


REVISED

Item No. 1
Halifax Regional Council
November 30, 2010

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: 
Councillor Linda Mosher, Chair, Graffiti Task Force

DATE: November 16, 2010

SUBJECT: Graffiti Management Plan – Update #2

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Regional Council adopted the Graffiti Management Plan (Plan) on August 1, 2006.

This report fulfils a requirement of the Plan for the Task Force to report to Council on its initiatives over the past year.

BACKGROUND

The Plan allows for a Graffiti Task Force whose purpose is to govern and implement the Plan with all stakeholders, through a co-ordinated, multifaceted approach. The Task Force is comprised of two Members of Council, a number of business units and Corporate Partners. Business unit participants are Halifax Regional Police (Community Response Team, Public Safety Office), RCMP, Transportation and Public Works, HRM Call Centre and Dispatch Service, Community Development (Arts Facilitator) and Corporate Communications. Along with Clean NS, Partner participants are Nova Scotia Power, Aliant, Canada Post, Halifax Regional School Board.

New Partners are Halifax Water and the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs).

Each Task Force member has a role to play in carrying out the intent of the Plan. The Plan recognizes that graffiti affects an entire community and that responsibility for managing graffiti is most effective when all stakeholders participate.

DISCUSSION

HRM's approach to graffiti management focuses on five components referred to as the **5 E Approach**:

ERADICATION
EDUCATION
EMPOWERMENT
ENFORCEMENT
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The following section provides an overview of the initiatives undertaken by the Graffiti Task Force over the past year, taking into consideration each of the above.

ERADICATION

Call Centre – The public, staff and Councillors are continuing to report graffiti on HRM and Partner assets through the 490-4000 line. For the period October 1, 2009 – September 30, 2010 there have been approximately 540 calls made to the Call Centre for the purposes of reporting graffiti.

Once information is received and processed through Hansen, Transportation and Public Works staff address graffiti on HRM assets. Partner property damage is forwarded directly to the respective Partner at which time they address the property damage.

Transportation and Public Works: Municipal Operations is responsible for graffiti eradication on all HRM owned assets. This includes buildings, traffic signs, utility and traffic poles, retaining walls and other HRM infrastructure.

Municipal Operations currently has four CUPE Local 108 staff that respond to reported calls. Equipment in the vehicles includes hot water pressure washers, a soda blaster to remove paint from sensitive hard surfaces, high volume paint sprayers, and many different colours of paint for paint overs when required. Staff also self- generate calls by performing regular patrols on infrastructure that is re-tagged on a regular basis. Private contractor resources are also available to respond at the direction of the Supervisor.

Municipal Operations also provides graffiti removal kits to homeowners and small business owners free of charge. Sensitive surface and brick/concrete kits are available by contacting the HRM Call Centre at 490-4000.

Over the past two years, there have been 2,143 WOs completed by MOPS.

Partner Participation:

Bell Aliant - Program involves internal and external identification of marked cabinets via email (graffitiinHRM@bellaliant.ca) or through their 611 Repair Service number. The process of removal, restoration and preventative coating has been outsourced to a company who specializes in these services. With muralled assets becoming more susceptible to tags, Bell Aliant is considering using a protective coating. Urgency of the removal is based on complaints, usually profanity. Bell Aliant is a participating member of the Graffiti Task Force.

Nova Scotia Power – Clean up of graffiti is part of the annual inspection process for pad mount transformers (large green boxes usually found on commercial properties) plus customer-requested clean-up locations. All company assets are checked for graffiti and cleaned up as required. NSP is a participating member of the Graffiti Task Force.

Halifax Regional School Board – The Board deals with graffiti on a daily basis. The speed in which it is removed is based upon the severity and location of the graffiti. The School Board is a participating member of the Graffiti Task Force.

Canada Post - All red mail boxes have been upgraded to a new anti-graffiti labelled mail box. Two hundred gray boxes are currently being cleaned during Canada Post annual clean up. As well, all Canada Post customer enquiries and HRM initiated calls are dealt with within a 24 hour time frame. Canada Post is a participating member of the Graffiti Task Force.

