford, be conveyed to the Hospice Society of Greater Halifax for the sum of \$1 and the \$5,000

offered by the society be redirected into the fabrication of an outdoor interpretation panel of a minimum value of \$5,000 to be completed within two years from the date of sale, and; schedule a public hearing date.

In response to a question by Ms. Byrne's, Ms. Temple advised that the building could not be sold without the land. Staff confirmed that through the Registry of Deeds an individual could not transfer title to the building without the land.

In response to the Committee's discussion in regard to subdividing the tennis court, taking a portion from the playground or road frontage and allocating it to another portion of the property, Ms. Temple expressed concern that each action could cause a zoning issue that would make the land non-conforming.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

**4.2 Community Grants Program 2010-2011 - Eligibility of
Community Gardens**

- An interpretation bulletin was before the Committee.

Ms. Temple requested this item be added to the November 2, 2009 agenda and noted she would be meeting with staff from the recreation department.

Ms. Temple advised that the Committee may want to look at reallocating funding in regard to appeals. She noted the reallocation does not require additional funding from the Committee.

Ms. Byrne asked who staff saw as being eligible and how could an individual become eligible if they own property privately. Councillor Walker requested the clarification be included in the information report to Halifax Regional Council.

Ms. Temple advised that on page 9 of the staff report there were specifications in regard to eligible and ineligible properties. She stressed the importance of an applicant including a copy of their lease agreement with their application.

Councillor Walker asked whether churches were eligible to receive community garden grants.

Ms. Temple advised that churches could apply for a community garden grant but noted that government lands usually receive some form of a contribution from another source. She advised the goal of the Committee is to view the applicants who do not already receive additional funding from an alternative source.

Councillor Smith requested clarification that lands owned by the Halifax Regional Municipality would not be eligible for community garden grants and that the grants would only be for the properties owned by the community.

Ms. Temple noted that the Committee could consider grants being used for indoor gardens for places such as a seniors club or a seniors non profit nursing home.

In response to a question by Council Smith, Ms. Temple advised that a group of residents would be eligible to receive community garden grants if they were to form a society and put in a garden for that society. She noted that groups who had HRM land would not be eligible to receive community garden grants but could apply for a grant to obtain the land. She provided an example wherein developers have portions of land that were designated for parkland and an option would be to combine those undersized lots and offer the land as a Request For Proposal (RFP).

In response to a question by Councillor Smith, Ms. Temple advised that the applicant would need a lease agreement to obtain the HRM land. She noted that HRM could put together a buy back agreement and undersized/ undeveloped lots would receive an extension. Ms. Temple noted that the demands for community garden grants would grow and that the Committee needed to determine what properties they would consider.

Ms. Temple noted that the Committee could e-mail her with any questions or comments in regard to the bulletin.

The Committee agreed to add this item to the November 2, 2009 agenda.

4.3 Partial Tax Exemption for Homes Destroyed by Fire

- A Supplementary Report dated September 22, 2009 was before the Committee.

Mr. Andre MacNeil, Finance Consultant, Finance, presented the report.

During the ensuing discussions the Committee raised the following questions/comments in regard to mobile homes and multi-unit buildings:

- What is the process for mobile homes? Would the exemption be based on the price of the land owned by the homeowner or would the homeowner get a rebate for the portion of the home?
- What is the process for land that is leased? Would the tenant pay the taxes on just the building portion?
- If the mobile home were to be destroyed, the homeowner should only have to pay the taxes on the home and not the land because they were only renting the lot. The owner of the Park would be responsible to pay the taxes on the land.
- Multi-unit buildings pose a challenge due to more than one unit within the building.

Normally if there are 3 to 4 units per building, the tenant would only occupy 1 of those units within the building. Staff would have to determine the building's total value and the individual value of each unit within the building to determine the assessment value for each unit.

- A potential problem for multi-unit building could be that some building owners know the square footage of their building and other owners do not. Each case would have to be reviewed individually to determine what information was available and what information was still required.

The Committee agreed to have only those properties destroyed by fire considered for the partial tax exemption at this time.

Staff confirmed that Fire Services would provide reports on major fires.

Staff agreed to provide a pro and con list for Option 1 and 2 for inclusion with the report to Regional Council.

Ms. Cathie O'Toole, Director of Finance, commented that there were no significant time differences between option 1 and option 2. She noted that obtaining a reassessment on property taxes would probably not be the first priority for the homeowner.

Councillor Walker expressed the importance of taking into consideration the amount of time the homeowner would have been removed from their home during the rebuilding process.

Following discussion by the Committee, it was **MOVED BY Ms. Gina Byrne, seconded by Councillor Peter Lund, that the HRM Grants Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council approve Option 2: Early Reassessment Approach as outlined in the Staff Report dated September 3, 2009 and the Supplementary Staff Report dated, September 21, 2009 attached to the report as Attachments 1 and 2, and; that the commencement date be for a fire that occurred on or after December 1, 2008. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

4.3.1 Written Submission from Mr. Herman Hugenholtz

- An email dated September 16, 2009 from Ms. Peta-Jane Temple was before the Committee for consideration.

No further action was required.

4.4 Grants & Contributions Appeals - Current Practices

Due to time constraints, this matter was deferred to the November 2, 2009 meeting.

5. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF MINUTES - NONE

6. REPORTS

6.1 Proposed 2010 Meeting Schedule

Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant, advised that as of November 2, 2009 the HRM Grants Committee meetings would be held in Finance Boardroom 1, 3rd Floor Duke Tower. Final decision on the 2010 meeting schedule was deferred to the November 2, 2009 meeting, pending comment from those members not in attendance.

7. ADDED ITEMS

7.1 Membership Update

Ms. Temple expressed concern that volunteers on the Committee were not provided an update in regard to the Committee of Council review prior to the recent newspaper article.

The Committee requested an update from the Municipal Clerks Office for the November meeting.

In response to Ms. Byrne's question regarding membership term expiration dates, the Legislative Assistant advised that there were three Committee members whose terms would be expiring on November 30, 2009. Any volunteers wishing to continuing serving on a Committee should submit their application form to the Municipal Clerk's Office as soon as possible.

8. NEXT REGULAR MEETING DATE - November 2, 2009

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:31 p.m.

Krista Tidgwell
Legislative Assistant