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Item No. 2
Halifax Regional Council
April 13, 2010

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Paul Dunphy".

Paul Dunphy, Director, Community Development

DATE: March 29, 2010

SUBJECT: Community Engagement Strategy - Systems Improvement Update

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

December 9, 2008 - HRM Community Engagement Strategy approved by Regional Council.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

Community engagement is key to building informed, cohesive, organized, welcoming and safe communities. Recognizing this, Regional Council adopted a framework for community engagement, including public consultation. The framework provides strategic direction and a number of specific objectives to achieve in the near, medium and longer term to ensure:

- key values and principles inform all of HRM's community engagement initiatives
- a strategic and consistent approach to community engagement
- continuous improvement and coordination of community engagement
- broad and representative participation
- processes, tools and techniques to ensure meaningful and effective engagement
- training and support for staff to carry out effective community engagement
- ongoing evaluation to ensure accountability for community engagement

HRM's community engagement framework was adopted just over one year ago. This report will update Council on what progress has been made in that time to improve engagement practices, and what new tools and processes are being implemented to help ensure community engagement is conducted in a meaningful, effective and professional manner (Table I). In addition, a listing of some of the past year's engagement initiatives is provided (pgs. 7-8).

Table I: Community Engagement Framework for Process Improvement

Action to be undertaken¹:		Progress to date:	
•	Develop a community engagement dictionary	•	Completed. Dictionary currently available from Community Engagement staff.
•	Develop and implement a Community Engagement Checklist and Readiness Test (to be used by all parties planning community engagement, including coordination with other HRM initiatives)	•	Completed. Resources available in print and on-line. Guidance on completing readiness test and checklist available from Community Engagement staff.

Action to be undertaken ¹ :	Progress to date:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orient staff and Councillors on the new Community Engagement framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed. Orientation sessions held with all HRM Business Units. Some ongoing work with Committees of Council.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Community Engagement (staff) Steering Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering committee not yet established. Other approaches/ alternatives being examined. Commitment to participate received from all Business Units. Business units would work collaboratively to ensure the recommendations are flexible and suitable to the requirements of their divisions, as well as oversee the implementation and evaluation of the strategy over time.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Community Engagement Calendar (to be used for posting and checking for conflicts with other community engagement initiatives) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed. HRM calendar rolled out in January 2010. Collaborating with Web Services and Corporate Communications.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a mandatory Community Engagement section in all staff reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed. A new template and guidelines for staff to become effective June 1, 2010.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve public knowledge of HRM's processes and structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing. Immediate priority placed on internal improvements, training, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve HRM's website (to facilitate e-participation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating with Web Services and Corporate Communications. Facebook added to Good Neighbours www.myhrm.ca web-page. Other ideas being explored through www.halifax.ca re-design.

Action to be undertaken¹:		Progress to date:	
•	Develop a community contact database solution	•	Collaborating with Corporate Communications and Volunteer Services www.halifax.ca/volunteerservices Examining existing databases - Regional Planning, VisionHRM, Recreation Services, Volunteer Services, Halifax Regional Library.
•	Develop a Community Engagement Inclusion Guide & Workshop	•	Preliminary discussion with Human Resources. Early stages of discussion with community stakeholders - Immigrant Services & Integration Services (ISIS), Collaboration on Diversity Integration (CODI) partners, Greater Halifax Partnership (GHP).
•	Develop a new volunteer management strategy	•	Strategy under development through Volunteer Services with focus on volunteer recruitment and retention. Strategy to be presented to Council in 2010.
•	Develop a revised and enhanced notification process	•	Ongoing. Some early improvements realized through Process Improvement Programs with individual business units and ongoing work on a community contact database solution to facilitate e-participation.
•	Allocate resources to support inclusive participation in HRM processes	•	Ongoing. Increased efforts to connect/ collaborate with community stakeholder/diverse groups.

Action to be undertaken¹:	Progress to date:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a 'Community Engagement Tools and Resources Kit' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing. Many helpful tools and resources exist now in the VisionHRM toolkit; combining into one resource. Some "tools" now online/more to be added in 2010 http://www.halifax.ca/crca/CommunityEngagement/ A new Community Engagement newsletter to feature "Tips & Techniques" section. Seeking permission to use other on-line resources.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a 'Community Engagement Resource Group' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed. Established in January 2009 through staff realignment. Community Engagement team based at Alderney Gate. Team serves as a go-to group, providing advice, guidance and training to all Business Units as the engagement strategy is implemented.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a 'Process Improvement Program' for individual Business Units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing. Some training has been provided. Internal requests for assistance with process design, process management and facilitation increasing.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a strategic communication plan for business units and their divisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration on www.halifax.ca re-design and internal meetings to promote and raise awareness of engagement principles and support/services offered by Community Engagement Team. Developing overall "web presence"/branding for Community Engagement in 2010.

Action to be undertaken¹:	Progress to date:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand and promote HRM's staff training programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing. Human Resources added new course material/training opportunities to the HRM Training Calendar. Business Units require ongoing support/monitoring of training/development activities. Implementation of the strategy requires the operating budgets of relevant Business Units adequately account for the cost associated with training staff to design, manage and facilitate the community engagement processes they lead.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Community Engagement Newsletter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under development. First issue of e-newsletter to be published in 2010.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop appropriate budget and resource allocation for community engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Development had a \$10,000 budget for 2009/10 to lead implementation of the Engagement Strategy including support to Business Units and monitoring of implementation activities. Implementation of the strategy requires the operating budgets of relevant Business Units adequately account for the cost associated with designing, managing and facilitating community engagement processes they lead. Guidance/advice on preparing cost estimates available from Community Engagement Team.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a plan to address needs for technology, equipment, facilities, and meeting spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing. Community Engagement Checklist requires consideration of these needs as part of process design; different processes may have unique needs; guidance/advice available from Community Engagement Team.

