
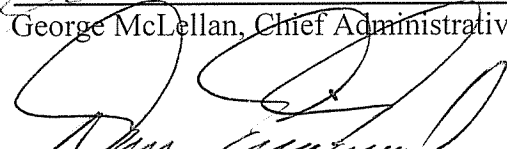


TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:


George McLellan, Chief Administrative Officer


Dan English, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: October 12, 2004

SUBJECT: **Enhancements - New High School - Halifax Commons**

Second Supplementary Report

ORIGIN

A supplementary report was requested by Regional Council on July 13, 2004 in addition to the previous report entitled "Supplementary Report - Enhancements - New High School - Halifax Common."

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

- 1) Approve in principle the building of an HRM community gym, conditional on community use as a priority, estimated at \$1.85 million, as part of the Nova Scotia Department of Education's Halifax Commons High School project, subject to budget approval in the 2005-06 and 2006-07 capital budgets. Staff will bring to Council an appropriate plan for facility rationalization and a joint use agreement for access to the new high school for consideration prior to budget discussions, and,
 - 2) Approve in principle the use of the Central Commons field by the adjacent new Commons High School, and the field improvements outlined in this report, estimated at \$30,000 to be considered in the 2005-06 capital budget.
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BACKGROUND

The Queen Elizabeth (QEH) and St. Patrick's (St.Pat's) High Schools will be replaced by a single school to be constructed at the existing site of the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) - Bell Road Campus. Each of the two exiting high schools have full auditoriums and each has a full size gymnasium. The Department of Education's (DOE) standard program for the new high school does not include an auditorium but does include a 8400 sq. ft. gymnasium. The School Steering Team has requested HRM consider financial contributions towards funding of an auditorium, provision of a sportfield (either natural or artificial) on the Halifax Commons, and an expansion of the gymnasium facility.

Information requested by Council at the July 13, 2004 session regarding the feasibility of area rates being put towards the project were provided through an information report entitled "Application of Area Rates to High School Enhancements at QEH/ST. Pats and Sir John A. MacDonald High School" from the Director of Real Property and Asset Management dated October 12, 2004.

Since Regional Council's summer break, HRM staff has met with the Deputy Minister and staff of the Department of Education, School Board and School Steering Team in order to explore any further options that may have been previously overlooked. Also, staff have met with the recently appointed design architect, Fowler, Bauld, Mitchell, in order to understand various options and costs for construction of the requested program.

DISCUSSION

1. TROLLOPE ST. FIELD

The Trollope St. (South Commons) field had deteriorated as a result of over-use since it was last rehabilitated, some five (5) years ago. In it's present form it is not sustainable for anything other than casual uses. Staff intend to bring forward a capital budget item for the 2005/06 budget for enhancements to the South Commons Field on Trollope St which is currently closed. The cost of this work would be approximately \$30,000 and includes irrigation and rehabilitation through overseeding and topdressing. Real Property and Asset Management has begun an irrigation program for fields, and the Trollope field would qualify as a top priority under the program.

Obviously the proximity of this field to the new high school would suggest that, if upgraded, it would well serve the new high school. It is not the intention that the field will be exclusively at the disposal of the school. Some school use would continue to be rotated among the other Halifax Commons fields in order to safeguard their condition. There is a long standing tradition of providing the Commons for use by St. Pats and QEH and this is seen as a continuation of that relationship. The Department of Education is willing to waive the requirement for a new high school field if the municipality is willing to make adequate facilities available. The Province's savings, estimated at \$200k in not having to build a school field, will be reallocated into the building of a larger gym (10,500 sq. ft. opposed to a 8400 sq. ft.) for the school.

2. GYMNASIUM

The construction of a community-use gymnasium to be added to the new Commons High School is recommended under the following specific conditions put forward in this report.

