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Item No. 15.1.1
Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council
December 3, 2015

TO: Chair and Members of Harbour East - Marine Drive Community Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed
Brad Anguish, Director, Parks and Recreation

DATE: November 2, 2015

SUBJECT: Public Boat Launch – Dartmouth Shoreline

ORIGIN

August 7, 2014 Harbour East - Marine Drive Community Council motion:
MOVED by Councillor Karsten, seconded by Deputy Mayor Fisher, that Harbour East - Marine Drive Community Council request a staff report on the feasibility of a municipally owned public boat launch on the Dartmouth side of the Halifax Harbour.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

HRM Charter Section 79 (1) The Council may expend money required by the Municipality for:
(k) recreational programs; (x) lands and buildings required for a municipal purpose; (ah) playgrounds, trails, including trails developed, operated or maintained pursuant to an agreement made under clause 82(c), bicycle paths, swimming pools, ice arenas and other recreational facilities; and (ai) public grounds, squares, halls, museums, parks, tourist information centres and community centres.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Harbour East - Marine Drive Community Council request that Halifax Regional Council, by way of the Transportation Standing Committee, direct staff to incorporate public boat launch opportunities into planning considerations of future private or public land developments along the Dartmouth shore.

BACKGROUND

The Municipality provides facilities for public recreational boat launching at lakes and salt water bodies throughout the region. Recreational use of the Harbour is desirable from both an economic and recreational perspective as a means to animate the harbourfront for residents and increase visitors. Harbour East - Marine Drive Community Council requested a staff report regarding the feasibility for another municipally owned recreational boat access from the Dartmouth side of Halifax Harbour.

For clarity, this report deals with power marine boats and smaller daysailers capable of being trailered to the Harbour. There are currently multiple formal and informal opportunities to access the Harbour with human powered craft such as canoe/kayak, rowing boats and stand-up paddle boards. Most large power and sailing craft used on the Harbour are of a size and below-water-depth that they are launched and taken out once in a season using specialized equipment and skills. This is usually done at yacht clubs or commercial marine facilities.

Transport Canada was not able to supply an indication of how many trailered recreational boats are found in the area. These crafts can range in cost from approximately \$7000 to \$100,000 dollars and cost about 10% of their original capital cost to operate on an annual basis according to the National Marine Manufacturers Association.

DISCUSSION

Boat Launch Facilities

There are three types of locations to launch trailered recreation craft on the Harbour for power and small daysailer boaters:

1. Commercial Marine Facilities;
2. Yacht and Boat Clubs; and
3. Public Boat Ramps.

There are a number of these boat launch facilities available to recreational boaters located around the Harbour. These are identified on Attachment 1 of this report.

Commercial Marine Facilities

A few commercial boat yards and launches exist on the Harbour. These usually are oriented towards seasonal users who are putting in, mooring and pulling out their boats once a year and those seeking repairs. While a few of these locations allow the public to access the Harbour for a fee, public access is not typically permitted since it creates interference with the yard's primary activities of boat sales and repair. Another factor which restricts public access from commercial facilities is their limited hours of operation on weekends and evenings when boaters are typically looking for access. Finally, trailer and vehicle storage for day users was identified by some commercial marine operators as another challenge, again due to other operational priorities.

Yacht and Boat Clubs

The six local yacht clubs and marinas around the Harbour are better geared to allow public use of their launch facilities. Most clubs and marinas allow public access to their launches on a daily basis with fees ranging from \$35 to \$50 per day. Hours of access at boat clubs are also geared around the prime hours and seasons for boating on the Harbour. Boaters also have the option to join the clubs to enjoy access to the launch and other amenities. Research conducted with the Yacht Clubs indicates that most welcome both members and non-members to use boat launches. As a result, yacht clubs provide Harbour access to a significant sector of the boating public through their service to members.

Public Boat Launches

The four existing public boat launches provided by the Municipality and two by the Province (Waterfront Development Corporation) are well situated around the Harbour on a regional basis giving direct access to the Bedford Basin, Halifax Harbour channel and the North West Arm.

These public launches are located at:

- Africville Park (Access to Bedford Basin and Halifax Harbour channel);
- Alderney Marina (Access to Halifax Harbour channel);
- Jubilee Road Boat Launch (Access to North West Arm);
- Sir Sandford Fleming Boat Launch (Access to the North West Arm);
- Halifax Marina (Access to Halifax Harbour Channel); and
- Bedford Marina (Access to Bedford Basin).

