

Halifax & West Community Council
March 18, 2013

TO: Chair and Members of Halifax & West Community Council

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SUBMITTED BY: _____
Peter Stickings, A/Director of Planning & Infrastructure

DATE: February 4, 2013

SUBJECT: Mainland South Heritage Society: Request for Artifact Storage Space

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

July 9, 2012, Chebucto Community Council motion: Moved by Councillor Mosher, seconded by Councillor Adams that the Chebucto Community Council request a staff report to assess the feasibility of converting an HRM property into a permanent facility to house the Mainland South Heritage Society artifacts, and include office space for volunteers to continue to build upon and maintain our Halifax heritage. The assessment should include but not be limited to looking at existing residential properties that HRM rents out in the area or some dedicated space in an HRM owned or leased facility.

January 7, 2013, approval of the addition of the Chebucto Community Council July 9, 2012, motion to the status sheet for the newly formed Halifax & West Community Council.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

HRM Charter 63 (1), The Municipality may sell or lease property at a price less than market value to a non-profit organization that the Council considers to be carrying on an activity that is beneficial to the Municipality.

BACKGROUND

The Mainland South Heritage Society is a volunteer, non-profit organization dedicated to research, documentation and preservation of the heritage of the communities of Mainland South - the region of HRM which extends from Armdale to Pennant.

Over the years, the Society has collected historical photographs, books, newspaper articles and other documents, a variety of small artifacts such as coins and medallions, and a number of historic building models that relate to the history of Mainland South. Some of these materials are stored in a crawl space at the Captain William Spry Community Centre Library, under an informal arrangement, while others are in boxes and file cabinets spread between the homes of three of the Society's members. Some of the models are on display at the library and copies of the photos are publicly accessible in binders on the library shelves and on-line through the Halifax Public Library website.

The wish of the Society is to have a home of its own, with all of its archival and artifact holdings in one place so that volunteers can access and work on them more easily. The Society also has a nascent vision of developing the material for display in a community museum setting.

DISCUSSION

Limited space available in HRM-owned Buildings in Mainland South:

HRM owns twenty-three buildings in the Mainland South area, not including a number of utility buildings in parks and playgrounds. These are comprised of eleven schools, five fire stations, two community centres (Captain William Spry and Chocolate Lake), one arena (Spryfield Lions), one special purpose education facility (Adventure Earth Centre), one public works depot (Cowie Hill), one police community office (Spryfield), and one residence (Sanford Fleming Cottage).

Of these, the two that appear to be the most obvious candidates for consideration as a standalone heritage archive facility are the Sir Sanford Fleming Cottage at 30 Dingle Road and the former St. Augustine Chapel at 68 Parkhill Drive, both of which are registered heritage properties and both of which are in close proximity to Fleming Park and the Dingle Tower; however, neither of these buildings is currently available. The cottage is leased as a residence, and the former chapel is in active use by the HRM Adventure Earth Centre.

There is no space available in either of the Community Centres that is not already used or reserved for recreation programs, meeting rooms and supporting offices. Whether there is vacant space in any of the fire department buildings, the Spryfield Lions Arena, the building occupied by the police community office, or any of the schools, has not been examined. Even if space were available, it is questionable whether the locations would be suitable for the heritage society's needs.

Social Heritage Strategy/Culture & Heritage Priorities Plan:

The request for a feasibility study to permanently accommodate the Mainland South Heritage Society's collection, comes at a time when HRM is considering how best to respond to a range of similar requests for support for community museums and local heritage archives and collections and how best to develop an effective social heritage and museum program for the entire region. This includes:

- Resolving long standing funding inequities and collection management issues that have been problematic since amalgamation.
- Determining whether HRM should develop a centralized Regional Museum (possibly with satellites) or focus instead on a de-centralized system.
- Improving museum collection services (policy, accessioning/de-accessioning, curating).
- Improving collection management services (storage, conservation, preservation).
- Improving interpretation services (thematic framework, curation, exhibits, events).

The Social Heritage Strategy was initiated in 2011/12 to examine these museum-related issues within the broader context of supporting and celebrating cultural expression in an increasingly culturally diverse society. The Regional Plan Five-Year Review (RP+5) proposes to include the Social Heritage Strategy as part of an overarching strategy to guide HRM's investment in culture and heritage - the "Culture and Heritage Priorities Plan". This plan will provide direction on HRM's future role and support for community museums, management of historic artifact collections and partnerships with community groups, along with other initiatives relating to cultural development, cultural events, public art, investment in cultural infrastructure, and priorities for built heritage and cultural landscape conservation. Work on the Culture & Heritage Priorities Plan will commence in 2013, following adoption of the revised Regional Plan.

Other Initiatives:

In addition to the current request, there are two other initiatives that are relevant to this request. In 2009, Regional Council directed that the Dartmouth Heritage Museum Society be given exclusive rights to 90 Alderney Drive for a museum. In December 2012, HRM's Auditor General recommended that improvements be made to management of HRM's cultural inventory. Work on both of those items, as well as the Culture and Heritage Priorities Plan, will inform recommendations for Council's consideration related to museums and heritage archives.

Conclusion:

In this context, consideration of the feasibility of providing a permanent home for the Mainland South Heritage Society collection is premature, and should be deferred until the Culture and Heritage Priorities Plan is completed.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement was not deemed necessary for this report. A representative of the Mainland South Heritage Society was contacted to ascertain the society's existing collection storage situation.


ATTACHMENTS

None


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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