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Tax Reform Committee (TRC)
January 18, 2007

TO: Tax Reform Committee (TRC)

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

DATE: January 18, 2007

SUBJECT: Communications and Public Participation Plan

ORIGIN

Tax Reform has been discussed by Regional Council on a number of occasions. In October of 2006 Council approved a formal Terms of Reference for the Tax Reform Committee (TRC). In December 2006, Council approved the appointment of the 13 members. As per the committee's Terms of Reference, part of 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 :

1. The Tax Reform Committee decide on an approach to public consultations on tax reform
2. The Tax Reform Committee direct staff to return with a detailed project time-line based on the approach to public participation.

BACKGROUND

In October of 2006, Council confirmed an approach to Tax Reform, and approved the creation of a project-specific Steering Committee. The direction given to Tax Reform from Council was to Rebuild the Foundations of the tax system. At the “Rebuild Foundations” level, the Tax Reform Committee will direct staff on the project and community consultation strategy, with the expectation of significant public involvement.

Council has not given specific instructions on how to undertake public participation but “significant public involvement” was seen as an element of the project. One of the purposes of the TRC was to oversee the development of a communications and participation plan. The “Draft HRM Tax Reform Communications Strategy” incorporates many of the key elements that should be considered in public consultations. There are variants and alternatives to this strategy.

DISCUSSION

The current approach to Tax Reform described in the Communications Strategy involves looking at the philosophy behind the tax system, consulting the public on the philosophy, and allowing that discussion to drive the options for municipal taxation. There are three key elements necessary for the success of Tax Reform. First, there must be education on municipal taxation issues so that the public may become involved in the process in a meaningful manner and so Council can have feedback. Secondly, there needs to be community agreement on what the tax system should do. Lastly, there needs to be a solid implementation plan for any taxation system changes including any legislative changes that may be necessary.

Staff are recommending that the TRC review the communication plan including the critical public consultation component of this initiative. The proposed public consultation plan is an opportunity to develop new relationships between taxpayers and HRM. To do this, the public consultation must be informative, engaging and well-structured. The timeline for the Tax Reform project will be driven by the public participation component of the project.

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

The Tax Reform Committee may decided to take a different approach to educating, and involving the public in the tax reform process.

ATTACHMENTS

HRM Tax Reform Communication Strategy

Project Time Line (Draft)

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

IAP2 Core Values of Public Participation

Report Prepared by: _____
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Report Approved by: _____
Bruce Fisher Manager, Fiscal and Tax Policy, 490-4493

Council Report Sign-Off Sheet

Subject:					
Meeting Date:		9 Regular Council	9 COW	9 In	
Camera		9 Information Report			
Prepared by:					

_____ Name & Business Unit				Date	
9	First Draft for Information Only		9 Consultation	9 Approval	
/	Stakeholder -Internal	Approved By	Date & Time	Revised Date	Initial
	Not Required (Issue unique to originating Business Unit)				
	By-Law Rationalization				
	EMS				
	Finance				
	Fire				
	H R				
	Legal				
	P & D				
	Police				
	TPWS				
	RPAM				
	RTC				
	Regional Planning				
	Shared				
	Library				
	RCMP				
	Water Commission				
	Councillor (s)				

	Stakeholder - External				
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