Dartmouth Access

With particular reference to Dartmouth as outlined in the Community Council motion, there is currently one public boat launch on the Dartmouth side of the harbour. The public boat launch is located on the north side of Alderney Gate (60 Alderney Drive). The Alderney Marina is currently leased and operated by Onyx Property Management Incorporated. The boat launch remains public and is also used by patrons of the Marina. The launch is also used for training and emergency water access by Fire and Emergency Services and Halifax Regional Police Services. The adjacent parking lot is under the management of the Alderney Landing Board.

The Alderney site does have some deficiencies as a public boat launch, including:

- The site is not clearly visible from public streets and can be hard to find.
- Parking space for boat trailers is not available, creating logistical challenges for boaters.
- Vehicle circulation can be difficult due to the proximity of the adjacent CN rail line, public parking lot and taxi stand.
- The launch is sometimes not available for public use due to the potential requirement for Emergency Service use and use of the adjacent Alderney Plaza for festivals and concerts.
- The corridor to the open harbour is not well identified and can be challenging for users not familiar with the site.

Staff monitored the use of Alderney Marina this spring and summer and found it well used despite these deficiencies. When the launch is unavailable, or beyond the comfort of boaters, other public launch options are available 4 kms away at Africville and Jubilee Road and 6 kms away at Fleming Park. All have good access to the Harbour.

The lease agreement for Alderney Marina has been renewed. As well, the Alderney Landing management agreement will also be renewed in the short term. Staff will explore opportunities for improvements to signage and parking lot use with both Onyx Property Management and Alderney Landing Board to try to address some of the challenges.

A particular challenge associated with the Dartmouth side of the harbour is the limited number of parcels with good water access and direct public street frontage. Of the available sites, most have restricted public access as a result of the CN rail line stretching from Wrights Cove to Eastern Passage. Additionally, much of the Dartmouth Waterfront is dedicated to industrial, naval and commercial marine uses. These uses are generally not compatible with recreation boat usage and, as a result, the majority of the recreation boat launches are sited in areas to reduce potential conflicts between recreation boating and industrial harbour access.

Feasibility of Additional Dartmouth Public Launch

The feasibility of another public boat launch access in Dartmouth is directly tied to the need for additional access, as well as the alignment to Regional Council's mandate and priorities. As outlined in Attachment 1, the public is generally well served with access options through both public and private launches. The attraction of Halifax Harbour warrants the number of current facilities, but none of them appear to be overly subscribed at this point. There are no indications of insurmountable congestion at any of the launches.

In terms of alignment to Regional Council mandate and priorities, HRM provides recreation opportunities to residents through the provision of facilities, services and programs. While boating is a recreation activity, it is not typically an option for all residents. Further, provision of boat launch facilities to support motorized and large scale vessels is not fully aligned with Regional Council's Healthy Communities Priority which is more focussed on active recreation and reduced environmental impacts.

As noted above, the current Alderney public boat launch does provide public access to the Harbour but has some challenges. Better signage, coordination with the Alderney Landing parking lot, and better delineation would improve the situation for users. However, the restricted space, the need to keep the area clear for emergency use, and closure during events will continue to somewhat limit public use. Some of these matters may be able to be improved with new agreement for the property.

This analysis outlined the challenges and opportunities associated with any future requirements for public boat launches. The Harbour is an important asset for both recreational and commercial usage. As a result, opportunities for future launches along the Dartmouth Shore are limited. Attachment 2 outlines locations where future opportunities may exist. Therefore, it is recommended that staff to be directed to consider public boat launch opportunities in future planning of development of both private and public lands along the Dartmouth shore.

Siting Municipal Recreation Boat Launches

Outside of small canoe and kayak put-ins, siting a public boat launch can be a technical challenge with a number of factors to be examined. These include:

- Recreational boats come in many sizes, shapes and formats and launches must be scaled accordingly
- Vehicles and trailers require large areas to maneuver and park
- Sea bottom conditions/slope and ramp angles and wharf must allow vehicle and trailers to be backed into the water for launching
- Impact on local residential neighbourhoods must be considered as well as the impact that recreational boats can have on adjacent commercial and industrial use of the Harbour
- Exposure to prevailing winds, tide and currents are an important consideration

Most of these considerations should be identified and examined at the feasibility stage when siting a launching facility. The overall process required to site a public boat launch is outlined in Attachment 3. Insurmountable challenges would eliminate a site as a candidate. Surmountable challenges can be addressed in the detailed stage of facility design when a site is chosen to proceed

Summary

At this time, there does not appear to be a need to create another boat launch on the Dartmouth side as a priority over other recreation needs. As indicated, there are several public and private options for boaters. When the Alderney Marina is not available, there are a number of other options for boaters at public launches and Yacht Clubs are in reasonable proximity.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report. Should Regional Council decide to proceed, with an additional public boat launch, additional budget would be required. The cost implications of boat launches are site specific. Based on previous boat launch projects, the costs could range from \$200k to over \$1M. Staff recently completed implementation of the Lake Charlotte Boat Launch at a cost of approximately \$1.3M. Municipal experience has shown that facilities in marine environments are typically at the higher end of the cost range.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1: Harbour East - Marine Drive Community Council could choose to recommend that Regional Council direct staff to initiate the process to site an additional public boat launch in Dartmouth at this time.

