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**Item No. 2**  
**Halifax & West Community Council**  
**December 16, 2014**

**TO:** Chair and Members of Halifax & West Community Council

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed  
Brad Anguish, Director, Parks & Recreation

**DATE:** December 5, 2014

**SUBJECT:** **Public Washrooms, change facilities, fountains and showers at Chocolate Lake Beach**

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**INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

October 14, 2014 - Halifax & West Community Council passed a motion requesting a staff report exploring the possibility of keeping the public washroom, change facilities and fountain/shower open before and after the supervised beach season at Chocolate Lake Beach and to enable the facilities to be open after 5 p.m. for the entire summer.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

*Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, sections 79(1)(k) "The Council may expend money required by the Municipality for.. recreational programs".*

**BACKGROUND**

Chocolate Lake Beach is the municipality's busiest urban beach park with approximately 12,630 people attending the beach in the summer of 2014 (July 1-Aug 31).

Although this site has been one of the best attended beaches in the municipality, washrooms and change facilities were below standard. The only available washrooms were an old concrete "outhouse" built over 30 years ago supplemented by two portable washrooms.

In 2014, a new accessible change room & washroom facility with an outdoor shower was constructed as a part of the approved Capital plan in 2013/14. Restoration of the parking lot and accessible pathways to the beach were constructed along with newly resurfaced tennis and basketball courts. As well, there is a playground that was newly built the summer of 2013.

Originally it was contemplated that the facility may only be opened annually from July 1st – August 31<sup>st</sup> during HRM's Beach Supervision Program when lifeguards are on duty. Since the opening of this new complex, residents have been requesting access to the washroom/change facilities prior to the official opening of the HRM beach season and after the closing of beaches (August 31<sup>st</sup>), as well as extended hours during the Beach Supervision season to accommodate swimmers and tennis players. Many residents who work during the day would like to utilize these facilities in the early evening, including the change rooms and washrooms while enjoying the beach after 5 p.m.

**DISCUSSION**

As part of the Parks & Recreation's post-season review, staff explored options for increasing access to the new washroom/change facilities. Staff is pleased to report that starting in 2015/16, staff will be opening the Chocolate Lake Beach public washroom/change facilities from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., May 1 to October 31 annually. Staff considered the following information in determining the new operating hours:

- 1) HRM has several other facilities that open for the season during similar times (as residents have requested of the Chocolate Lake facilities).
- 2) The extended season and hours could be accommodated within the existing budget at no additional cost by using another vendor that is available through Operational Support, Facility Services.
- 3) The season could be extended year-round as the facility does have in-floor heating, however this would not be recommended as the use of the facility at this location is dependent on the use of the beach, tennis courts and play area that would not be accessible during the winter. There would also be significant costs associated with snow removal, utilities and continued janitorial and security services during the winter season.
- 4) There is a risk of vandalism in extending the hours past 8:00 p.m. During the summer of 2014, after the opening of the new facilities, the site experienced acts of vandalism. This vandalism was done during the day when the beach was being supervised. While staff at the location complete frequent spot checks, they are not able to keep visual contact with the facility at all times as there is a significant distance and large hill between the guarded beach and the washroom/change rooms. There is a concern in the absence of staff (and during later hours of operation) that there may be more risk of vandalism. This issue has been experienced at other locations later in the evening when these facilities have remained open. During the construction of the new change rooms/washrooms, wiring for video surveillance was installed. Parks & Recreation staff is exploring the installation of video surveillance and signage as a further deterrent. Staff will also be ensuring that signs are posted advising patrons to call 311 if/when they see any vandalism.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

None

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

None

**ATTACHMENTS**

None

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/index.php> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

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