Halifax Water – All reports of graffiti on Halifax Water infrastructure are dealt with in a timely fashion. Graffiti reports are received from staff, the public, and through Hansen via the HRM call center. Halifax Water staff paint over and remove graffiti and also use the services of an outside vendor. Halifax Water also utilized murals on infrastructure at some locations where there are reoccurrences of graffiti. Halifax Water is a new participant on the Graffiti Task Force.

Clean NS – Direct correlations have been made between graffiti and litter where neighbourhoods that are not kept clean are more likely to attract graffiti as well as more litter. Clean Nova Scotia's role on the Graffiti Task Force has been to make other partners aware of the Great Nova Scotia Pick-Me-Up program and to support the work being done to put a stop to community degradation within HRM. Clean NS is a participating member of the Graffiti Task Force.

EDUCATION

Halifax Regional Police (Public Safety Office) - In addition to overseeing the implementation of the Graffiti Management Plan, the Community Response Team (CRT) has undertaken the following initiatives: responded to general enquiries on graffiti; monitored Partner graffiti removal; developed updated presentation for community groups, organizations, agencies, Police recruits and beat officers; manned a booth during Police Week to raise awareness on the detriments of graffiti to a community; incorporated section on graffiti within Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Level 1 training; included a component on graffiti within all CPTED audits/assessments; liaised with business units on graffiti; continuous research, and a resource for other municipalities. Refer to **EMPOWERMENT** section as well.

RCMP – The RCMP made 280 presentations to students with ten modules included within the DARE package resulting in 28 graffiti segments being presented.

Corporate Communications – Continues to promote civic pride through the Good Neighbours, Great Neighbourhoods initiative that will both directly and indirectly help to further the goals of the Graffiti Management Plan.

By promoting universal values central to being a good neighbour, and using a social marketing approach, the initiative seeks to increase civic pride and safety in our neighbourhoods by working together with residents to reduce undesirable behaviours like graffiti and increase desirable behaviours such as removing and/or reporting graffiti and the creation of community murals.

The HRM website continues to be the most comprehensive source of information to the public. It includes items such as what is graffiti, how to report it, tips for removing it from a variety of surfaces, HRM service standards for removal from HRM assets, information on the Community Arts Project, etc. It is also the place where Partners in Graffiti Management are profiled. A link from the myhrm.ca website brings people to the site and a web icon on www.halifax.ca/business.asp links the business community to the page.

Corporate Communications continues to provide any design, communications, project management and printing support to the Plan as required such as: ad insertions for Calls for Artists for Community Art projects, ongoing media relations support; photography; articles.

Community Development - Cultural Affairs (Community Arts Facilitator) - Programs continue in partnership with the Community Justice Society to engage and educate youth and the

graffiti sub culture on the harmful effects of graffiti; further, to create positive artistic opportunities for youth charged with graffiti vandalism.

Empowerment

Through the availability of Graffiti Tool kits through TPW, community members have access to removal product at no cost (refer to **ERADICATION – TPW** as well).

The CRT is in the process of developing Door Knockers – an information flyer on graffiti to be distributed (hung on door handles) to residents and the public is continually encouraged to take civic pride in their neighbourhoods.

Economic Development

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs): Sackville Drive, Spryfield and Main Street BIDs

Sackville Drive, Lr Sackville – Graffiti has not been an issue this past year.

Spryfield - There have not been any calls for graffiti removal in the past two years. There is one problematic area, however, the business owner continually maintains the property. Expenses incurred to date for 2010 is approximately \$3,000.

Main Street, Dartmouth – Graffiti, although not a huge problem, is removed twice a year, Spring and Fall, however, graffiti is removed from any member business within 24 hours of receiving notice. Expenses incurred to date for 2010 is approximately \$800.

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs): Quinpool, Spring Garden, Downtown Halifax,

Quinpool Road

Graffiti has been and continues to be a great problem on Quinpool Road. Despite the Association's best efforts to fundraise and conduct several cleanups throughout the year, tagging continues. Expenses incurred to date for 2010 is approximately \$10,000.

