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Halifax Regional Council
June 20, 2006

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:



Dan English Chief Administrative Officer



Geri Kaiser Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: June 7, 2006

SUBJECT: Parking Meter Rate Increase

ORIGIN

Feedback from Council and the public including the Downtown Business Commissions has resulted in a review of this rate. In order to meet the 2006/07 revenue requirements and make on-street parking rates more comparable to off-street parking rates, an increase in the hourly rate is warranted. The last increase in parking meter rates was sixteen years ago.

RECOMMENDATION

1) It is recommended that Regional Council approve an increase to parking meter rates as follows:

- ◆ in the former City of Halifax, from \$1.00 per hour to \$1.50 per hour
- ◆ in the former City of Dartmouth, from \$0.75 per hour to \$1.00 per hour
- ◆ both effective July 1, 2006.

2) It is recommended that Regional Council approve an addition to Administrative Order 15 (AO 15) to include the rates for parking meters and that this report serve as notice of amendment to AO 15.

BACKGROUND

Parking meters are installed because they are an effective device for controlling on-street, short term parking in busy areas. The meter creates more parking spaces by generating parking turnover at regular intervals and meters are easy to enforce because they clearly indicate when a vehicle is parked in violation.

In the last 22 years there have been two increases in the former City of Halifax parking meter rates. In 1984, the rate increased from \$0.25 per hour to \$0.50 per hour and in 1990 the rate increased to \$1.00 per hour. A similar history of rate increases exists in the former City of Dartmouth.

There are several guiding principles that must be followed when determining the appropriateness of rates for on street parking.

Parking meters must ensure convenience for customers in providing parking options. The location, time duration and charges must meet the needs of both customers and business owners.

There must be consistency with the goals and objectives of the HRM Regional Plan. These include the goal to optimize the supply and efficient use of casual parking in the Capital District and to manage commuter parking as an integral element of the management of the transportation system as a whole.

Additionally, policy objectives around environmental sustainability and promotion of public transit and active transportation are influenced by parking policies. Many urban centres are now considering these aspects when setting parking policies.

DISCUSSION

When meter rates are substantially below off-street rates, the on-street metered spaces become more attractive to long-term parkers. Due to the cost savings and the convenience of on-street metered spaces, the long-term parkers choose to occupy metered spaces and the concept of generating parking turnover is defeated.

A comparison of the hourly parking meter rates to the average off-street parking rates in the HRM is provided:

	1984	1990	2004	2006
Parking Meter Rate - Halifax	\$0.50	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.00
Parking Meter Rate - Dartmouth		\$0.75	\$0.75	\$0.75
Average Off-street Rate - HRM	\$0.75	\$1.20	\$1.84	\$2.12
- Downtown Halifax			\$2.10	\$2.33
- Universities / Hospitals			\$1.76	\$2.10
- Spring Garden Road			\$1.43	\$2.00
- Downtown Dartmouth			\$1.54	\$1.75

As per the table above, the current rate for the meters in the former City of Halifax is \$1.00 per hour while the rate for the former City of Dartmouth is \$0.75 per hour.

The proposal to increase the hourly rate for parking meters is in line with the increases in both the off-street rates in HRM and the metered rates for other Canadian Municipalities over the past sixteen years. The average hourly rate for off-street parking in Halifax has increased 77% over the past sixteen years while the average meter rate for the other Canadian Municipalities has increased 78% over a twelve year period. The proposed increase in the meter rates is 50% in Halifax and 33% in Dartmouth. The attached Schedule "A" identifies the rates for the other Canadian Municipalities.

When we compare the proposed new rates of \$1.50 for the Halifax meters and \$1.00 for Dartmouth meters to the average hourly parking rates at off-street parking facilities, the proposed new rates are about 36% below the off-street rates for downtown Halifax and 43% below the off-street rate for downtown Dartmouth. The attached Schedule "B" identifies the rates for off-street parking facilities in the HRM.

It has been identified through the parking industry that the price for short term on-street parking should be at a premium compared to off-street parking due to the convenience for motorists and for the desire for high turnover of metered spaces. It is the opinion of HRM's traffic authority, that from a traffic congestion and safety perspective, it is reasonable to encourage parkers to park at off-street locations. When on-street rates are well below off-street rates, a high percentage of parkers will seek out the cheaper alternative creating the above mentioned traffic dilemmas.

