



P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 7.1.1
Grants Committee
September 14, 2015

TO: Chair and Members of HRM Grants Committee

SUBMITTED BY: *Original signed*

Amanda Whitewood, Director of Finance & ICT/CFO

DATE: August 5, 2015

SUBJECT: **Community Grants Program 2015-2016: Referrals**

ORIGIN

May 26, 2015 - Regional Council motion to refer the application from the Preston Area Housing Fund to staff for further review approved.

June 1st, 2015 - Grants Committee referral of an appeal from the Halifax North West Trails Association to staff for further review.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

HRM Charter (2008) Section 79 (1) (av) respecting grants and contributions and s. 79(2) respecting public notification of awards.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Grants Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Confirm the recommendation of May 4, 2015, and decline a grant request in the amount of \$5,000 to the North West Trails Association.

BACKGROUND

The *Community Grants Program* awards discretionary project and capital grants annually to eligible registered non-profit organizations and charities located within the geographic boundary of HRM. Applications can be referred back to staff by Regional Council for further review by the Grants Committee or a committee of Council.

The 2015-2016 *HRM Community Grants Program* received a total of 93 applications¹ for a combined total of \$957,017.73. To date, a total of 57 grants have been approved by Regional Council for a combined total of \$374,387. At the May 26th, 2015, Regional Council meeting a motion to refer the application from Preston Area Housing Fund was approved. Subsequent to Council's approval of the Grant Committee's report a written appeal was received from the Halifax North West Trails Association. At their meeting of June 1, 2015, the Grants Committee referred the appeal to staff for further review.

DISCUSSION

AFFORDABLE & SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

1. Preston Area Housing Fund – North Preston – Building Repairs

The Preston Area Housing Fund requested a capital grant of \$25,000 to fund minor repairs to twelve (12) properties. Based on the quotes provided, the repairs to roofs, doors, windows and bathroom fixtures totalled approximately \$54,000. The balance of funding was unconfirmed. During the course of the review it was determined that application had been made to Nova Scotia Housing Corporation. Given the risk of duplicate funding, a referral was recommended pending confirmation of provincial financing.

The applicant was notified of the status of the decision in a letter dated June 1, 2015, and asked to confirm the status of their application for provincial funding, the amount and purpose of any award. Further, the applicant was given the option to amend their initial request (based on their provincial funding request) or to withdraw their application. The offer of assistance with any future funding application was also made in writing. As of August 4, 2015, no reply was received. In light of the partial information provided by the applicant and the absence of any confirmation of provincial financing the application remains incomplete and ineligible for consideration.

RECREATION & LEISURE

2. Halifax Northwest Trails Association – Halifax – Project Grant/Trail Plan

The Halifax Northwest Trails Association (HNTA) requested a grant in the amount of \$5,000 for a trail mapping project in relation to a proposed network of trails on lands owned by the Province of Nova Scotia. Specifically, land leased to the Maskwa Aquatic Club abutting Kearney Lake and the Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness area. Funding was not recommended on the basis of:

- an inability to self-finance the project independent of municipal support not substantiated given limited financial information for all three (3) partners identified in the application;
- the absence of municipal funding for the construction of recreational trails - the *Community Grants Program* does not fund capital projects on land not owned by the applicant and the Municipality's focus is on active transportation;
- the cessation or significant reduction in Provincial funding for the construction of new trails, potential issues related to property ownership of adjacent lands, and operational sustainability.

¹ Excludes applications withdrawn by the applicant organization.

The staff recommendation was upheld by the Grants Committee (May 4, 2015) and Regional Council (May 26, 2015). On June 1, 2015, correspondence from HNTA to the Grants Committee (See: exert included in **Attachment 1**) requested an appeal based on the following:

- The review "...overlooked budget facts" insofar as the three partner groups contributed \$6,000 and a grant of \$5,000 was received from "Health & Wellness";
- The cancellation or reduction in provincial trails funding was irrelevant because additional studies were needed to establish capital costs and feasibility;
- HRM's *Green Network Project* and the possibility that the proponent's proposed trail concept "...may form a small part of the Open Space Plan in the future";
- The partners' limited financial capacity, other funding priorities, and volunteer role.

At their meeting of June 1, 2015, the Grants Committee referred the appeal to staff for further review. The second review finds no basis to overturn Council's decision:

- Financial information was not omitted during the initial review process: the evaluation confirmed receipt of a grant of \$5,000 from the Nova Scotia Department of Health & Wellness for completion of a *Comprehensive Concept Plan* (email dated April 30, 2015) and a combined total of \$6,500 from the three applicants. However, it was noted that despite the description of "a coalition" the only financial statement included with the submission was HNTA. No documentation was provided with respect to the financial status of the Maskwa Aquatic Club or the Canadian Parks & Wilderness Society and as such an inability to self-fund could not be substantiated.
- The proposed trail network is not confined to "...passive lands leased to Maskwa Aquatic Club" (otherwise described as the Kearney Lake Loop). From the information provided, the mapping exercise includes a series of trails extending beyond the boundaries of the land leased by Maskwa and includes routes referred to as Charlie's Lake Loop, Fox Lake Trail, Ash Lake Trail, and Blue Mountain Trail. These five (5) trails form the basis of the quotes provided for "trail alignment flagging".
- Council has endorsed HRM's trails funding priority to be active transportation networks (connectivity, transportation corridors), not wilderness or recreational trails. Albeit *HRM's Green Network Project* includes reference to commuter and recreational trails the development of a comprehensive plan is a major undertaking the outcome of which is unknown in terms of relative priorities and budget implications².

