

HRM GRANTS COMMITTEE
MINUTES

June 13, 2011

- PRESENT: Councillor Russell Walker, Chair
Councillor Barry Dalrymple, Vice-Chair
Councillor Peter Lund
Councillor Jennifer Watts
Deputy Mayor Jim Smith
Bernadette Kehoe
Darren Watts
Andrew Higdon
- REGRETS: Councillor Brad Johns
David Woo
Lori Wozney
Geoff Baker
- STAFF: Ms. Peta-Jane Temple, Team Lead, Tax, Grants and Special
Projects
Mr. Peter Greechan, Community Developer
Ms. Shelly Hutt, Grants Program Technician
Mr. Scott Sheffield, Community Developer
Mr. André MacNeil, Financial Consultant
Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER / WELCOME

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m. in Halifax Hall, 2nd Floor City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

2. GRANT COMMITTEE ORIENTATION

A copy of the HRM Grants & Contributions orientation presentation was before the Committee.

Ms. Peta-Jane Temple, Team Lead, Tax, Grants and Special Projects, introduced the following staff associated with the Grants Programs: Peter Greechan, Community Developer, Scott Sheffield, Community Developer and Shelly Hutt, Grants Program Technician.

Ms. Temple then provided a verbal overview of the HRM Grants and Contributions portfolio outlining the six (6) programs under the Grants Committee mandate as follows: Community Grants Program; Community Facility Partnership Fund; Tax Exemption for Non-Profit Organizations; Non-Profit Fire Tax Concessions; Business Improvement Districts – Discretionary Fund, and; Less Than Market Value Property Sales.

Councillor Dalrymple entered the meeting at 1:08 p.m.

Discussion ensued on the Grants Programs under the mandate of the Grants Committee. Staff provided the following response to concerns/questions raised:

- staff could prepare a separate report for those applications not recommended for a grant that could include: a description of the organization; total amount requested; an explanation of the project, and; information on why the application was declined.
- those applications declined for funding are provided a letter, following Regional Council's decision, explaining why their request was not approved. The group may then contact staff for more information and may also file an appeal. A press release is released the day following Council's decision but there is no guarantee that the media will pick up on that release, therefore; staff suggested a notice be placed in the municipal government section of the newspaper that would include reference to the Grants Program website to access program information.
- in regard to Non-Profit Fire Tax Concessions for churches, those churches located 1200 feet beyond a fire hydrant, and fall within this program, may be charged the residential rate rather than the commercial rate. Tax exempt properties are exempt from everything except the fire tax so this would be the only item to appear on their property tax bill. The fire tax money is collected by HRM and given to Halifax Water.
- in response to a suggestion that the amounts for each program category under the Grants Committee mandate be provided, staff noted that the information could be provided in the reports.

- in regard to the ongoing review of the tax exemption for non profit organizations program, staff clarified that it is a program redesign within the existing tax system not tax reform.
- there is no criteria concerning repeat asks for any of the programs offered under the HRM Grants & Contributions programs. A directory is being prepared by staff for review by the Committee at a future meeting in regard to an alphabetical listing by sector for each group and how much they have been provided since 1996. Staff suggested that they could include a clause that an applicant shall not receive a grant for more than four (4) consecutive years; or, an excess of \$100,000 in any four year period. Under the current policy, a group may re-apply each year.

Deputy Mayor Smith expressed support for adding a clause to the policy, in regard to repeat requests, to balance out the funding awarded as there are some groups on the sidelines that are not obtaining any funding.

- in regard to tax exemptions and the concern that some groups are awarded 100% tax exemption but do not appeal their property assessment, staff suggested that the policy could include a requirement for the candidate to provide proof of appeal of their property assessment.
- currently, when a Councillor requests an appeal at Regional Council that Councillor must present to the Committee, in person or in writing, the basis for the appeal. If this does not occur, the appeal is automatically disqualified.

MOVED by Councillor Dalrymple, seconded by Mr. Darren Watts that the Grants Committee recommend that any appeal requests, issued by a Member of Regional Council, be given a two week deadline, from the date of the Regional Council meeting, to provide details of the appeal to staff. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – May 2, 2011

MOVED by Mr. Darren Watts, seconded by Councillor Watts that the minutes of May 2, 2011, as presented, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND ADDITIONS / DELETIONS

Addition:

- 12.1 Information Item: Requests from Non-Profit Organizations for Waiver or Discounted Municipal Fees –Darren Watts

Councillor Watts requested that the information report be deferred to the next meeting agenda.

