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Halifax Regional Council
November 8, 2005
November 22, 2005
December 13, 2005

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:



Dan English, Chief Administrative Officer



Wayne Anstey, Acting Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: October 24, 2005

SUBJECT: Council Chamber Security

ORIGIN

During the In Camera session of September 6, 2005, Council requested that a written security protocol be developed to address safety and security issues within the Council Chamber.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that :

1. Security protocol be adopted as outlined in appendix "A" of this report.

BACKGROUND

Security in the chamber has been an issue on a number of occasions in recent years when public demonstrations have required Police intervention to restore order. Members of Council have expressed a growing concern regarding groups disrupting Council meetings as a means of gaining exposure for their concerns.

DISCUSSION

To ensure the well being of those attending meetings in the Council Chamber closed circuit cameras have been installed. When in use, these cameras allow activities in the Chamber to be monitored by the Commissionaire on duty at the front desk in City Hall. Should a problem become apparent the Commissionaire will summon police. The Municipal Clerk also has access to a telephone, which may be used to summon assistance in case of an emergency.

A Police call button, which sends an immediate alarm to Police Headquarters, is strategically positioned within the Council Chamber. If the call button is activated officers will immediately be dispatched to City Hall.

Scheduled public hearings can result in large numbers of the public attending Council. Fire regulations specify that the maximum capacity for the Chamber is 117 people in total. This maximum must be strictly adhered to in order to ensure public safety. In such cases the Municipal Clerk will monitor numbers attending Council.

Once fire load capacity has been reached, members of the public will be directed to a designated overflow area in Halifax Hall. In cases where there is more than one matter scheduled for Public Hearing, seating in the Chamber will be assigned based on the order in which each item is to be considered. Members of the public who have addressed Council during a Public Hearing will be asked by the Chair to vacate the Chamber, thus allowing those in the overflow area to come forward. Staff of the Municipal Clerk's Office will orchestrate the orderly progression of those speakers / spectators to and from the overflow area to the Chamber.

The Municipal Clerk will ensure that exits in the Chamber are not obstructed by individuals standing in the aisles or on the stairs during meetings.

In the case of groups or individuals attempting to disrupt sessions of Council, the meeting is to be immediately recessed and the Chamber vacated until such time as order has been restored.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

No budgetary implications at this time.

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. Maintain the status quo. This alternative is not recommended as a written protocol would provide clear direction during emergency situations, without unduly inhibiting public access to the proceedings of Council.
2. Council may wish to consider a more stringent security protocol.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix "A"

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:



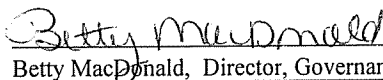
Jan Gibson, Municipal Clerk 490-4210

Financial Review:

N/A

[Barb Palmeter, Financial Consultant 490-7221

Report Approved by:



Betty MacDonald, Director, Governance and Strategic Initiatives

APPENDIX "A"

- Closed circuit cameras are activated during meetings of Council in the Chamber
- Commissionaire to monitor activities in the Chamber during meetings and summon Police if required.
- Police Call buttons to be utilized by CAO / Municipal Clerk should problems arise during Council meetings at the direction of the Chair.
- Fire occupancy capacity for the Chamber to be strictly monitored by the Municipal Clerk
- Halifax Hall is held in readiness for speaker / spectator overflow for Public Hearings in the Chamber
- Those wishing to participate in public hearings will be given seating preference in the Chamber during Council meetings
- Once seating capacity has been filled in the Chamber members of the public will be directed to the overflow area . Where there are multiple Public Hearings, seating will be assigned accordingly.
- Chair will ask speakers to exit the Chamber once they have addressed Council during public hearings to allow individuals waiting in the overflow area to enter the Chamber.
- Municipal Clerk to orchestrate the orderly progression of speakers / spectators from the overflow area to the Council Chamber as room becomes available.
- Municipal Clerk to ensure that exits in the Chamber are not obstructed by individuals standing or sitting in the aisles or on the stairs during meetings.
- Chair to immediately call for adjournment of the meeting should a group or individual attempt to disrupt proceedings and the Chamber shall be vacated by the Municipal Clerk until such time as order is restored.