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PO Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Halifax Regional Council
January 23, 2007

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: 
Councillor Russell Walker, Chair, HRM Grants Committee

DATE: January 8th , 2007

SUBJECT: **HRM Community Grants Program 2007-2008: Revisions**

ORIGIN

This report originates with staff of the Grants Program, HRM Financial Services. Revisions are recommended to the *HRM Community Grants Program* for 2007-2008. This report was approved by the HRM Grants Committee at their meeting of January 8th, 2007.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council approve revisions to the *HRM Community Grants Program* as detailed in the Discussion section of this report for the 2007-2008 program.

BACKGROUND

The *HRM Community Grants Program* is a centralized program of annual, one-time project-specific awards to registered non-profit societies and charities throughout HRM. Awards are made annually in accordance with policy and procedures approved by Regional Council. In 2004, Regional Council approved revisions that tightened eligibility criteria and aligned funding sectors with the HRM Scorecard. Staff recommend further refinement to align funding with the municipality's mandate and to adjust the allocation of sector funding to reflect a reduction in budget; a decrease of \$60,000 in 2006-2007.

DISCUSSION

1. Grants to Membership-Based Clubs

In 2005-06, the program added criteria re: eligibility of membership-based clubs. The intent was to support the provision of facilities or services that would otherwise be a municipal responsibility: the policy stated "...the facility, amenities, programs or services make sufficient and appropriate provision for the general public to derive direct benefit". Greater clarity is required to explain what is considered "sufficient and appropriate" and "direct benefit" to the public. Staff propose the following:

- To encourage access for low income persons and non-members, staff reviewers will be asked to confirm if the club has an inclusion plan or specific program (eg. HRM Kids sponsor, bursaries, pay-what-you-can, discounted rates, equipment loan, family rates etc). Reviewer's questions are intended to gather actual data and not simply 'claims' of assistance, for example: "How many non-members and members were assisted and at what combined cost to the club?"
- An indoor or outdoor amenity that can be rented by, or is free to, non-profit groups or the general public (eg. a public boat launch, playground, trail, public washroom or changing room, boardwalk, wharf or dock, picnic area, public parking). "Who rented the facility over the course of the past year and what did they pay?"
- The club provides an amenity that is not available in the immediate neighbourhood from the private or government sector.
- Instructional programs, open competition, or events for non-members.
- Hosting venue for regional, national or international events.
- Club property is a municipally registered heritage property.
- Stewardship of coastal, lakefront, river, wetland, or woodland location(s). The club does not simply own or use the location they provide environmental protection and, as applicable, remediation.
- Seasonal operation (the club does not operate a year-round bar, restaurant, or retail outlet). Clubs that have a year-round revenue source are not excluded from eligibility but might score lower than those who are seasonal or those unable to participate in relatively profitable fundraising initiatives such as lotteries, gaming, alcohol sales, catering, and sub-contracted services to commercial vendors.

The aim of the proposed changes is to avoid exclusivity and to provide the general public with a tangible

benefit for the investment of public money. "Are the benefits commensurate with the value of public subsidy (eg. a grant, rent subsidy, or tax concession)?"

2. Affordable Housing and Emergency Shelters

For clarity, affordable housing is intended to be rental housing and not property that will be sold to an individual or shareholders and create personal equity.

It is recommended that the former three (3) housing-related categories¹ be combined. The 'new' sector will be called Affordable Housing & Emergency Shelters and includes: rental housing for low income individuals and families, assisted living for persons with special needs, transitional housing, and emergency shelters. In effect, the overall funding for the housing-related sector will be reduced as a percentage of the program's total budget but staff contend that such a reduction is offset by an increase in the number of non-profit housing groups assisted under the *Tax Exemption for Non-Profit Organizations Program* (By-law T-200).

3. Replacement of Social Supports Sector with Neighbourhood Safety

Presently, the Social Supports sector provides grants to programs for disabled persons, literacy, community feeding, parenting skills, child care, and family violence prevention. The rationale for the elimination of this sector is as follows:

- The provision of social services is no longer a municipal responsibility. In the Service Exchange Agreement (1996) the provincial government assumed responsibility for income assistance, child welfare, and employment. Municipal funds were also transferred that had been provided as grants to some non-profit organizations serving this sector - but HRM staff have been unable to account for their continuation under provincial jurisdiction. Discretionary assistance for social services remains available under councillors' discretionary funds.
- The *inclusion of disabled persons is not sector-specific and should be integrated into all funding sectors of the HRM Community Grants Program*. Examples from the revised criteria include: capital grants towards the cost of "...accessibility upgrades for persons with special needs" and program grants for "...adaptive aids" across all sectors.
- **Literacy** is primarily a responsibility of the public education system (including adult education and ESL programs) although HRM does provide supplementary support through its funding of the Halifax Regional Library and an annual Supplementary Education levy. *Literacy should be integrated into all funding sectors of the HRM Community Grants Program*. Examples from the revised criteria include: "...grants for printed materials or web site development will give preference to the inclusion of low literate readers, the visually impaired, and persons whose first language is not English". The ethnocultural sector also includes program grants towards "...translation of texts into English, or from English into an indigenous language, or into braille".
- **Community feeding** programs (eg. food banks, meal programs, community garden) are included under the Emergency Assistance sector - the provision of "...compassionate assistance (at no cost

¹ In 2006-07 these categories were: Affordable Housing; Supportive Housing; Emergency Shelters.

to the recipient) to persons who require basic subsistence support”.