MOVED by Mr. Andrew Higdon, seconded by Deputy Mayor Smith that the Order of Business, as presented, be approved and that the information item be added to the next meeting agenda. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

5. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES – NONE

6. MOTIONS OF RECONSIDERATION – NONE

7. MOTIONS OF RESCISSION - NONE

8. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS - NONE

9. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS, DELEGATIONS

9.1 Correspondence

9.1.1 Canadian Naval Memorial Trust – Request for Presentation

A letter dated June 2, 2011 from Mr. Hugh MacNeil, Chair, The Canadian Naval Memorial Trust, was before the Committee.

MOVED by Mr. Darren Watts, seconded by Deputy Mayor Smith that the Grants Committee grant the request for a presentation by the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust and schedule the presentation for the July meeting. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Councillor Watts retired from the meeting at 1:47 pm.

9.2 Petitions - NONE

9.3 Delegations – NONE

10. REPORTS

10.1 HRM Community Grants Program 2010-1: Recommended Awards

A staff report dated May 4, 2011 was before the Committee.

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

Discussion ensued on the staff report.

MOVED by Mr. Darren Watts, seconded by Councillor Lund that the Grants Committee recommend deferral of Item #41, Vedanta Ashram Society pending

clarification on the rationale for the recent decline for a variance requested by this group. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Staff provided the following response to questions of the Committee:

- following Regional Council's approval, staff do contact all those groups awarded conditional grants to ensure the groups understand the conditions
- merit is assigned to each request for website development however not all are recommended as the applicant(s) may have already received previous funding for website development
- at this stage there is no accounting of requests for other HMR grants including the Councillors' Discretionary Fund: staff could bring forward information on groups that have received/requested funding for programs under the Grant Committee portfolio such as tax exemption (full or partial). Cross referencing programs under the Grant Committee mandated categories is possible. This raises the questions of whether:
 - a "tax exempt" group should also be eligible to receive an HRM grant if they are not contributing to the "kitty"
 - "in kind" contributions could also far exceed a typical grant amount.
 - a group receives a property at less than market value, for \$1, and then receives full tax exemption and then applies for a grant should they be eligible for all or should the wealth be better shared.

Referencing the Auditor General's report on *Corporate Grants, Donations and Contributions*, Mr. Watts commented that it is important to account for multiple streams of HRM dollars including any funds that may come from a Councillor's fund and/or elsewhere.

- the HRM Heritage Planners review grant requests for substantive work on registered heritage properties and would advise that the provincial government also offers a rebate on a portion of the provincial sales tax on expenditures for heritage properties
- rejected grants due to program budget may mean the recommended decline was due to more requests being received than funds in the budget, or; due to poor project merit.

In response to a question by Councillor Lund in regard to the Hook Rug Museum Society of Nova Scotia, listed on Attachment 3 under Community History, staff explained that the museum was requested to have a third party review their collection to provide heritage/monetary value for what is in their collection. In this instance, the application appears to be an employment generation project to set up a market place to sell locally made rugs rather than heritage rugs.

Deputy Mayor Smith requested that more information be provided for those applications that have been turned down for funding.

Ms. Temple and Mr. Greechan provided clarification in response to questions raised by Mr. Watts in relation to the following applications: # 3 the Young Naturalist Club; #6 Sackville Rivers Association; #10 Golden Age Social Centre; #15 Scouts Canada Nova Scotia Provincial Council (Camp Harris); #25 Mothers Against Drunk and Impaired Driving (MADD Canada) Halifax Chapter; #42 Anchor Archives Society; #43 Frankie Productions Cooperative Limited; and #49 Plutonium Playhouse Society. Mr. Watts advised that he was satisfied with the clarification provided by staff.

Mr. Greechan responded to questions of clarification from Councillor Lund in regard to the St. Nicholas Anglican Church, Upper Tantallon application and the Emmanuel Baptist Church – Upper Hammonds Plains application and the non recommendation for grants. Councillor Lund advised that he was satisfied with the clarification provided.

Ms. Temple responded to questions of clarification from Deputy Mayor Smith in regard to the non recommended applications from the Halifax Sexual Health Centre; Lacrosse Nova Scotia; and, the Farrell Benevolent Society, Dartmouth. Deputy Mayor Smith advised that the Farrell Benevolent Society does have a completed Building Condition report that should have been included with the application.