Action to be undertaken¹:		Progress to date:	
•	Institute the “Community Engagement Checklist” as part of planning for all community engagement	•	Completed. Detailed checklist developed. Orientation to checklist provided to all Business Units during January-February 2009. Guidance/ advice on completing the checklist available from Community Engagement Team.
•	Revise HRM contract templates to ensure external consultants use the new Community Engagement Framework	•	Completed. Contract templates revised in February 2009 to include new section on community engagement. External consultants to meet principles/requirements of Community Engagement Strategy. Template available from Intranet (Finance/Procurement).
•	Require regular evaluation of completed engagement processes	•	Ongoing. Evaluation tools being developed for inclusion within Community Engagement Tool Kit.
•	Develop a program to recognize excellence in community engagement	•	Ongoing. Recognition of volunteers is being considered under the development of new Volunteer Management Strategy. Strategy to be presented to Council in 2010. Staff recognition through HRM Employee Recognition Program. New programs to be considered under employee action plans developed in response to HRM Employee Survey.
•	Annually report to Council on progress made with the Community Engagement Strategy	•	First report - April 2010

¹: Actions from HRM’s Community Engagement Strategy, approved December 9, 2008

Summary of Community Engagement Initiatives

With a primary goal of overall process (systems) improvement within HRM, Community Engagement staff have been available to provide advice on process design, process management, and facilitation of community engagement. In some cases, this advice has been provided for a single event (i.e. public information meeting) or a specific project (i.e. Bayers Road Corridor Study). In other instances, the scope of work to achieve community engagement is much greater, more complex and time-consuming (i.e. Community Recreation Facility Review). Some examples of the work being done internally to improve community engagement are listed below.

Staff Training and Development

- ☐ Orientation sessions to HRM Business Units on Community Engagement Strategy
- ☐ ½ day workshop with IAM staff on Community Engagement Strategy
- ☐ ½ day workshop with Planning Applications
- ☐ Facilitator training for Peninsula Recreation Facility Review

Council Committee Training and Development

- ☐ Design and facilitation of a three-part workshop with HRM Active Transportation Committee to build capacity, understand roles and responsibilities of committee and staff, and develop a work plan
- ☐ Handouts and other tools provided on request to Committee chairs and staff to assist with running meetings, making presentations and dealing with conflict
- ☐ Training and coaching of Community Liaison Groups (CLG) to undertake Community Visioning
- ☐ Training and coaching of Vision Implementation Committees/Teams and working groups to undertake Community Vision implementation
- ☐ Training and coaching to support the work of Regional Youth Advisory Committee (RYAC)
- ☐ Design and facilitation of workshop with Special Events Advisory Committee to achieve endorsement of the proposed Special Events Strategy

Project-Specific Processes and Process Improvement

- ☐ Advice on future engagement of residents and other key stakeholders on the Bayers Road Corridor Study
- ☐ Advice as a member of a cross-departmental (internal) working group leading into commencement of 09/10 winter safety operations
- ☐ Advice on process design, management, and facilitation of a public information meeting for plan policy amendment for mobile homes in Lake Echo
- ☐ Advice to broaden scope of engagement plan to include more stakeholders in developing a Functional Plan for Burnside

- ☐ Advice on the process design, management, and facilitation of community engagement for the review of community recreation facilities (as a part of Community Facility Master Plan implementation)
- ☐ Advice to engage residents on implementing local improvement charges
- ☐ Facilitation on process design and process improvement for community gardens on HRM owned lands, community facility decision-making, and community signs

Community Workshops, Networking and Partnership Development

- ☐ Design and facilitation of workshops through Halifax Regional Library - “Welcoming Newcomers to HRM”
- ☐ Design and facilitation of workshops through HRM Volunteer Services - “Welcoming Newcomers to your Volunteer Organizations” and “Community Engagement for Volunteers”
- ☐ Design and facilitation of workshops for the “Collaborating on Diversity Integration Network”
- ☐ Participation on Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS) steering committee undertaking a needs and asset assessment with immigrant seniors, their families and service providers
- ☐ Facilitation of service agreement with Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS) to support events to welcome newcomers, communicate on initiatives of mutual interest, share information, collaborate on training and community engagement, and explore future partnerships
- ☐ Facilitation of municipal service agreement with Acadia First Nation for provision of municipal services
- ☐ Participation on roundtable on Urban Aboriginal Strategy designation for HRM
- ☐ Coordination of HRM participation and support for Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study
- ☐ Participation on Immigration Intergovernmental Roundtable to increase coordination and collaboration in planning and programming around immigration initiatives
- ☐ Collaboration with Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE) on French Newcomers’ Guide
- ☐ Facilitation on creation of Arabic Newcomers’ Guide
- ☐ Participation in Mayor’s “Make Your Mark” Event
- ☐ Facilitation on creation of Youth “Welcome to HRM” Guide

Conclusion

The Community Engagement Strategy’s implementation is based on an understanding improvement needs to happen on a continuous basis. In other words, HRM staff and Council are continually striving to improve community engagement practices, and are always seeking out ways and means to do things better using the principles of good community engagement. Engagement must be community friendly and allow community to be actively engaged.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications associated with this report.

Community Development had a \$10,000 budget for 2009/10 to lead implementation of the Engagement Strategy including support to Business Units and monitoring of implementation activities. This budget came from Cost Centre D710.

Additionally, implementation of the strategy requires the operating budgets of relevant Business Units adequately account for the cost associated with designing, managing and facilitating community engagement processes they lead.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the proposed 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 at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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