The Association recently held its 9th Annual Monte Carlo night, a fundraising initiative held to support graffiti clean-ups on Quinpool Road. The Association encourages its members to call the non-emergency graffiti HRM police line when they have been tagged. This has led to the installation of a beat patrol officer on Quinpool Road and they are currently looking at providing an office for the beat patrol officers and Community Response Officers on Quinpool Road.

Through fundraising efforts, approximately \$7,700 has been realized.

Spring Garden Road

The Spring Garden Area Business Association actively removes graffiti from business owners' property. The BID also utilizes a local service provider to monitor fast and effective clean up by way of weekly audits of the districts area. Approximately 140 tags have been removed in 2010 from local businesses' private property at a cost of approximately \$ 4,200.

Downtown Halifax

The Downtown Halifax Business Commission engaged Atlantic Graffiti Busters to do removal of all graffiti on private commercial buildings within its boundaries (Brunswick Street to the Waterfront and Cogswell Street to Inglis Street) on an ongoing basis. This is the fifth year of the program, which has a matching dollar component from Halifax Regional Municipality. Atlantic Graffiti Busters removed 1100 tags over the last year.

As well, during the months of May to September, the Downtown Halifax Business Commission's Summer Enviro Team Students removed graffiti from benches, lamp posts and, street signage. The elimination of graffiti has a profound effect on the perception of Downtown Halifax as a place that is safe and cares about its environment. Expenses incurred to date for 2010 are approximately \$4,356.

Downtown Dartmouth

The Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission's budget for 2010/11 fiscal year is currently \$3,000 but might be reduced because of the funding cuts from HRM. In the past they have done two full clean-ups a year and have done graffiti clean-ups as calls come in from the businesses (spot cleaning).

Community Development - Cultural Affairs Community Arts Facilitator - Since the fall of 2006, nine youth murals have been completed in the following communities: Sackville, Spryfield, Lakeside, Clayton Park, Pavilion in Halifax, Woodside, Bedford, Eastern Passage and Beazley Field.

To date there have been four Outdoor Gallery projects - Their locations are/have been on Bedford Row, Halifax (2007), Beazley Field Stadium in Dartmouth (2008), and Dartmouth Cove, Maitland St. (2007, 2010). These projects connect a multiplicity of partners including HRM, private business, BIDS, other levels of government, artists and graffiti writers to transform otherwise neglected eyesores, into beautiful and engaging pieces of public art.

The first annual Hopscotch: Urban Arts Festival was held from September 4th - 11th, 2010. One component of the event had writers painting legal murals in Grand Parade to compete for prizes. Two artists from France flew in for the event to showcase their innovative approach to public spray painting by creating temporary cellophane walls. The event heightened the importance of aerosol art being used to beautify public space rather than for scrawling tags, highlighting that this can be accomplished when artists collaborate with government and private business.

The summer of 2010 has brought 21 new pieces of art to HRM streets through the Traffic Box Program. Twenty-one artists painted traffic boxes across HRM to add to the previously existing 65 murals that have been created on boxes since 2008. There continues to be a positive response from both the community and the artists about how much they enjoy painting outdoors and seeing artists and artwork in their community. The program ran in 2010 on a reduced budget of \$12,000 compared to \$20,000 in the first and second years.

ENFORCEMENT

HRP/RCMP - For the period October 1, 2009 to November 4, 2010:

14 - Adults charged (Adult Diversion)

14 – Youth (Restorative Justice)

6 - No charges laid

The Community Response Team has a Constable on staff who is responsible for co-ordinating the enforcement piece of graffiti, with both HRP and the RCMP. Further, HRP is developing a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the internal taking of graffiti calls and integrating Restorative Justice (youth) to Adult Diversion with enforcement procedures.

Crime Stoppers continues to be a tool that can be relied upon for people to report graffiti anonymously. The tipster may be eligible for a cash award between \$50 and \$2,000 if their tip leads to an arrest. Five tips were relayed to HRP within 2010.

NEXT STEPS – CHAIR REPORT

The Graffiti Task Force continues to work collectively towards eradicating graffiti and the associated vandalism in our municipality. We are continually seeking new partners and recently have added representation from the Suburban Business Improvement Districts, the Capital Business Improvement Districts, and Halifax Water. At our last meeting the Port Authority sent a representative. Graffiti is a chronic problem in our municipality and in order to appropriately address it, a continued integrated and collective approach is required.