In order for parking meters to be effective in controlling on-street short term parking and to be priced reasonably as compared to off-street parking and to be comparable with other Canadian

Municipalities, staff is recommending that the current rates be increased by \$0.50 per hour for all meters in the Halifax area and \$0.25 per hour for meters in the Dartmouth area.

Although these proposed rates are still quite low compared to off street parking rates, staff feel that the increase is fair at this time. In keeping with the intent of hourly meters and the equity principle, Commissionaires will continue to enforce the illegal practice of “meter feeding.” This practice defeats the purpose of timed meters.

The Business Commissions propose that the meters which allow one hour of parking be changed to increase the time to park to 90 minutes in selected areas. Currently, there are meters that allow 30 minute parking, one hour parking, as well as two, three and five hour parking. This time minimum for the one hour meters is considered to be more convenient for shoppers and residents who partake in other activities in the downtown. Staff are supportive of this change and will proceed to make the adjustment to the selected meters involved.

In the past the Business commissions have contended that parking meter revenues which go to general funds in Fiscal Services should be redirected to downtown initiatives. To that end, in recent years there has been an increase in spending to support the Capital District recognizing that it is the primary center for the regions’s employment, governance, culture and entertainment. In fiscal 2005/06 HRM spent \$175,000 on upgrades and maintenance to parking meters. Since the creation of the Capital District in 2002, the capital budget for streetscaping has grown to \$1.6M and now delivers new streetscape furnishings, universally designed sidewalks, parks and waterfront improvements. Council also approved an additional \$100,000 in 04/05 and 05/06 for enhancements such as extension of seasonal maintenance to December, new four-stream waste receptacles, 60 new pole mounted waste receptacles with increased servicing to empty them, a graffiti cleanup project, and purchase of a new sidewalk sweeper. The operating budget for the Capital District initiative which has grown from \$232,000 in 2002/03 with the creation of a project office to \$600,780 in 2005/06 and now delivers new programs related to maintenance, joint marketing, streetscaping, and urban design in partnership with the area Business Commissions. As well, the \$1M in Ferry Replacement Reserve funds is an expenditure out of Fiscal Services.

The Business commissions and the public have voiced their concern over the level of customer service exhibited by HRM’s parking enforcement staff. Over the past year, HRM has addressed this issue and is proud to report that strong customer service expectations have been set with the on-street parking enforcement staff, and we have received positive feedback from the business commissions. On that note, HRM has also committed to supporting a public relations parking initiative with the Downtown Business Corporation, which will involve a gift certificate and quarter campaign. HRM’s on-street parking enforcement staff will play an role in the delivery of the gift certificate part of the program.

Part of the amendment to by-law P-500 in 2004, allows for the use of a “smart card,” with an approved meter rate increase staff would proceed to fully implement the smart card into on-street

parking operations by December 2006. Staff are, also, preparing a plan with the intent to funnel new parking related revenue streams to create a sustainable funding source for transportation related initiatives. An overall transportation parking management plan is an important part of the Regional Plan and a funding strategy to meet goals arising from that plan might include the creation of a Transportation Reserve. New technology and methodologies around parking fee collection could be funded from such a reserve, such as pay and display systems or the newest cell phone “pay for space” options.

Staff will commit to an annual review of rates so as to keep pace with the parking environment in which HRM operates. To this end, it has been suggested by Legal Services that the rate for parking be incorporated into the Administrative Order (AO) which currently regulates a number of HRM fees. If council approves the rate increase this report will serve as notice to amend the AO.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

An approved rate increase as recommended will generate an estimated additional \$585,000 in parking meter revenue in 2006/07 assuming an effective date of July 1, 2006. A conservative estimated portion of \$150,000 of this increase has been provided in the proposed operating budget.

In the 2007/08 fiscal year this increase would grow to a full year of revenue in the estimated amount of \$ 780,000.

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) Increase the rate to \$2/hr in former City of Halifax and \$1.50/hr in former City of Dartmouth to bring on street parking closer to the average rate for off street parking. Staff do not recommend this as the percent increase to the rates would be too high.

- 2) Increase the times meters are to be used to include evenings and Saturdays. This option was not supported by the business district associations. Staff discovered that other jurisdictions in Canada do charge for parking at meters on weekends and note that this approach would result in a revenue increase of \$300,000 for fiscal 2006/07.

3) Maintain the rates at current levels. This is not recommended as per discussion section of this report.

