

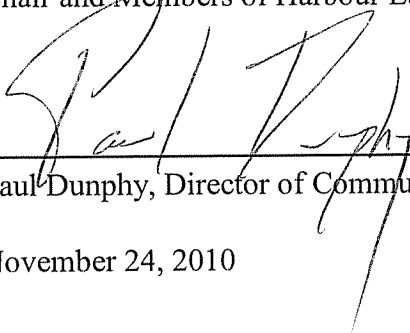


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Harbour East Community Council  
December 2, 2010

**TO:** Chair and Members of Harbour East Community Council

**SUBMITTED BY:**

  
Paul Dunphy, Director of Community Development

**DATE:** November 24, 2010

**SUBJECT:** Dartmouth North Community Centre Operational Review

### INFORMATION REPORT

#### ORIGIN

To report on the Operational Review of the Dartmouth North Community Centre (DNCC) and the transition of recreation service delivery and management of the facility from the Dartmouth North Community Centre Board to HRM Community Recreation Services.

## BACKGROUND

Built in 1995/96, the DNCC is owned by HRM and categorized as a community /neighbourhood centre. It is one of 26 HRM facilities in this category that is municipally owned and managed by community boards. In 2006, a new HRM Facility Lease Agreement Program was introduced to address inconsistencies of expired facility Management Agreements, partner roles, funding, and asset management. The DNCC was included as part of this program. HRM staff and DNCC Board members continued with on-going meetings from 2006 - 2009. In March of 2009, HRM and the Board partnered to conduct an operational review.

The DNCC Board and HRM staff agreed to initiate the operational review, in part to address unresolved issues surrounding a new Facility Lease Agreement (FLA). The review identified larger issues associated with the purpose and role of the DNCC and its place within HRM's service delivery models. The issues were considered critically important and required resolution to establish an effective FLA, but also to provide a solid foundation for future service delivery. The review included community meetings, focus groups sessions, and community surveys. In October of 2009, the Operational Review was presented to the community.

### **Consultants Key findings were as follows:**

1. There are opportunities to expand programming and create stronger connections with the community and with other service providers. This requires an engaged and effective Board with some new roles and responsibilities.
2. The Board must establish clear strategic directions for the DNCC and must put in place the management tools necessary to fulfill an effective governance role.
3. The Board must also demonstrate its capacity and commitment to provide the leadership necessary to govern the DNCC and respond to the needs of the community.
4. The Board initiatives must be supported by staff and this will require some refocusing of staff responsibilities and priorities.
5. A community management model is appropriate for the DNCC and should be supported by HRM.
6. The Municipality has put in place many of the tools necessary to ensure community management can be successful. However, the support required in Dartmouth North must reflect the nature of the community. The volunteer resources and the mix of social and recreational programming appropriate for this community is a key component of success.
7. This will require appropriate financial resources and, at least in the short term, greater staff support for such things as Board renewal.

8. HRM should expect the need for greater investment than might be customary in many other community managed centres.
9. The operational review describes a number of initiatives that can be jointly pursued by HRM and the DNCC Board to reconfirm the purpose and benefits associated with programming at the DNCC.
10. To renew and strengthen the Board and its role as the manager of the Centre and, ultimately to structure an appropriate funding and operating agreement to ensure the DNCC effectively responds to the needs of the community.

In December 2009, the AGM was held and the Board was tasked to look at options for operations and consider the following;

- the DNCC is **NOT CLOSING**
- the DNCC will continue to be community focussed
- community contribution and involvement is important and welcomed
- citizen involvement and community collaboration is the key to success

The community directed the DNCC Board to investigate and make a decision regarding how the DNCC will be managed and how the Centre can best meet the community's needs by developing a community vision, while considering opportunities and challenges, expectations for the facility as well as governing board options.