Several factors were considered in examining the rationale for HRM to participate in this project. These were community need, community accessibility to the new high school, condition of existing public facilities, service relationship with the Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB), location, and cost of building the gymnasium now versus adding the facility onto the high school at a future date.

Need and Access- Currently there are 60,000 people living on the Halifax Peninsula. One of the primary recognitions of the Indoor Recreation Facilities Masterplan (IRFM) was the need for greater public access to adequate gym facilities within schools. Presently public access to the larger existing high school gyms is very low due to an unavailability of gym time. This is due to high rates of after school, evening and weekend use by the student population. The majority of publically accessible school gyms are smaller elementary facilities. The IRFM study did not find an immediate need for new facilities to meet population growth on the Peninsula, however it did call for improved access to improved facilities. The new "service exchange agreement" with the Halifax Regional School Board which is being implemented will improve access to school gyms and other school facilities however it will not do much to improve access to larger high school gyms for the general public.

Community Space Rationalization - The results of the IRFM highlight that the peninsula is adequately served with community recreation space. Therefore, any investment in an additional gymnasium can only be supported as part of a rationalization of gymnasias on the peninsula. The new high school represents a significant opportunity to achieve the gymnasium relocation.

Condition One - Consistent with a 'double entry principle' if HRM is to contribute towards a community-use gym, then it can only do so through a rationalization of community space on the peninsula..

Location - In terms of location, the Commons site is considered as one of the best locations for community recreation on the peninsula. Road and transit networks, association with other recreation facilities and a location central to a number of the communities that make up the peninsula make this a very favourable site. The site is also highly visible and it's association with a significant new building is seen as being advantageous.

Construction Costs - The indicative cost, as provided by the Department of Education, of building of a community gymnasium (8400 sq. ft.) at the time of the school construction is approximately \$1,850,000 versus the cost of constructing the gym addition *after* construction of the school is complete is \$2,500,000. The 35% cost difference is owing to

efficiencies in construction if the community gym is built at the same time as the school. A community gym includes a separate public entrance, separate public locker facilities, storage and a small community office.

Condition Two - The community space rationalization exercise needs to outline the specifications for the gym which would be particular to community-use.

Relationship with HRSB - The recent service Exchange Agreement between HRM and the HRSB is seen as a step forward in providing the public recreational access to schools and is in line with the IRFM recommendations. While staff understand that there are challenges in accessing high school gyms, there are synergies which can be achieved under the right type of agreement. These synergies can help both parties meet their objectives in serving the public. A Joint Use Agreement pertaining specifically to the new high school should be a condition of the any funding commitment by the municipality and is key to ensuring that any municipal investment in the high school will create the desired returns for the public. It is the intent of staff to develop an agreement based on the premise that the additional gym is intended for community use and would be held for public use as a first obligation. The high school would have access to the additional gym on a reciprocal basis. A multi-court gymnasium created by adding a community gym would also provide both parties an opportunity to host special events and tournaments. Capitalizing on these opportunities will require creativity and flexibility on the part of both the HRSB and HRM in utilizing other facilities in the area to accommodate regular uses when the full size field house is required. The opportunity to provide such a large facility would not be realized if HRM were to choose instead to participate in the gym enhancements for the upcoming consolidation of peninsula elementary schools.

Condition Three - The terms of a Joint Use Agreement must be detailed and approved by Council as a condition of any HRM contribution.

Therefore, staff feel that HRM should move to build a community gym as part of the Commons High School Project and that facility would, as first obligation, be available for public use. Access for reciprocal use of HRM and HRSB facilities are required to be negotiated in a joint use agreement prior to construction. This project also represents a decision not to participate in the enhancements of other school projects coming forward on the peninsula in the next few years without justification due to substantial population growth and demographic change.

4. QEH/ST. PAT'S AUDITORIUM

The proposal to municipally fund an auditorium is not recommended.

