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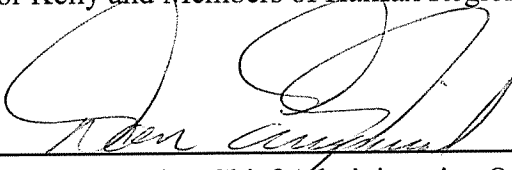


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**Halifax Regional Council**  
**October 11, 2005**

**TO:** Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dan English, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Wayne Anstey, Acting Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** September 28, 2005

**SUBJECT:** CityWatch

### **ORIGIN**

At the September 27 meeting of Council, Councillor Snow requested a staff report respecting CityWatch. Some of the issues to be addressed were with respect to who currently leads the program, how it was initiated, program funding, program stakeholders, and promotional activities. Information was also requested with respect to an action plan for the CityWatch program.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that:

Halifax Regional Council endorse the use of the CityWatch system for broadcasting messaging only in support of public health and public safety issues, emergency preparedness and disaster response and recovery.

## **BACKGROUND**

CityWatch is a telephone and fax alerting system that uses telephone and data lines to send important recorded messages to pre-defined stakeholder groups. CityWatch gives HRM the ability to create, target and send an alert or message to thousands of destinations within minutes. The time it takes to communicate critical information in an emergency can impact the timeliness and quality of the response. CityWatch allows HRM to accurately deliver the right information to the right audience at the right time and is crucial to our emergency and community health and safety planning efforts.

There are limitations to the CityWatch system however, primarily due to the fact that the outgoing messaging utilizes standard phone lines. The number of subscribers being called with messages and the number of phone lines required to fulfil those calls, as well as the resources to maintain the data base of subscribers and phone numbers are the primary limiting factors of the system.

CityWatch was originally implemented in 1999 by the Burnside Watch program under the direction of Gary Martin and with the support of the Halifax Regional Police. Later that year, Burnside Watch conveyed CityWatch to HRM to be used for a broader application in support of public health and public safety issues. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Halifax Detachment invested additional funding, providing expanded capacity for RCMP usage.

The power of the product in support of emergency response was identified by the Emergency Measures Operations (EMO) during 9/11 and again during several events such as the Hammonds Plains forest fire. CityWatch soon became an important part of the corporate communications strategy for HRM's emergency preparedness and disaster recovery and response and was expanded for that purpose.

The key stakeholders for the CityWatch program are Halifax Fire and Emergency Services, Halifax Regional Police, the Halifax Detachment of the RCMP, the Emergency Measures Operation, Halifax Ground Search and Rescue, the Halifax Regional Water Commission, the Department of National Defence (DND), Integrated Emergency Service (911) and the Office of the CAO.

In 2003, a coordinating committee of key stakeholders was struck to manage and direct the use of the CityWatch System. CityWatch is a potentially powerful product to support emergency preparedness and disaster recovery and is strongly supported by the staff who believe in the concept. However, up until 2004, the product and services operated on a rather "ad hoc" basis with inadequate funding, uncertain authorities and a limited technical support structure.

Staff recognized these issues and through 2005/06 Budget and Business Planning, Fire and Emergency Services submitted a proposal to the Safe Communities Theme Team asking for support of this program. The project was approved and funds were allocated. Staff were directed to initiate the development of an implementation plan.

## **DISCUSSION**

The implementation plan is critical to achieving a return on the investment made by Halifax Regional Municipality and our partner agencies.

The power of CityWatch as a tool in dealing with community health and safety, emergency response, and disaster response and recovery is significant and needs to be resourced and managed effectively to achieve its intended results. In addition, issues of citizen privacy, data base administration, and 24/7 technical support are critical elements of a sound management plan.

To resolve concerns identified by staff, the following implementation plan is underway to ensure the success of the CityWatch program:

1. Funds have been approved in the Fire Services budget for a CityWatch Coordinator, new servers, and software licensing fees. It is expected that this function will be aligned with the Integrated Dispatch and Telecommunications Centre in Eric Spicer once the Centre opens in November.
2. The CityWatch coordinator position will be posted for competition in October 2005.
3. Shared Services IT services will support the CityWatch system through the provision of technical support and maintenance of the IT infrastructure. The servers will be added to the refresh program and a Service Level Agreement is currently being drafted.
4. City Watch will be upgraded using GIS mapping capabilities and selected databases to do geographical phone calls for water and sewer line breaks and evacuations.
5. CityWatch operational, content, and messaging guidelines will be formally established by a new working committee of staff representing the various functional responsibilities and stakeholder interests.

## **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

There are no budget implications since the program has become part of the HRM base operating budget.

**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**

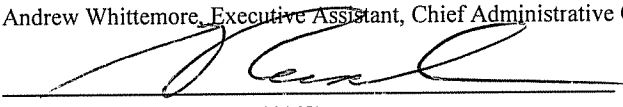
Council could direct staff to expand the usage of the CityWatch program to include telemarketing of HRM's programs and services. This option is not recommended since there are insufficient resources and capacity to support expanded use beyond those related to community health and safety issues, emergency response, and disaster response and recovery.

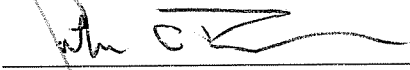
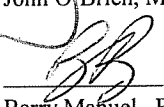
**ATTACHMENTS**

None

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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