Four options were reviewed and included:

- Governing Board
- Advisory Board
- Community Board
- Disband

With the support of independent facilitators, Board members and HRM staff began a comprehensive process to consider the above 4 options. A final decision determined HRM Community Recreation Services would operate and manage the facility and provide recreation programs and services. The focus would be:

- increased awareness of the DNCC and its programs through enhanced marketing and promotion
- enhanced customer service through one-stop information and registration
- enhanced communication between existing partners
- increased partnerships to deliver programs and services

## **DISCUSSION**

1. To ensure a successful transition, an HRM program and service review is required in 2010/2011.

It is good public practice to audit program funding to ensure the most effective service outcomes are realized. Is the community being well served? Are there more efficient methods? Are there other revenue opportunities? Outcomes of the review will include information regarding:

- current effectiveness of the HRM budget
- increased recreation services with an emphasis on youth
- funding opportunities for services outside of HRM's mandate
- increased access and use of the facility by the neighbourhood
- increased operating and service delivery efficiency i.e. revenue, expenses
- appropriate service level for Dartmouth North
- a positive relationship with the community
- service delivery role clarity within Dartmouth North i.e. clarity of role within community and among service providers
- means to determine sustainability of the service
- HRM assistance as required to support volunteer interests and initiatives

## **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

There are no HRM budget implications.

## **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN**

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

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

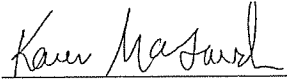
The DNCC Operational Review process has included community in numerous ways. The DNCC Board has been a partner throughout the entire process, community meetings, information sessions, interviews and consultation sessions have reached out to the community residents and stakeholders on a number of occasions

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Dartmouth North Operational Review - Executive Summary

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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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDED FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This operational review was initiated in part to address unresolved issues surrounding the Facility Lease Agreement (FLA). However, our review suggests that there are larger issues associated with the purpose and role of the Dartmouth North Community Centre (DNCC) and its place within HRM's service delivery models for community centres that must be addressed. These issues are critically important and must be resolved to establish an effective operating agreement but also to provide a solid foundation for future service delivery. The DNCC is not fulfilling its potential as a critical part of the recreation and community service delivery system serving residents in Dartmouth North. There are opportunities to expand programming and create stronger connections with the community and with other service providers. This requires a more active, engaged and effective Board with some new roles and responsibilities. The Board must establish clear strategic directions for the DNCC and must put in place the management tools necessary to fulfill an effective governance role. The Board must also demonstrate its capacity and commitment to provide the leadership necessary to govern the DNCC and respond to the needs of the community. These Board initiatives must be supported by staff and this will require some refocusing of staff responsibilities and priorities. A community management model is appropriate for the DNCC and should be supported by Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). The municipality has put in place many of the tools necessary to ensure community management can be successful. However, the support required in Dartmouth North must reflect the nature of the community, the volunteer resources and the mix of social and recreational programming appropriate for this community. This will require appropriate financial resources and, at least in the short term, greater staff support for such things as Board renewal. HRM should expect its ongoing investment in the DNCC to be greater than might be customary in many other community managed centres. The operational review describes a number of initiatives that can be jointly pursued by HRM and the DNCC Board to reconfirm the purpose and benefits associated with programming at the DNCC, to renew and strengthen the Board and its role as the manager of the Centre, and, ultimately, to structure an appropriate funding and operating agreement to ensure the DNCC effectively responds to the needs of the community.

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

#### ***Funding and Financial Performance – Recommendations***

Recommendation 1: HRM should maintain DNCC funding at current levels for the next three years during which time the Board should explore alternative sources of revenue and opportunities for more cost effective service delivery.

Recommendation 2: The DNCC Board should develop a detailed business plan to link services and service delivery to anticipated expenditures and revenues as a basis for future HRM investments.

Recommendation 3: The DNCC Board and staff should actively pursue a wide range of grants, donations and other program and service funding from non-municipal sources to increase the proportion of self-generated revenue in their future budgets.

