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Tax Reform Committee
April 12, 2007

TO: David Grace and Members of the Tax Reform Committee

SUBMITTED BY: _____
Cathie O'Toole, Acting Director of Finance

DATE: April 05, 2007

SUBJECT: Communication and Public Participation Plan

ORIGIN

Tax Reform has been discussed by Regional Council on a number of occasions. In December 2006, Council approved the appointment of a 13 member Tax Reform Committee. As per the committee's Terms of Reference, part of the role and responsibility of the committee will be to oversee the development of the Tax Reform project, including the development of the communication and public participation plans.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the TRC:

1. Approve spring consultations as described in phase 3 of the proposed HRM Communications and Public Participation Plan,
2. Schedule a practice workshop for the committee on April 19th to help ensure workshops are on the right track for the public participation needs, and,
3. Approve the remaining Communications and Public Participation Plan as a working document to be further refined throughout the Tax Reform process, and present an update on the project to Regional Council on April 17th.

BACKGROUND

In October, staff presented to Regional Council on the progression of Tax Reform, and asked Council to confirm an approach to Tax Reform, and approve the creation of a project-specific Steering committee. Council confirmed the approach to Tax Reform at the “Rebuilding Foundations” level, and approved the creations of a Tax Reform Committee to guide the Tax Reform process at this level.

DISCUSSION

At the “Rebuilding Foundations” level, Tax Reform involves first prioritizing taxation principles and determining the appropriate foundation for HRM municipal tax system before beginning to develop new taxation options for HRM. At this level of Tax Reform, significant public involvement is necessary to developing a sustainable and viable tax system. Since the beginning of the Tax Reform project, the public has been involved with determining areas of concern with the current system, and providing suggestions for improvements. The public has been engaged in several CRA surveys concerning Tax Reform, and seven members of the general public sit on the project’s steering committee.

As Tax Reform enters the phase where key decisions must be made, the level of public involvement will increase. Public workshops, held in the spring of 2007, will focus on the principles and foundations of HRM’s future tax system. Information gathered from these sessions will then be used to develop several tax option packages, which will be taken to the public for further comment in the fall.

A HRM Tax Reform Strategy Communications and Public Participation Plan has been developed that clearly illustrates the different phases of the Tax Reform project and the public’s role in each phase. This plan will help ensure that the public plays a meaningful role in rebuilding HRM’s tax system, and further ensures a sustainable, viable tax system that HRM, as a community, had a share in building.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

None at this time.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality’s Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ALTERNATIVES

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

HRM Tax Reform Project Communications and Public Participation Plan

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/cc.html> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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