Deputy Mayor Smith declared that he is no longer a Board Member of the Farrell Benevolent Society and does not believe he is in conflict of interest to speak on this matter.

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Smith, seconded by Councillor Dalrymple that the Grants Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council award a conditional grant in the amount of \$12,500 to the Farrell Benevolent Society, Dartmouth on condition that a building condition report and urgency of need information be submitted to Grant Program staff prior to the report being addressed by Regional Council. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

In response to a question raised by Mr. Andrew Higdon in regard to the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Halifax – Dartmouth, non recommended application, Ms. Temple advised that staff will suggest to the group that they have staff assist them with their application for next year in regard to the standard/basis of their request.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Lund, Ms. Temple explained that the time frame for the holding back of funds conditional upon confirmation of matching funds would be until the end of the year.

In response to a question of clarification by Councillor Lund in regard to the non granted application by the Royal Canadian Legion: Branch 153, White's Lake under the Emergency Assistance category in Attachment 3, Mr. Greechan explained that the Legion does not have an MOU with the Emergency Measures Office to act as an EMO

centre. Staff will meet with the Legion to provide a better understanding of the Community Grant Program.

MOVED by Mr. Darren Watts, seconded by Deputy Mayor Smith that the Grants Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council approve the HRM Community Grants Program awards as detailed in Attachment 2 of the May 4, 2011 staff report and as amended by the Grants Committee for a total of 54 grants with a combined value of \$327,721 with funding from operating account M311-8004 (Community Grants) with the following two amendments:

- 1. Defer decision on Item #41, Vedanta Ashram Society pending confirmation/clarification from staff on the rationale for the recent decline for a variance request. (*\$20,000 grant deferred*)**
- 2. Approve a \$12,500 conditional grant to the Farrell Benevolent Society, Attachment 3, Recreation & Leisure Category, conditional upon a copy of the building condition report and urgency of need for the funding/project being provided to HRM staff. (*\$12,5000 conditional grant recommended*)**

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

10.2 HRM Discretionary Funding to Business Improvement Districts: Proposed BID Contribution Policy

A report dated May 5, 2011 was before the Committee.

Ms. Temple, Team Lead, Tax, Grants and Special Projects, presented the report.

MOVED by Mr. Darren Watts, seconded by Deputy Mayor Smith that the Grants Committee recommend that the Audit and Finance Standing Committee approve in principle:

- 1. The proposed HRM Business Improvement District Contributions Policy as detailed in Attachment 1 of the May 5, 2011 staff report and refer same to Halifax Regional Council;**
- 2. Implementation of the proposed HRM Business Improvement District Contributions Policy, effective April 1, 2012;**
- 3. Identification of the HRM Business Improvement District Contributions Program and respective budget, to be created under M311- Fiscal Services.**

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

10.3 Auditor General's Report – Corporate Grants, Donations and Contributions

Councillor Walker noted that he was disappointed with the format of the report in that it did not separate out those grants that relate specifically to the six (6) programs under the Grant Committee mandate. He suggested that staff separate out those recommendations that would relate specifically to the Grants Committee programs.

Councillor Dalrymple noted that he did not read any recommendations in the report that the Committee has not already discussed and have started working on. He requested that the response from staff also include information on those recommendations the Committee has already discussed and taken some action with as well as those that have not been brought up by the Committee.

Councillor Lund noted that in Attachment 2 of the report, the grants provided under the Grants Committee programs are not listed, therefore; it is not an all inclusive list.

MOVED by Mr. Darren Watts, seconded by Deputy Mayor Smith that the Grants Committee request that staff prepare a report outlining all recommendations in the Auditor General's Corporate Grants, Donations and Contributions report that pertain to the Grant Committee programs, and; that the report include what action has already been taken; action that is being taken in regard to the recommendations, and; that staff provide an implementation work plan prioritizing the recommendations. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

11. MOTIONS - NONE

12. ADDED ITEMS

12.1 Information Report: Requests from Non-Profit Organizations for Waiver or Discounted Municipal Fees

This matter was deferred to the July meeting agenda.

13. NOTICES OF MOTION - NONE

14. NEXT MEETING DATE

The July 4, 2011 meeting date is to be confirmed pending availability of the HMCS Sackville group.

15. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:04 p.m.

Chris Newson
Legislative Assistant

INFORMATION ITEMS

1. HRM Community Grants Program 2011-2012: Ineligible Applications