Recently three members from HRM attended the TAGS Anti-Graffiti Symposium in Calgary. The members were: Constable Marshall (Gerry) Murney, Community Response Team; Peter Brown, Supervisor Public Works, and Councillor Linda Mosher, Chair, Graffiti Task Force. Although HRM possesses considerable knowledge about graffiti vandals and the associated effects, attendance at this conference was important to stay current and to obtain the experiences

from much larger cities. The sessions included: Portrait of a Vandal, Impacting the Subculture of Graffiti Vandalism, Learning the Truth (Interview Techniques), Anti -Graffiti Products, How to Conduct a City Wide Graffiti Survey, Tracking the Elusive Vandal (Database), Painted Problems (Education), Laying a Graffiti Hate Crime Charge (Case Study), The World of Criminal “AR”, Unmasking Urban Hate Crime Graffiti, Entering the World of Graffiti Vandals (Warrants), Colouring Outside the Lines (Transit, etc.), Gang Graffiti, Capital City Clean Up, Inside the Mind of a Graffiti Writer, ReSTART (Vancouver Restorative Justice Program), and Staying Connected (Graffiti Networks). In addition to the sessions, there was an opportunity to network with colleagues from across the country to build contacts and learn about their respective programs.

This conference is traditionally held in the Western Provinces, however, we have been asked to host a conference which is tentatively set for the fall of 2013. This will be an excellent conference for key stakeholders in Nova Scotia to learn from Canadian experts.

During the numerous break-out sessions at TAGS, we realized that we were not in a position to determine if the HRM eradication programs were indeed working. One of the sessions provided an overview of a graffiti survey conducted on an annual basis. Should HRM undertake such a survey, this would not only tell us if the problem is getting better or worse but also identify taggers, provide a cumulative number of infractions per tagger, identify problematic locations, provide information to determine if corresponding crime is increasing with graffiti increases, and identify gang or racial/hatred graffiti. One could pin point areas on a map and then concentrate graffiti eradication /crime prevention efforts in those particular areas. We will be discussing the potential for undertaking a baseline survey in HRM on an annual basis to determine how we are progressing.

At the TAGS Conference, there were sessions specific to Police Officers and this assisted our police representative in understanding the process to lay a hate crime charge. The specific definitions of hate included Hate Incident, Hate Crime, Hate Propaganda and Religious Mischief. Subsequent to the conference, Constable Murney distributed the definitions of ‘hate crime charges’ to key stakeholders. These instances have occurred recently in HRM and it is important that any of these hate related crimes be referred to Halifax Regional Police (HRP). They must not be removed until HRP has taken a photograph at which time it would be referred to the Major Crime Unit. In order to successfully prosecute, we must ensure specific procedures are followed. This information has been disseminated the Police and discussions are taking place on the development of an internal operations.

All speakers at this conference made it very clear that graffiti is a crime. When graffiti is present we have a generalized increase in crime, the real estate values decrease, graffiti attracts other crimes and in particular, neighbourhood crimes. It fosters social withdrawal, it intimidates people from walking and being in the area and it can isolate groups especially when race, creed and colour are integrated into graffiti. Although graffiti vandals can come from any age, it was

clear that it often starts in youth when they are exhibiting at-risk behaviours. From the information presented it is important that we talk to our youth at an earlier age, with a suggested age of three. There is also often a mental health component and this is one area that we need to address. Graffiti can be one of the first criminal activities, often progressing to more offences and violent crime. Therefore, we need to ensure that graffiti crimes are reported and recorded and monitored in a database. In addition, we need to be part of a national database so we can share intelligence with other Police forces.

The Graffiti Task Force feels that we need to deliver an anti-graffiti message to schools, but we want to ensure that the delivery is respected and accepted by the students. Therefore, we are considering mentors such as reformed graffiti vandals to speak to students. This has been validated by an educational program in Auckland, New Zealand.