Alternative 2: Harbour East - Marine Drive Community Council could choose to recommend that Regional Council amend any of the proposed sites for planning consideration for future public boat launch.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Consultation with various service providers was completed in preparation of this report. Community consultation would be incorporated into open space planning around potential future sites.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Map of Recreational Boat Launch Facilities around Halifax Harbour
Attachment 2 - Potential Boat Launch Sites along the Dartmouth Shore of Halifax Harbour
Attachment 3 – Process to Create a Halifax Harbour Municipal Boat Launch

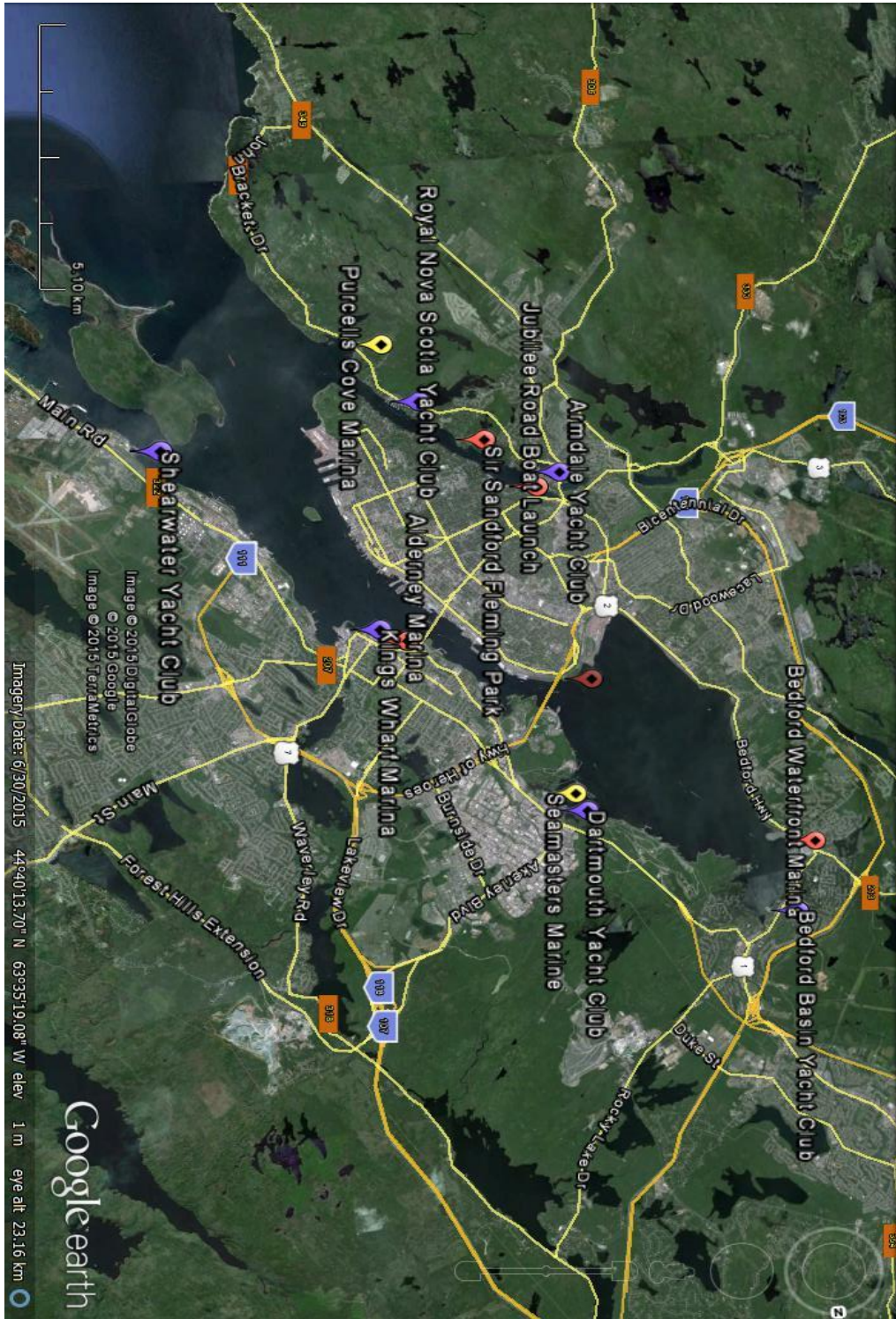
A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/cc.html> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by: Jan Skora, Planning Coordinator, Parks and Recreation (902-490-6783)