- **Child care and parenting** are a provincial responsibility primarily under the Department of Community Services and the Department of Health. However, the *HRM Community Grants Program* will continue to provide support for children’s recreation (eg. playgrounds, adaptive equipment) and children’s art programs (eg. dance, theatre, music, visual arts).
- Groups providing support to **victims of violence** remain eligible for funding under the Emergency Assistance sector and its link to HRM Police/RCMP services. The focus of HRM funding is on peer support, advocacy, telephone crisis intervention and referral.

The existing **Emergency Assistance** sector provides assistance to community groups who provide subsistence supports (food, clothing, household furnishings, feeding programs), peer crisis support, emergency preparedness, comfort centres in community-owned facilities, or volunteer rescue.

The proposed new sector, called **Neighbourhood Safety**, would provide assistance to residents’ participation in local safety issues such as crime and fire prevention, community-based (ie. not public institutions or government) safety education, neighbourhood beautification to encourage pride-of-place and reduce vandalism and graffiti, good neighbours programs etc. Regional Council has identified safety as a priority in municipal programming.

The aim of these two sectors (Emergency Assistance and Neighbourhood Safety) is to supplement or complement services provided by Halifax Police, RCMP, Emergency Measures Operations, Fire & Emergency Services, and By-law Enforcement. However, grants to community groups are not intended to replace departmental services such as police patrols, victims services, cadet training, volunteer training and recruitment, drug prevention etc. Further, the *HRM Community Grants Program* tends not to fund programs related to the justice system (diversion or restitution programs, court representation, community service sentencing, parole supervision etc) but does support advocacy initiatives such as tenants’ rights, non-profit housing such as emergency shelters for victims of domestic violence, and transitional housing for persons in conflict with the law. The Neighbourhood Safety sector is also intended to complement HRM’s Community Response initiative, graffiti management plan, and overall volunteer capacity building.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

None. The proposed changes to eligibility do not impact the program’s annual 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

1. Regional Council could defeat the staff recommendation and maintain the status quo.

This action is not recommended: the merger of three housing-related funding sectors provides clarity and

focus; the addition of a Neighbourhood Safety sector provides a preventive component to complement the Emergency Assistance sector.

2. Regional Council could approve the addition of the Neighbourhood Safety in addition to the Social Supports sector.

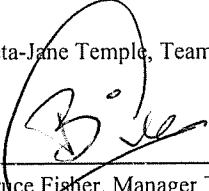
This action is not recommended: the majority of community-based services assisted can be accommodated under other sectors and inclusion (disabled, low literate, low income) should be incorporated across all categories of funding.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Proposed sector allocations 2007-2008.

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

Report Prepared by: Peta-Jane Temple, Team Lead, Tax, Grants & Special Projects, HRM Finance.

Report Approved by: 
Bruce Fisher, Manager Tax & Fiscal Policy, HRM Finance

Report Approved by: 
Cathie O'Toole, A/Director of Finance

Attachment 1. HRM Community Grants Program 2007-2008 Proposed Sector Allocations.

Program Budget: \$503,700. Contingency: \$13,700.

Sector	Program Grants	Capital Grants	Notes
Healthy Communities: \$180,000 (37%)			
Environment \$40,000	\$15,000	\$25,000	
Recreation * \$70,000	\$20,000	\$50,000	
Affordable Housing & Emergency Shelters \$70,000	\$20,000	\$50,000	
Sub-Total	\$55,000	\$125,000	
Safe Communities: \$100,000 (20%)			
Emergency Assistance \$50,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	
Neighbourhood Safety \$50,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	
Sub-Total	\$50,000	\$50,000	
Cultural Communities: \$210,000 (43%)			
Heritage* \$70,000	\$20,000	\$50,000	
Ethnocultural \$40,000	\$15,000	\$25,000	
Arts & Crafts* \$100,000	\$75,000	\$25,000	
Sub-Total	\$110,000	\$100,000	
Contingency			
Contingency	\$13,700	-	
TOTAL	\$228,700	\$275,000	
	\$503,700		

*Recommend rationalize *HRM Community Grants Program* awards with municipal contributions to recreation centres, museums, heritage properties, and cultural facilities.

Recommend rationalize *HRM Community Grants Program* with property tax subsidies and municipal rent subsidies.