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**Halifax Regional Council**  
**July 4, 2006**

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

**SUBMITTED BY:** Carol Macomber  
Carol Macomber, Acting Director  
Community, Culture and Economic Development

**DATE:** June 23, 2006

**SUBJECT:** Needham Bells Capital Budget Transfer

**INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

Halifax Regional Council, March 28, 2006 - Item 10.1.2, Bicentennial Theater - Capital Project. A staff report was requested for clarification on budgetary and work related issues regarding the Needham Memorial Bells

## **BACKGROUND**

On March 28, 2006 Regional Council approved a staff recommendation to reduce the Needham Memorial Bells Refurbishment capital project (CPG00485) by \$30,000 and a subsequent withdrawal of \$30,000 from the Heritage Reserve to assume cost-sharing funding for the Bicentennial Theatre capital project (CBG00300). The staff report focussed in large part on the rationale for additional funding to support the Bicentennial Theatre project. While Council supported the recommendation to support the additional funding, questions were raised as to why the Needham Bells project came in significantly under budget. Specifically, Council asked staff for clarification as to what work was completed as part of the Needham Bells refurbishment and why interpretation panels, as previously identified, had not been completed prior to the budget transfer.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Needham Hill Memorial Bells were constructed in 1984. In 2002, it was determined that some of the fourteen bells had become inoperative and a phased refurbishment project for the Bells was initiated. At the same time the need for adequate interpretive and directional signage to properly mark this significant historical site was identified.

A consultant was retained to assist in assessing the structural, mechanical and electrical systems of the Bells' operating system and the Memorial structure in order to determine a specific scope of the work required. In addition, a bell manufacturer was consulted to assist in assessing the specialised equipment. The Bells refurbishment project was managed by Real Property and Asset Management (RPAM) Capital Projects.

In order to determine the scope of work, investigation into the three major systems that operate the Bells was undertaken. These major systems include the keyboard, the control panel, and the internal electrical/mechanical solenoid mechanisms within each bell which force a striker against the bell when a particular key is struck. It was determined that specific refurbishment was required for these internal bell solenoid mechanisms.

During the Summer and Fall of 2004, the Bells' internal mechanical/electrical solenoids were refurbished and rewired, and exposed structural steel and concrete repairs were completed by Duron Atlantic. The cost to complete this work, including consultant fees, was approximately \$150,000. This work brought the Bells back to working order in time for the annual December 6<sup>th</sup> Halifax Explosion Memorial ceremony. This work concluded Phase I of the refurbishment project.

The scope of work for the Phase 2 control panel repair could not be determined until all of the bells were operating. Minor repairs were undertaken to place the panel into full service but due to control panel condition assessment, weather, contract document preparation, and tendering time major Phase 2 work was scheduled for the 2005/2006 fiscal year. \$50,000 was budgeted in the Heritage Reserve for the Phase 2 re-capitalization of the control panel. This budget was estimated based on the need to either replace control panels or refurbish the existing.

By March 2005, Recreation Tourism and Culture had been advised that a refurbishment or replacement of the control panel would not be required at that time as the control panel and bells continued to operate at a satisfactory level. Furthermore, it was felt that a further year of operation would conclusively determine whether or not the control panel required further upgrading. Until it could be conclusively determined whether the control panel required major refurbishment or replacement, a strategic decision was made to wait and monitor the Bells ongoing operation.

Since that time the Bells have been monitored and the operating and control systems are performing adequately. This rationalized the decision to reduce the project budget by \$30,000 in order to properly recapitalize the Bicentennial project. Unfortunately this budget reduction, and the rationale behind it, was not effectively communicated to the area Councillor prior to submitting the March 28 Council report.

Due to staff changes within CCED, the Needham signage project was not effectively advanced during the 2005-06 fiscal budget. In order to move the project forward, interpretive and directional signage for Fort Needham Park is identified for funding through the Heritage Reserve (account CDG00302 - Community Signage) as part of the 2006-07 capital budget. Signage for Fort Needham Park will be installed this year and will include interpretive panels and directional signage at the main entry points into the park. Staff have engaged a local historian and author who will assist with this project.

In addition, the area Councillor has facilitated the formation of a local group of citizens interested in the preservation and promotion of the Hydro-Stone area, which includes Fort Needham Park. Staff will continue to work with this citizen group to address issues and opportunities for the area, including ongoing improvements to the Hydro-Stone Park and preparation for the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Halifax Explosion in 2007.

### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

There are no budget implications as a result of the material discussed herein.

### **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**

No alternatives are suggested at this time.

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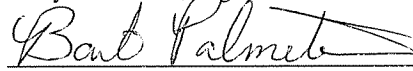
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A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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