Attachment 1

Map of Recreational Boat Launch Facilities Around Halifax Harbour

Legend
Yellow = Commercial Marine Launch
Blue = Yacht and Boat Club Launch
Red = Public Boat Launch



Attachment 2: Potential Boat Launch Sites along the Dartmouth Shore of Halifax Harbour

An evaluation of all waterfront properties located on the Dartmouth side of Halifax Harbour was conducted for potential suitability as part of the feasibility exercise. From the list of properties, the following sites may present the best future opportunity to improve public access for a recreation boat launch.

Bancroft Lane located off Windmill Road

Two undeveloped municipal parcels are located near the intersection of Windmill Road and Wright Avenue. Access and visibility to the site are suitable and there is substantial water frontage. The area is sufficient to accommodate the required parking area. A portion of this land is being considered for a future Halifax Transit bus terminal which will improve exposure of the site. The channel in front of the site is navigable to commercial barges and watercraft so recreational craft should be able to be accommodated. Configuration and requirements for the channel would need to be evaluated.

Shore Road below McDonald Bridge off Windmill Road

This site is capable of accommodating boat launch infrastructure and the required parking area. Geotechnical stability would require further examination. As with most harbour sites on the Dartmouth side, this property would require negotiation of a public crossing of the CN railway line. The Halifax Bridge Commission has asked HRM in the past to refrain from allowing public access and use to ensure public safety, however the site appears large enough to locate most of the public infrastructure away from the bridge. For the time being the site is leased to local marine industrial interest. The property would figure into any long term plans for the development of the Dartmouth Waterfront.

King's Wharf Development in Dartmouth Cove

The parcel has existing natural shoreline, beach area and suitable characteristic for a boat launch but has no public street frontage. Access to the site is restricted by the CN corridor. Development of the adjacent Kings Wharf lands will provide future opportunities for development of vehicle access and park infrastructure. Currently negotiations are underway for the public parkland dedications for future phases of the development. The existing private Kings Wharf boat launch could be considered for dedication as a public facility. However, there would likely be constraints around trailer and vehicle storage.

Extension of Maitland Street ROW in Dartmouth Cove

The parcel is located at the extension of the Maitland Street. The existing land area is limited but the configuration and site improvements make the site generally suitable for a smaller boat launching facility. Access to the parcel is restricted by the railway track and access for a boat launch would need to be negotiated with CN. In the direct vicinity of this parcel, there is no municipal land suitable for the required parking area. However, future development of Dartmouth Cove could assist with that constraint in the future.

Shannon Park Property

The property is owned by Canada Lands and intended for future redevelopment. A significant portion of the property has a natural shoreline for recreation uses. Several areas have a suitable characteristic for boat launch infrastructure. The required parking space could be arranged in close proximity to the site. Public street access could be arranged from Princess Margaret Boulevard or Windmill Road subject to negotiation of railway track crossing with CN. Proper assessment of the navigation channel would be required due to past and present industrial activity in this area. Any recreation use of this channel would need to be evaluated in context of safety and functional requirements of the existing Tufts Cove Power Plant. Canada Lands have recently initiated a master plan for the property which would inform any potential future public access capabilities.

Attachment 3: Process to Create a Halifax Harbour Municipal Boat Launch

Any initiative to provide additional boat launch facilities on Halifax Harbour would require;

- Request submitted to the Transportation Standing Committee
- Consideration of Transportation Standing Committee and recommendation to Halifax Regional Council through a report.
- Consideration and direction to staff by Halifax Regional Council to develop a public boat launch
- Staff work including conducting a needs assessment, program development, site selection, stakeholder consultation and preliminary design necessary to define the project for budgetary consideration of Regional Council.
- Preparation of conceptual plans and budgets
- Capital Budget Approval for Facility Construction
- Detailed Design
- Federal Permit Process (Transportation Canada and Fisheries and Oceans)
- CN Rail Crossing Permit (if required)
- Tendering
- Construction
- Commissioning and Operations

Estimated time to complete would be 24 to 30 months depending time of year for construction and permitting processes.