

September 13, 2009

To: Chebucto Community Council

Dear Community Council members,

In February 2009, I wrote to Chebucto Community Council requesting review of the status of the Draft Checklist as it pertains to Trails built in HRM. As you will recall, this was presented to Chebucto Community Council in October 2006 and an HRM Staff Report was requested at that time. At your request, following the February 2009 meeting, I understand this was passed along to both the Bayers Lake Business Park Association and the Active Transportation Committee.

To date, I have not heard from either of these Groups. In the meantime, I notice that trail continues to be constructed in the region that could benefit from a review by HRM staff including planners, community development officers, and so on, using just such a Checklist. It was always the intent of our Trails Group, which developed the Checklist with the professional assistance of a Landscape Architect and using HRM funds acquired through Halifax Regional Trails, that the Checklist be discussed in an open and transparent way (perhaps through a focus group) by the end users – Parkland Planners, Trails Groups, Community Development Officers and, of course, Developers and builders and, perhaps, even the public or trail users. We hoped that a “Revised Checklist” would be accepted by HRM and used routinely by HRM staff when developers build trails and then hand them over to HRM for on-going maintenance.

As another trail building season comes to a close, it is indeed disappointing to conclude that this tool has been ignored. Many thousands of dollars of HRM funds are being used to rehabilitate trail, pathways and walkways that were not built to ‘standard’ in the past and present.

I hope that lack of communication does not represent lack of action. Perhaps one day there will be a tool that our group can feel we had some small input in helping save HRM taxpayers unnecessary trail maintenance and rehabilitation expenses as well as the inconvenience of this to the users, your public. The seeming lack of a transparent process or progress in this matter reflects poorly regarding HRM fiscal responsibility, and also on the value of volunteers and the collective community wisdom in developing trail policy. Again, I ask for your support in moving this issue forward in a timely manner.

Sincerely,

Bob McDonald
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Cc Shawnee Gregory