




PO Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 10.1.1

North West Community Council
March 26, 2009

TO: Chair and Members of North West Community Council

SUBMITTED BY: 
Cathie O'Toole, CGA, Director, Finance

DATE: February 19, 2009

SUBJECT: Uniform Charge for Waterstone Neighbourhood Association

ORIGIN

Interim Area Rate Guidelines were adopted by Council in January 2000 to create a process to assist communities establish new area rates (or uniform charges), and to ensure that all taxpayers have an opportunity to participate in setting a rate. The Guidelines are also intended to ensure that rates are set only for valid municipal purposes and not for services already covered by the general rate.

The purpose of this report is to determine if the Interim Area Rate Guidelines have been satisfied thus far with regard to a proposed new uniform charge for the Waterstone Neighbourhood Association.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that North West Community Council recommend to Regional Council that:

A uniform charge of \$75.00 per property be approved to be applied against the properties within the mapped area depicted in Appendix A of this report for a three year period effective with the 2009-10 fiscal year for the purpose of funding the activities of the Waterstone Neighbourhood Association.

BACKGROUND

The Waterstone Neighbourhood Association (WNA) “represents the interests of the members of the Association and provides services to all residents of Waterstone Village. The Association works with residents and governments to maintain and enhance the quality of life within the community, through neighbourhood improvement programs, recreational facility development, environmental improvement and various social activities.” The WNA has been registered with the Registry of Joint Stock Companies since January 6, 2006. Waterstone Village is located in Lucasville in District 19.

The WNA has developed a three year plan for the development of recreational amenities for the community. Details of the plan are provided in Appendix B of this report. It is proposed that the community’s share of the funding would come from a uniform charge of \$75 per property for a three year period commencing in 2009.

DISCUSSION

The current status of this uniform charge in terms of the Interim Area Rate Guidelines is as follows:

1. ***Area rates can only be used for the provision of services within the municipal mandate; services traditionally provided by the municipality.***

Section 65 (ag) of the Municipal Government Act states that “Council may expend money required by the municipality for playgrounds, trails, bicycle paths, swimming pools, ice arenas and other recreational facilities.” The Halifax Regional Municipality and its predecessor municipal units have traditionally funded, either entirely or partially through partnerships, the construction and ongoing operating costs of recreation facilities.

2. ***Area rates are not to be used to provide different levels of a municipal service within urban and suburban areas where said service is covered by the general tax rate.***

The community to which the uniform charge would be applied is within the suburban area of HRM. The WNA is not duplicating any services provided directly by HRM to Waterstone Village.

3. ***In order for a proposed new area rate to move to the process as outlined in #4 below, it must have the support of the area's Councillor(s).***

The catchment area for this uniform charge falls entirely within District 19. The Councillor for the District, Brad Johns, conducted a vote of all community households in May and June 2008 to determine if there was support from a majority of the community for the uniform charge. The results of the vote are indicated below. Having determined that sufficient support existed, he

has requested staff prepare a report in compliance with Step 5 of the Interim Area Rate Guidelines for consideration at the next meeting of the North West Community Council.

- 4. *Proposals for new area rates must be advertised publicly, clearly identifying affected areas, the purpose for the rate, rate information and the duration the rate is expected to be charged. A public meeting will be held and those attending the meeting will be informed of the rationale for the rate and consulted on its appropriateness.***

An information package including a ballot was mailed to the owners of the 188 taxable properties identified within the proposed catchment area. A map of the proposed catchment area is provided in Appendix A of this report, and a copy of the information package is provided in Appendix B. The information package included details of the purpose and amount of the uniform charge, and the date, time and location of a public information meeting which was held on June 4, 2008. The results of the ballot are shown below.

Tabulation of Ballots

Total For Uniform Charge:	70
Total Against Uniform Charge:	7
Total Ballots Distributed:	188
Total Ballots Returned:	77
% Respondents voting For:	90.9%
% Respondents voting Against:	9.1%
Response Rate:	41.0%

- 5. *With the concurrence of the Councillor, the request is forwarded to the Community Council for review and a recommendation to Halifax Regional Council. Where a Community Council does not exist, the request will go directly to Halifax Regional Council.***

The purpose of this report is to provide the North West Community Council with the necessary information required to consider making a recommendation to Halifax Regional Council for initiating this uniform charge within the proposed catchment area. The implications to the Municipality are identified under the Budget Implications section which follows.

- 6. *Any proposed new area rates recommended by a Community Council (or, in the absence of a Community Council, the Councillor for the area) will be submitted to Halifax Regional Council through a staff report with a recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer. The staff report will identify the implications to the Municipality along with the results of any public meeting.***
- 7. *Halifax Regional Council is responsible for approving all area rates.***

Completion of steps 6 and 7 are contingent on the North West Community Council approving the Recommendation contained in this report.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The uniform charge would take effect in the 2009/10 fiscal year. As all funding is from the uniform charge (ie. no transfers from the general tax rate), there would be no impact on the HRM General Operating Budget at any time in the future. There is also no impact on the Capital or Reserve Budgets.

The uniform charge of \$75 per property applied to the 191 properties in Waterstone Village would provide \$14,325 in revenue in 2009.

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

Community Council could decide not to implement the uniform charge.

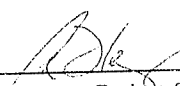
ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Map of Catchment Area for Proposed Uniform Charge for Waterstone Neighbourhood Association

Appendix B: Copy of Ballot and Information Package mailed to Property Owners

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 : Gordon Roussel, Financial Consultant, Finance 490-6468

Report Approved by: 
Paul Fleming, Manager, Budget & Financial Analysis 490-7203