In HRM we are not only seeing an increase in graffiti but recently an increase in hate graffiti. This is only based on reported graffiti and on the feedback from the general public and Graffiti Task Force members. Unfortunately, all incidents are not reported. People feel it is best to remove it immediately, however, when it is removed and not documented by the Police, we cannot use this to move forward to criminal charges. It is clear that Halifax Regional Municipality, Halifax Regional Police and the RCMP need a formal protocol and reporting structure for both the general public and internally. We have been recommending that the public contact the HRM Call Centre at 490-4000 or the Police at 490-5016 (911 for crime in progress). If the Call Centre receives a call regarding graffiti on HRM or Partner properties, a service number is assigned and the call goes in the queue for removal. Although it does get removed, it may not get reported to the Police ... meaning it is not investigated. Ideally HRM should have a 311 system which has proven to be more successful in other Cities. In the absence of 311, we are working on a protocol that will ensure the Police receive the call first, visit the scene (**report**) photograph the crime (**record**) and then it gets removed (**remove**) – this follows the basic three principles of eradicating graffiti.

The Graffiti Task Force wants to further its initiatives with both a public education and community involvement initiative. Residents must be encouraged to watch their area and report graffiti – whether someone is in the process of tagging or after the fact. Last year there were less than 800 reports of graffiti, however, this is not a fraction of the actual number of tags. The Task Force will be working on a campaign to create an enhanced education program for the public in order to have public ownership of this issue. The message would be to have a cleaner and even greater city. Areas such as Edmonton have an aggressive public education campaign that has led to businesses such as Tim Horton's implementing an adopt a block litter campaign. They have been successful based on community engagement and community ownership.

We have requested the legislative ability to manage graffiti on private properties. At the conference it was indicated that in order to be successful in eradicating graffiti, it cannot only be on public properties. It varies by city as to how much assistance the city can provide to private

property owners. Once legislative authority is in place, HRM can implement a best practices approach. Concurrent with this would be the launching of an education campaign and host a local symposium.

In 2006 when the Graffiti Management Plan was first adopted, \$50,000 had been allocated within the CAO's budget to implement the Plan. There has been no dedicated corporate funding since. In order to meet the goals in the Plan, we will require additional funding but this should reduce spending in other areas over the long run. In other areas within Canada they have full time resources, such as Calgary Police's Education Coordinator – "Don't Buy In" Program for Community & Youth Services, Edmonton's Graffiti Project Manager or Vancouver's dedicated Police Officers. It takes money to implement the Plan and appropriate staff resources. We do not have any full time employees working on graffiti and a thorough analysis of HRM resources is required.

In summary our suggested next steps are:

- Coordinated protocol to ensure we have appropriate reporting that can lead to successful conviction if a Graffiti vandal is apprehended.
- Appropriate education which will lead to increased reporting, community understanding and ownership of this issue.
- Awareness and immediate reporting of hate and religious crimes.
- Education for our youth by mentors, starting at age three if possible.
- Ability to enforce on private properties, with assistance to homeowners to comply.
- Subsequent to legislative authority, an extensive education campaign and a symposium bringing in experts for community understanding of the issue.
- Continue to seek new partners for the Graffiti Task Force.
- Conduct an annual survey to monitor our progress.
- Conduct an analysis of budget requirements in order to be able to continue implementing the Graffiti Management Plan.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Costs applied to implement the Graffiti Management Plan have been covered by each business unit and Councillors. For the year 2010, HRM has incurred approximately \$283,153 in expenses

with the BIDs spending \$19,256. Overall, however, it is estimated that outside of these figures, collateral costs associated with graffiti in HRM is still a \$1 million + concern.

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

The Graffiti Task Force community engagement process for the past year complies with the HRM Community Engagement Strategy and fulfills Council's direction through the Graffiti Management Plan in that the Graffiti Task Force will file a report to Council on an annual basis.

The process involved Information Sharing, Consultation and Community Engagement and was carried out through a number of initiatives: raising awareness of graffiti with children and parents during Police Week; presentations; module built within Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Level 1 classes; resource for staff, Council and outside agencies/associations/other municipalities; collaborating with Partners and the business community; providing complimentary graffiti removal kits for the community; working with youth through art programs and support for mural programs. Further, the HRM website has information for the community on how to manage graffiti.

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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