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Re: Item No. 11.3.2
Halifax Regional Council
November 2, 2010

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original signed
Philip Moscovitch, Chair, Halifax Regional Library Board

DATE: November 1, 2010

SUBJECT: Library Service Review

ORIGIN

Council, on May 21, 2010 during the budget review process, approved a Service Review for Library Services “to include the cost/benefits of the Halifax Regional Library being a line department as opposed to its continuing to be governed by the Library Board.” The Halifax Regional Library Board received no prior notification of this intent. Terms of Reference subsequently received by Library staff and cost reduction proposals from the Service Review Committee indicate a broadening of the scope of the review and an underlying assumption that the Board should be dissolved.

The Library Board directed a letter to Mayor and Members of Council on July 13, 2010 recommending that governance be removed from any review and that an open and transparent public process with clear terms of reference be adopted if the review proceeds. In the absence of a reply a second letter was sent September 22, 2010. Receipt of this letter was acknowledged by the Municipal Clerk. A letter dated October 21, 2010 was sent requesting placement of the matter on Council’s Committee of the Whole agenda for November 16, 2010.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. Halifax Regional Municipal Council exclude review of the Halifax Regional Library Board governance structure from any service review.
2. Halifax Regional Municipal Council limit the Library Service Review to financial issues only and that the review be conducted by the Office of the Municipal Auditor General.

BACKGROUND

Prior to amalgamation, library service was provided under the direction of the Halifax City Library Board, the Dartmouth Regional Library Board and the Halifax County Library Board. In 1996 at amalgamation, Council retained the library board structure and signed an Agreement with the Province of Nova Scotia under the HRM Municipal Act forming the Halifax Regional Library Board. The powers of the Board are defined in the Nova Scotia Libraries Act. Council appoints 4 municipal councilors and 4 municipal citizens to the Board; 2 citizens are appointed by the Province. Council approves all capital budget projects and expenditures, approves the operating budget prepared in accordance with HRM processes and procedures, and the Board's Strategic Plan and annual business plans are aligned to Council's strategic directions.

On December 2, 2003 notice of motion was given that Council:

“Request staff to report and recommend as to the procedure and implementation of terminating our agreement of April 1, 1996 with the Province of Nova Scotia as it relates to the continuance of the Halifax Regional Library Board. Furthermore, develop terms of reference for the creation of an HRM Library Advisory Board, operating under the jurisdiction of the Halifax Regional Municipality.”

The motion sparked substantial public opposition and was defeated on December 9, 2003.

In a report to Council, the CAO recommended and Council approved, that no change in the current structure of the Halifax Regional Library as an independent organization is recommended.

HRM & HRL staff continued to explore opportunities for closer collaboration. A Service Agreement for the provision of Human Resources by HRM was signed and terminated 2 years later upon mutual agreement that the endeavor had proved to be unworkable for both parties. A Service Agreement for the provision of GroupWise was entered into by the parties on February 1, 2007 and remains in place.

The Library is integrated with HRM in pension and flex benefits plans, payroll, procurement, accounts payable and financial reporting. The Library participates in HRM programs and initiatives.

DISCUSSION

The separate status of the Halifax Regional Library Board is not unique in terms of municipal organization in Canada. Boards are the service model norm (with only 2 exceptions), and historically separation has been required to ensure arm's length service decision making to protect intellectual freedom and the public's right of access to information and to provide for flexibility and responsiveness in service delivery. While boards are separate they are not autonomous and are accountable to their funding partners.

An extensive governance and service review was conducted in 2003 and Council voted in 2003 and in 2004 to retain the current governance model. Nothing has changed since that time. The Library Board is politically neutral and highly responsive to changing public needs.

Libraries are uniquely public institutions. Throughout the extensive Central Library public consultation initiated by the Board, we have clearly heard from residents that they value public libraries as the last truly democratic place in modern society, free of commercialism and open, welcoming and accessible to all. Citizen volunteers on the Board ensure that the public voice is heard in service development and, through the current governance structure, the quality of community life has been substantially improved with development of new libraries in Tantallon, Clayton Park and Woodlawn and through renovation of Halifax North Memorial Library and Captain William Spry Library. The Library Board has maintained rural Mobile Service in 2010 in spite of an HRM staff decision not to fund this much-needed service, while investigating longer term solutions.

There are clear advantages to Council in retaining arm's length decision making through the Library Board. Location of new facilities, closing of facilities, children's use of the internet, censorship and intellectual freedom issues, reductions in service and withdrawal of service are all issues the Board reviews. These are among the many issues that can touch off public protest and negative media attention. Council can distance itself from controversy as the Board is the publicly accountable body.

Eliminating the current governance structure could easily put provincial funding at risk. The Board currently receives a Provincial conditional operating grant of \$4,785,800. The grant is paid to library boards and not to municipalities. In dissolving the Board (which requires a one year notice period), HRM would then have to renegotiate terms with the Province risking loss of the grant or substantial reduction of the grant.

In the absence of a Board, responsibility for \$1.7 million in contribution and \$1.7 million in public fundraising would transfer to HRM. Additionally, minimal savings that might accrue through merging operations would be offset by the increased staffing HRM would require to manage operations, and increased salary and benefits costs and training costs to provide equity to library employees with HRM staff. It is unlikely that the Department of Education would continue to support EDNET DSL lines to branches (\$90,000 per year) and educational pricing and grant opportunities could be impacted.

Public library funding in Nova Scotia is predicated on the principle of free access and resource sharing. Any introduction of user-pay fees or non-resident fees for service would further heighten the risk of losing provincial funding.

