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Item No. 2

**Halifax Regional Council
October 7, 2008**

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: 
Cathie O'Toole, Director, Infrastructure & Asset Management

DATE: September 22, 2008

SUBJECT: Release of the Service Capacity Study on the Master Plan areas

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

On September 16, 2008 Regional Council requested that staff release the findings of the Service Capacity Study on the Master Plan areas carried out by CBCL Ltd.

BACKGROUND

May, 2006 HRM adopted a Regional Plan to guide growth and development in the region for the next 25 years. The Plan supports and encourages growth that occurs in mixed use, transit friendly centres through out the region. In general terms, it is expected that 25% of the population growth will occur in the regional centre, 50% in suburban centres, and 25 % in the rural commutershed. Most of the growth in suburban centres will occur in undeveloped areas often referred to as “green field” sites. The Plan designates six such areas as follows:

- Bedford South
- Bedford West
- Morris Russell Lake
- Port Wallis/Dartmouth East
- Sandy Lake
- Highway 102 - Blue Mountain/Birch Cove Corridor

The Plan prescribes that growth in these areas occur after a secondary planning program or a “master plan” has been completed, and development is subject to the adoption of a Capital Cost Contribution (CCC).

Bedford South, Morris Russell Lake, and Bedford West all have approved secondary plans. Bedford South has an approved CCC and development is underway. Morris-Russell Lake has an approved CCC on approximately 1/3 of the plan area and development is underway. Bedford West has an interim CCC approved on a portion of the plan area and negotiations with developers are underway to finalize the CCC on the entire plan area.

Secondary planning, or “master planning” has not been initiated in the remaining green field sites. The Regional Plan stipulates that secondary planning cannot be initiated in an area unless servicing capacity exists and can accommodate the development, and the proposal serves to protect the “fiscal health” of HRM.

DISCUSSION

Letters requesting initiation of secondary planning processes have been submitted to staff by landowners in each of the remaining green field areas. HRM has engaged CBCL Engineering Ltd. to study the cost of servicing the remaining green field sites. The study is nearing completion, and is expected a final draft will be submitted by the consultant within a month. The report must then be reviewed by staff to ensure compliance with the terms of reference prior to completion of the contract. The study can then be tabled with Council after staff have determined that the study meets or exceeds the terms of reference.

The study is a technical study and will provide information on servicing costs and system capacity, but will not make recommendations on where to initiate master planning.

Council is required by the Regional Plan to ensure that any proposal for a secondary plan protects the “fiscal health of HRM and its capacity to meet additional financial commitments”. Staff are currently preparing criteria for Council that measures “fiscal health” in relation to the secondary planning process.

Staff will table a report either at the same time or as immediately as possible after the Cost of Servicing Study is presented, which deals with defining and measuring the “fiscal health” of HRM. The report will lead to a recommendation on which, if any, green field sites should have master plans initiated.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

None

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.

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 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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