The staff evaluation concluded that funding a comprehensive trail development planning process was premature given that there is no designated municipal capital or operating funding for this purpose, and the availability of government funding to sustain operations is speculative. Notwithstanding that the project partners have allocated some of their financial resources for other priorities, the trails project could be phased as funds permit including a reduction in scope to focus on the Kearney Lake provincial land leased to the Maskwa Aquatic Club. Given Council's current priority on active transportation routes, HRM's immediate role in the development of recreational trails (including motorized) and wilderness trails remains limited.

Finally, all applicants to the program were advised in writing that appeals would not be entertained other than by referral from the Grants Committee or Regional Council. As such, consideration of an appeal after Council has rendered a decision could set precedence or could be challenged as preferential consideration given that all other applicants adhered to the process as described.

² Identified themes include ecosystems, working landscapes (eg. agriculture, forestry, extraction), communities, cultural landscapes, commuter and recreational trails.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If approved, the recommendations advanced in this report have no financial implications.

If the Grants Committee overturn the staff recommendation to decline funding and in the alternative advance an award/awards there is sufficient capacity remaining in Account M311-8004.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Grants Committee is comprised of a voting membership of one elected member of Regional Council from each Community Council, the Chair appointed from the membership of the Audit & Finance Standing Committee (also an elected member of Regional Council) and six (6) citizens-at-large. Grant Committee meetings are open to the public unless otherwise indicated. Agendas, minutes and reports are available on the HRM website.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Unknown in relation to protected wilderness areas.

ALTERNATIVES

1. The Grants Committee could overturn or amend the recommendation to decline the Preston Area Housing Fund's application to the *Community Grants Program*.

This action is not recommended on the basis of a lack of information/confirmation from the applicant.

2. The Grants Committee could recommend to Regional Council an award to the Halifax North West Trails Association.

This action is not recommended on the basis of undetermined sustainability. However, should the Grants Committee wish to advance an award recommendation a two-step process is required. First, a two-thirds majority of Council must vote in favour of rescinding Council's decision of May 26, 2015. If the motion of rescission is approved, the motion to grant an award must be passed by a simple majority.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Correspondence from Halifax North West Trails Association to the HRM Grants Committee dated June 1, 2015: Extract.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/index.php> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

Report Prepared by: Peta-Jane Temple, Team Lead Grants & Contributions, Finance & ICT 902.490.5469;
Peter Greechan, Community Developer, Grants & Contributions, Finance & ICT.

Original signed

Report Approved by: Bruce Fisher, Manager Financial Policy & Planning, Finance & ICT 902.490.4493

Attachment 1

Correspondence from Halifax North West Trails Association to the HRM Grants Committee dated June 1, 2015: Extract

June 1, 2015

Original submitted to the Office of the Municipal Clerk by e-mail.

"I respectfully request a reassessment of the application submitted. It is noted that the reviewer may have overlooked the budget facts - that the 3 partner groups have self-funded (\$6,000) the initial stages of the project underway including the Trail Concept Plan, with additional help from Health and Wellness (\$5,000).

The provincial funding program, cancelled recently, has nothing to do with our application and was in place when the grant proposal was submitted on March 31. This was not the year for a proposal to RFD by the group so it is perhaps inappropriate to base refusal on this fund which was not considered a part of this grant application. Indeed, before other major grants are applied for, additional studies, including the Trail Alignment (funding request) are required in order to establish capital costs and feasibility on passive lands leased to Maskwa Aquatic Club, a popular urban resource. These requested funds would help initiate that process.

Halifax Parks and Recreation has launched a Green Network Project; Recreational Trail is one of five key areas of the review. This proposed trail concept may form a small part of the Open Space Plan in the future. I can share that 300+ individuals completed the survey as a part of the ongoing project and 200 attended the Open House held last fall....more safe sustainable recreational trail [sic] is needed in the urban setting.

As non-profits, cash is not free flowing for any of the 3 partner groups so \$5,000 was requested to complete the trail detailed alignment by a professional. Funds on hand are generally earmarked for specific purposes by each group.

Please authorize a second review by those who may be involved with recreation trail and understand the challenging role of the volunteer in this sector".

Thank you,

██████████, Board member
Halifax North West Trails