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**Item No. 5**

**Halifax Regional Council  
December 9, 2014**

**TO:** Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

*Original Signed by Director*

**SUBMITTED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Brad Anguish, Director, Parks & Recreation

**DATE:** November 28, 2014

**SUBJECT:** Petition – Cole Harbour Recreation Programs

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**INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

At the July 22, 2014 Halifax Regional Council meeting, a petition was submitted containing 118 signatures asking that Council look for input from users of the Cole Harbour Recreation programs to understand the concerns and allow the users to be part of the solution.

Remedy Sought: For users of the Cole Harbour Recreation program to have input into the decisions that will affect the quality and affordability of the programs that are currently offered at Cole Harbour Recreation Centre. We would like to see that the community base management model be used over the facility based management model. As well we would like to maintain the quality of programs with retaining the certified instructors and the community feel of the programs.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

*Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, sections 79(1)(k) "The Council may expend money required by the Municipality for.. recreational programs"*

**BACKGROUND**

Parks & Recreation leases space at 1216 Cole Harbour Road at a cost of approximately \$120,000 to provide 145 recreation programs and services annually to approximately 930 unique users from the Cole Harbour area and surrounding communities. The Cole Harbour Recreation Centre (CHRC) operates with a significant annual deficit of approximately \$150,000, which is largely attributable to the \$120,000 lease cost and program revenues of only approximately \$60,000. Whereby staff continually strive to contain/reduce costs, and whereas this lease is due to expire on December 31, 2014, an internal review was conducted to examine the possible relocation of administrative offices and recreation programs offered at the CHRC to Cole Harbour Place (CHP) to potentially improve programming and reduce costs. The leased facility is located within 2 kilometers of CHP, a Multi-District Facility.

## **DISCUSSION**

Recreation staff continually strive to provide the best recreational return for the taxpayer's dollar in an overall municipal environment where the goal is to hold/reduce taxes/fees wherever possible. Programs offered at CHRC share many synergies with programs currently offered at CHP. Participants attending programs at CHRC could potentially benefit from more modern facilities that include better parking, intergenerational programming/inclusion, aquatic programs and leisure swims, skating, dance classes, wellness programs, health service organizations/businesses, Cole Harbour Library and outdoor park areas.

An internal review conducted by staff from Parks & Recreation explored two options.

**Option 1:** Relocate the current programs and administration to leased space at CHP.

Through the examination of space available at CHP, a number of issues were identified that would not support the relocation of CHRC administration and programming spaces to CHP. In order to relocate recreation program space to CHP, another public community agency would be required to be displaced and cause a negative impact within the community. In addition, the space available at CHP would not be suitable for the administration or implementation of municipal recreation services due to the access of the space within the building, cost of renovations associated with conversion to a recreation space, and cost of lease. This option will not be investigated further.

**Option 2:** Migrate programs from CHRC to CHP and other community assets.

The migration of programs to CHP, along with the termination of the CHRC lease, would provide an overall savings in program delivery costs and likely strengthen the revenues and sustainability of CHP. Significant savings could be generated through the termination of the CHRC lease (approximately \$120,000) and through the merger of administration and recreation services providing additional annual cost savings up to \$40,000. It is estimated that at least 50% of CHRC programs could be directly relocated within CHP. The new Joint Use Agreement (JUA) for community gymnasium access currently being negotiated with Cole Harbour High School will provide additional opportunities to relocate and/or offer additional programs to the residents of Cole Harbour and surrounding area.

This option has potential that will need to be explored further with various stakeholders, and informed through community consultation. Whereby this review process will extend beyond the life of the current CHRC lease, negotiations are underway to extend the lease for an appropriate period. This action will ensure the ongoing stability of current programming in the area.

## **CONCLUSION**

In responding to the specific language provided in the petition, staff provide the following:

- a) Users of the Cole Harbour Recreation programs should be assured that there is no intention to affect the quality and affordability of programs. The potential alignment of services and reduction of overhead costs within the recreation system will only serve to ensure the Municipality can enhance the affordable programming already available by placing many programs into more modern facilities that include better parking, program options, etc. As mentioned above, residents and users will have an opportunity to participate in future community consultations.
- b) Community Base Management Model vs. Facility Based Management Model – The Municipality employs a community based recreation management model. Any decision to combine programming into one building, as opposed to two buildings within 2 kms of each other, does not jeopardize HRM's community based approach.

- c)        Maintaining Quality of Programs with certified instructors – Users of CHRC programming should be assured that the integrity of the program would remain. The use of qualified instructors would be maintained and the “community feel” enhanced.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Community engagement will occur as part of the Community Facilities Master Plan update process.

**ATTACHMENTS**

None

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.php> 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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