Recommendation 4: HRM policies and procedures governing self-generated revenue should be reviewed to ensure they do not unduly constrain the Board's activities in this regard or unduly restrict the Board's ability to determine how these revenues are allocated.

Recommendation 5: All tenants should pay rent to cover occupancy costs associated with space permanently dedicated for their use at the DNCC.

Recommendation 6: Rent for tenants should be calculated based on actual occupancy costs and reviewed and revised on a regular basis to represent changes in these costs.

Recommendation 7: Opportunities for tenants to share space should be explored to ensure the cost of providing services from the DNCC are as affordable as possible and that all available space is used to its maximum advantage.

Recommendation 8: The DNCC Executive Director should prepare an annual business plan entailing a review of the previous year's financial performance, projections for the current year, and plans to enhance revenues and control costs.

***Programs and Services – Recommendations***

Recommendation 9: A mix of programs and services that address both the social and recreational needs of the community are appropriate and should continue to be offered from the DNCC.

Recommendation 10: The terms of the existing FLA calling for 50% public access and alignment with HRM focus areas do not restrict the ability of the DNCC Board and staff to pursue a program mandate that reflects the social as well as the recreational needs of the community. These guidelines are appropriate and should be adopted for the agreement.

Recommendation 11: The FLA agreement should more clearly indicate any programs or services that would not be permitted at the DNCC to address any concerns that these restrictions might unduly constrain the Board's ability to meet the social needs of the community.

Recommendation 12: The FLA agreement should acknowledge the role that the Board must play in identifying the unique needs of the Dartmouth North community and recognize that program or service priorities in Dartmouth North may not always be consistent with those for HRM as a whole. While this can be more explicitly stated in the FLA, it can also be accommodated within the current guidelines.

Recommendation 13: The DNCC is not currently used to capacity and additional programs and services should be developed. The DNCC Board must endorse this activity and direct staff to play a greater role in providing programs and services in partnership with others.

Recommendation 14: The DNCC Board and staff should adopt improved formal mechanisms for program planning, delivery and evaluation.

Recommendation 15: The major program providers at DNCC should investigate additional opportunities for joint program delivery and adopt formal mechanisms to coordinate program planning and delivery.

***Community Management and Governance – Recommendations***

Recommendation 16: The DNCC Board must adopt a lead role in program and service delivery and establish stronger connections with the community to understand needs and identify services in partnership with others to respond to those needs.

Recommendation 17: The Board must provide strategic direction for the DNCC through the development of a Vision, strategic plans and the management tools necessary to implement these strategies, including business plans and performance measures.

Recommendation 18: A professional with expertise in volunteer Board development should be retained to work with the DNCC Board on a renewal strategy.

Recommendation 19: A FLA consistent with the recommendations in the operational review should be finalized to govern the relationship between the Board and HRM.

Recommendation 20: If after three years with HRM support, the DNCC Board is unable to adopt an effective role and governance function, the operation of the Centre should become the responsibility of HRM staff.

***Community Centre Operations – Recommendations***

Recommendation 21: The DNCC Executive Director should place greater emphasis and commit more time to the core management functions reflected in the position's job description. These include supporting the Board's efforts to fulfill its governance functions, partnership development, program and proposal development, and community outreach.

Recommendation 22: The current staff complement appears adequate to effectively operate the DNCC but this should be confirmed through a detailed review of job responsibilities and staff capabilities.

Recommendation 23: The Board and the Executive Director, with the assistance of external advisors as warranted, should immediately undertake a detailed review of operating efficiencies at DNCC. The review should focus on two broad opportunities for operating efficiencies: (1) internally with respect to staff roles; use of technology, and services priorities; and (2) the operating relationship with HRM.

***The Facility – Recommendations***

Recommendation 24: HRM should undertake a facility planning study to determine the relative costs and benefits of restructuring existing program and service areas and expanding the size of the DNCC.