Fowler Baud Mitchell are proposing two possible approaches to the auditorium. The first being the building as a conventional 800 seat space. According to the architect, the cost of enhancing the school with a permanent 800-seat auditorium would be approximately \$2,250,000. This cost would include such amenities as seating, stage lighting, a curtain, amplification, and sufficient electric capacity as well as changes to the building to relocate several classrooms from the original

building layout. Staff has been informed that the auditorium could be built now or in phases, with the shell being constructed as part of the school construction and the outfitting being built later as funds become available. As is the case for the gymnasium, there is a premium attached to building the auditorium in phases.

The second approach as suggested by the architects, is to create multi-functional music, dance and drama classrooms with the ability to renovate the space to a 800 seat auditorium at a future date. This would involve moving the music, dance and drama classrooms to a pre-designated area at a present day cost of \$300,000. Staff would question the logic of this approach as the additional costs would be better utilized in the initial construction of an auditorium. Again, the future outfitting of the auditorium would require funds to become available and costs would be higher for a renovation approach rather than initial purpose built construction.

Staff do not feel that there is adequate justification for the municipality to fund the high school auditorium. While at one time public use of the two existing high school auditoriums was high, since the building of the Rebecca Cohn they have steadily decreased. Currently, the public use of the auditoriums collectively amounts to twelve times per year. Based on present day use rates of the existing high school auditoriums, the proposed auditorium enhancement is predominantly for school use and is not a municipal service. Therefore, the auditorium should be funded by the Province and the School Board who are the responsible authorities (with possible community fund raising). Staff feel that sufficient options have been integrated into the design of the school to allow for the auditorium to happen now or in the future.

There are indications that the Dalhousie Arts Centre (Rebecca Cohn) will need to be replaced in the future. It's present seating capacity of 1500 is seen as too small and it has run much of it's useful life. HRM's Capital District in partnership with the Province and the Downtown Business Association has recently awarded a study examining the feasibility of a new, regional performing arts centre in the range of 2,000+ seating capacity. Such a facility, however, is not what is intended for the high school site, which is rather in the range of 800 seats.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The following budget implications are related to the recommendations proposed above.

Trollope St. Field - Irrigation Installation and Natural Turf Maintenance

\$30,000 is the estimated cost of installation of a new irrigation system at the field. The approval in principle in this report constitutes pre approval of this amount from the 2005-06 capital budget.

It is proposed that a rehabilitated and irrigated natural turf would require an estimated **\$5,000 - 8,000 per annum** for a designated Class B field. This cost would be incorporated by Real Property and Asset Management as part of Real Property Operations' annual maintenance budget, pending capital improvements as per the staff recommendation.

Community Gymnasium Enhancement

1.85 million dollars is the estimated cost of the additional gymnasium. The approval in principle constitutes pre approval of this amount from the 2005-06 and 2006-07 capital budgets. Staff will return to Regional Council with a funding plan for the capital and operating costs of the facility as part of the 2005/06 budget deliberations. Work will not commence on the construction of the school until the summer of 2005. In preliminary talks the Province has indicated that the costs of the gym could be spread over the two years of construction or may be paid in a lump sum at the end of the project in the fall of 2006. The condition that this be a community gym, with first access by the public and not the school is a critical condition. In the absence of this condition being met, staff would not recommend moving forward.

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

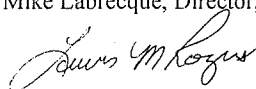
- A. Council may choose to build the gym in the future. This would require a request to the Province to reserve lands and size mechanical systems to allow for a future expansion. This option does carry a 35% premium in construction costs. This is not recommended.
- B. Council may approve the auditorium enhancements regardless of staff recommendations. This is not recommended.
- C. Council may decide to waive the "in principle" language of the recommendations and fully approve the gym and/or auditorium. This would require Council to create a new capital project outside of the normal budget process and a funding source would have to be identified immediately.
- D. Council may choose not to make any contribution whatsoever towards enhancements and advise the NS Department of Education and the HRSB of same.

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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