ATTACHMENTS

Schedule A - Canadian Municipalities - Parking Meter Rates

Schedule B - Off-Street Parking Rates in the HRM

Amendment to AO 15

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.

Report Prepared by: Catherine Sanderson, Senior Manager-Financial Services 490-1562
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Report Approved by:


Cathie O'Toole, Acting Director, Finance 490-6308

Schedule A
Canadian Municipalities
Parking Meter Rates per Hour
May 2006

City	1994	2004	2006
Halifax	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.00
Dartmouth	\$0.75	\$0.75	\$0.75
Moncton	\$0.40	\$1.25	\$1.25
Saint John	\$0.50	\$1.00	\$1.25
Fredericton	\$0.60	\$1.00	\$1.25
St. John's	\$0.75	\$1.00	\$1.00
Montreal	\$1.50	\$2.00	\$2.00
Ottawa	\$1.00	\$2.50	\$2.50
Kingston	\$1.00	\$1.50	\$1.50
Kitchener	\$1.25	\$1.25	\$1.60
Toronto	\$1.00	\$2.00	\$3.00
Winnipeg	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.00
Saskatoon	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.00
Calgary	\$1.25	\$3.50	\$3.50
Edmonton	\$1.25	\$1.25	\$2.00
Victoria	\$1.00	\$1.25	\$1.50
Vancouver	\$1.50	\$2.00	\$2.50
Average	\$1.00	\$1.57	\$1.78

Schedule B
Off-Street Parking Rates per Hour
Halifax Regional Municipality

	Dec 2003	May 2006
Halifax - Downtown		
Waterfront Development Corp. - Meters	\$2.00	\$2.50
Cable Wharf	\$2.25	\$2.50
Queens Landing	\$2.25	\$2.50
Maritime Museum	\$2.00	\$2.50
Bishops Landing	\$2.25	\$2.50
Waterfront Warehouse	\$2.25	\$2.50
Scotia Square Parkade	\$2.50	\$2.50
Metro Park Parkade	\$2.50	\$3.00
Maritime Mall	\$2.50	\$2.50
Westin Hotel	\$2.00	\$2.00
5151 Terminal Rd	\$1.00	\$1.50
Sexton Campus	\$1.00	\$1.00
Summit Place	\$2.00	\$2.50
Law Courts	\$2.50	\$2.50
Casino Hotel	\$2.50	\$2.88
Purdy's Wharf	\$2.25	\$2.25
Casino Parking	\$2.00	\$2.00
Average	\$2.10	\$2.33
Hospitals / Universities		
Victoria General Hospital Site	\$2.00	\$2.50
N.S. Rehab Center Site	\$2.00	\$2.50
Camp Hill Site	\$2.00	\$2.50
Museum of Natural History	\$1.50	\$1.50
Fenwick Medical Ctr	\$1.30	\$1.50
Average	\$1.76	\$2.10
Spring Garden Road		
City Center Atlantic	\$1.35	\$1.75
Spring Garden "Customer Parking"	\$1.25	\$1.25
Parklane	\$1.35	\$2.50
Professional Ctr Spring Garden Rd	\$1.75	\$2.50
Average	\$1.43	\$2.00
Dartmouth		
Belmont Place	\$1.00	\$1.50
Alderney Landing	\$2.00	\$2.00
Alderney Gate	\$1.00	\$1.00

Lot 1 Queen St.	\$1.50	\$2.00
Lot 2 Queen St.	\$2.00	\$2.00
Ochterloney St. - booth	\$1.50	\$1.50
Royal Bank Building	\$1.80	\$2.00
Prince & Portland	\$1.50	\$2.00
Average	\$1.54	\$1.75
Average Off Street Rate	\$1.84	\$2.12

**Rates are for regular day time hours,
excluding after hours & Weekends.**

Appendix A

**HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER A.O.-15**

RESPECTING ON STREET METER PARKING RATES

BE IT ENACTED by the Council of Halifax Regional Municipality that A.O.-15 (12) Respecting Parking Meter Rates for the Regulation of Parking of Vehicles Left Standing in the Halifax Regional Municipality be enacted as follows:

1. The following Section is added immediately after Item 11.

**12. A, Definition
By-law #**

	Short title	Section	Fee
P-500	Parking By-Law	10	Within the former City of Dartmouth \$1.00/hour
B, P-500	Parking By-Law	10	Within the former City of Halifax \$1.50/hour