The Board is justifiably concerned that service reduction proposals received from the Service Review Committee and the terms of reference received to date envision the dismantling of a highly productive public service that is enthusiastically supported by residents in every corner of HRM. Within the municipality 44% of residents are registered active patrons of the Halifax Public Libraries and that the library in 2009/10 received 2,251,504 resident visits and circulated 4,746,449 items. Clearly these are enviable and impressive numbers indicating strong

community support and engagement.

The Library system is not broken. There has been no suggestion that the Library Board and its management have done anything but a good job in delivering Library services to the people of Halifax Regional Municipality. By reopening the issue of Library governance, there is little to gain but there is potential for eroding service quality and jeopardizing funding agreements.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications in retaining the current Board structure. There are financial risks to be incurred in dissolving the Board.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Project and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Project and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Dissolution of the Library Board is a significant public policy issue. It should not be contemplated without an extensive public consultation in which impacts perceived benefits and future service plans and/or reductions are clearly enunciated.

ALTERNATIVES

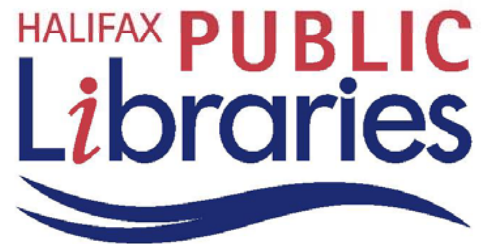
1. Defer any further discussion or implementation of a Library Service Review until construction of the Central Library is completed to ensure that the Funding Agreement with the Federal and Provincial governments is not negatively impacted and public confidence in local government to work collaboratively is not eroded.
2. Initiate a comprehensive public consultation process to receive public opinion and input into the Library Service Review and provide the Library Board with an opportunity to make a full presentation to HRM Regional Council.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Halifax Regional Library Board Strategic Plan

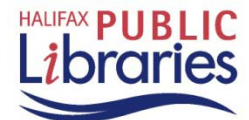
A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by: Judith Hare, CEO, Halifax Public Libraries, 490-5868



Halifax Public Libraries

2010 – 2015
Strategic Plan



Vision and Mission

Vision:

Halifax Public Libraries:
Where we shape the future together...
Imagine the possibilities

Mission:

Connecting people, Enriching communities,
Inspiring discovery

Core Values

Values: The essential and enduring beliefs that drive our behaviour. They are non-negotiables, not to be compromised for short term reward or expediency.

- Community
- Integrity
- Our People
- Discovery
- Diversity and Social Inclusion

Core Values Defined

Community

- Community is at the heart of what we do
- Exceed community expectations
- Commitment to collaboration
- The community defines success

Integrity

- Accountable to all stakeholders
- Responsible and ethical management of our resources
- Protection of personal privacy
- Reliable and trusted partner

Core Values Defined

Our People

- Safe, welcoming, respectful workplace
- Opportunities for learning and development
- Challenging and interesting work
- Team-based environment
- Compassionate and committed

Discovery

- Passion for learning, literacy
- Encourage fun and social interaction
- Invite creativity
- Takes risks
- Embraces change

Core Values Defined

Diversity and Social Inclusion

- Foster understanding and respect for all cultures and abilities
- Encourage the exchange of ideas and perspectives
- Reflect the diversity of our community
- Universal access to information
- Affirm the dignity of people and communities
- Freedom of expression and thought

2015 Goals

- The Central Library reflects and engages the Municipality's imagination and aspirations.
- Service delivered in high quality, well designed and attractive facilities strategically located throughout the Municipality in alignment with the Library Facilities Master Plan and the HRM Regional Plan.
- A community-centered library system that fosters social understanding and cooperation among the diverse communities of the Municipality.
- To lead creative initiatives that connect, enrich and inspire discovery.
- Staff exemplify the vision, mission and values.
- Demonstrate accountability and stewardship to ensure sustainability while building our capacity.
- Develop and sustain aligned relationships and meaningful partnerships based on open communication and motivated participants.

Strategic Directions

Central focus or purpose that exists over time

People and Communities

Connecting people and ideas for:

- personal enrichment
- engaged communities
- motivated staff

Innovation and Growth

The library builds capacity through:

- recognized leadership
- continuous improvement
- innovative services

Key Initiatives

- Demonstrate the value of the Central Library to the residents of HRM.
- Design Central Library with approved architects in cooperation with HRM according to plan and schedules.
- Ensure effective community engagement in the design phase of the Central Library project.
- Launch fund-raising campaign for Central Library.
- Develop criteria and mechanisms for managing requests for system expansion.
- Manage ongoing facilities maintenance projects and develop priorities.
- Identify best practices from the Central Library and new Woodlawn Library processes related to space and facility usage that can be implemented at branches across the region.

Key Initiatives (con't)

- Create accessible environments and opportunities for diverse communities and organizations to connect, create and exchange ideas.
- Strengthen our community networks, leverage staff community connections, pursue new partnerships, and create an inclusive community process.
- Identify and develop services in non-traditional ways and in non-traditional places to meet communities where they are.
- Develop and implement automation initiatives (eg RFID) to improve customer service.
- Explore service delivery alternatives to replace Mobile Library service.
- Develop a recruitment and selection program to hire staff who demonstrate our core values and reflect our diverse communities.

Key Initiatives (con't)

- Create a fully integrated talent management and succession plan.
- Create a staff rewards and recognition program.
- Effectively manage and safeguard library resources and plan for, maintain and replace assets as necessary.
- Review and implement results of pilot of shared access service with university, college and regional public libraries through the Libraries Nova Scotia consortium (BARA – Borrow Anywhere, Return Anywhere).