HALIFAX
REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No.

Executive Standing Committee
October 31, 2011

TO: Chair and Members of Executive Standing Committee

SUBMITTED BY:

_____

Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: September 30, 2011

SUBJECT: **2012 HRM Citizen Priority Survey**

ORIGIN

At the June 27, 2011 meeting of the Executive Standing Committee, the 2012 Citizen Priority Survey work plan was endorsed. As per the work plan, this report includes a draft Survey for Executive Standing Committee consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Executive Standing Committee:

1.   Endorse the proposed draft 2012 Citizen Priority Survey (Attachment A);
2.   Forward a report containing the originating June 27, 2011 staff report and this report to Regional Council with a recommendation to approve the proposed draft survey; and
3.   Authorize staff to distribute the proposed draft 2012 Citizen Priority Survey to all members of Regional Council.

BACKGROUND

On June 27, 2011 the Executive Standing Committee endorsed a long term survey cycle, the 2012 Survey Development Work Plan, and the 2012 Survey Schedule as per the tables below.

Long Term Survey Cycle

Year	Survey Type	Reporting Time Frame
2010	Full Priority and Satisfaction	April 2010
2012	Community Priority/Expectations	April 2012
2013	Service Satisfaction	April 2013
2015	Service Satisfaction	April 2015
2016	Community Priority/Expectations	April 2016
2017	Service Satisfaction	April 2017
2019	Service Satisfaction	April 2019
2020	Community Priority/Expectations	April 2020

2012 Survey Development Work Plan

Date/Period	Work Plan Action/Deliverable
June – August 2011	Staff review 2010 community priority questions and apply "lessons learned" to re-work, add, or delete questions.
August – October 2011	Distribute draft 2012 questions to Executive Standing Committee to solicit feedback/ideas on questions.
September 2011	RFP for Survey (standard procurement process).
November 2011	Submit final questions to Executive Standing Committee for endorsement/recommendation to Regional Council.
November 2011	Award contract to successful proponent.
December 2011	Finalize survey content with successful proponent and commence communications.

Supplement to Survey Development Work Plan
Staff is recommending that the proposed draft 2012 Citizen Priority Survey be distributed to members of Regional Council for awareness and feedback prior to formal submission to Regional Council by the Executive Standing Committee. This will provide all members of Council with an opportunity to fully consider the content of the survey and provide feedback in advance of Regional Council consideration for approval.

2012 Survey Schedule

Milestone	Completion Date
Survey pre-test / Finalize Survey	December 16th
Survey distribution	January 3rd
Close survey	January 31st
Data analysis	March 31st
Preliminary Report to Executive Standing Committee	March 31st
Final Report to Council	April, 2012

Benefits of a Survey
There are a number of benefits associated with conducting surveys, but perhaps the most important reason for surveying is that it gives a voice to a random cross section of the community,

not just those who choose to make their voice heard through public hearings, letters to the Municipality, or calls to their councillor. The survey represents an opportunity to hear from the community at-large, and avoids the risk associated with relying on the feedback from the self-selecting public.

There are a number of benefits associated with conducting a community priority/expectations survey:

- Best-practice of leading cities and municipalities to solicit feedback from a random and representative sample of citizens region-wide;

- Enables identification of the variable(s) with the most influence on citizen's perception of HRM, and identification of the themes most affecting residents quality of life;

- Provides an assessment of community priorities and need(s), identifies broad community issues, and enables Council and staff to align service delivery to meet specific community and planning needs;

- Results will help to inform discussions during business planning, enabling better allocation of resources for maximum community benefit and improved policy development and decision making;

- Fulfils a commitment made as part of HRM's Economic Strategy to undertake citizen surveys on a regular basis.

DISCUSSION

As per the above Work Plan, staff have reviewed the survey conducted in 2010 and developed a proposed 2012 Citizen Priority Survey for Executive Standing Committee consideration and recommendation to Regional Council. The proposed draft survey is attached for review by the Executive Standing Committee.

All HRM Business Units were consulted regarding their areas of responsibility and their feedback has been incorporated in the draft survey. In addition, a draft was circulated to the members of the Executive Standing Committee for input. Five members responded with feedback which was incorporated in the attached draft survey for the Committee's consideration.

It should be noted that some wording or formatting changes may be recommended by the successful proponent selected to conduct the survey on HRM's behalf. As a result, staff is requesting the approval of the survey generally, with the expectation that the final version may need to be amended somewhat to reflect industry standard surveying techniques, without changing the intent or subject of the questions.

Proposed 2012 Survey Methodology and Work Plan
Staff proposes to use the same methodology for conducting the 2012 survey as was used in 2010, including the same time frames (January/February). However, it is proposed that because this survey is intended to measure priorities at a Regional level, it is recommended that the size of the

survey population can be reduced from 27,000 to 12,000. With a projected 10% response rate, this is estimated to provide HRM with 1,200 responses, representative of the general population of HRM and accurate to within +/- 3%, 95% of the time. This change in sample size results in a cost savings of ~$25,000 compared with a larger sample survey, with no significant loss in accuracy of the findings. The selected population sampling methodology should also allow the survey to provide results at a Community Council level, albeit at a lower level of accuracy.

It is estimated that the survey will take approximately ten weeks to complete, with results presented to Regional Council in April 2012.

Social Media Use
During the June 27, 2011 Executive Committee meeting staff were asked to look at how Calgary and Regina were using social media to engage their citizens.

Social media has proven to be an excellent tool for municipalities to engage with citizens online and HRM is currently finalizing a draft Social Media Policy and Guidelines as well as developing a strategy for how the Municipality will engage residents online. The objective of this Social Media Policy is to encourage the safe, creative and effective use of social media by HRM employees while ensuring it complies with all applicable laws and all HRM policies and procedures. In researching best practices for how HRM will use social media to engage residents, staff have looked at, and are continuing to monitor, how municipalities across Canada have been successfully using it. Calgary and Regina were among the municipalities reviewed and both communicate with their citizens via websites, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. Neither of them have attempted to use social media as a survey tool, in fact their primary use of social media is to push information and they include disclaimers that indicate they do not consider this information to be used for official decision-making.

When municipal government staff wish to communicate with citizens through social media channels, it is comparable to having a discussion in a grocery store. It is not a formal process and does not constitute a formal method of collecting information for making decisions. Online discussions will be skewed to the demographic using social media. Therefore, online dialogue can be used to inform analysis; however, it will not be used as the primary research tool.

In order to ensure we have results which accurately represent the views of our total population, including geographic representation, a statistically reliable survey method will be used where each resident has an equal chance of being chosen randomly. This will provide Council with confidence that they are getting results that are accurate and results which can be extended to the greater population, subsequently allowing Council to make decisions based on the collective views of HRM citizens.

A multi-media, integrated communication campaign is being developed to inform residents of HRM's 2012 Citizen Priority Survey and encourage them to use this as an opportunity to provide their feedback to the municipality. Part of that plan will include leveraging existing social media channels and networks HRM hosts, such as the Good Neighbours Great Neighbourhoods Facebook page, to encourage residents to participate if randomly chosen. We will also encourage Councillors and staff to promote it through their own social media networks.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

It is expected that the total cost to conduct the 2012 survey will be $77,200 (plus net HST of $2,355) as follows:

Item	Estimated Cost
Mailing	$15,250
Printing	$7,500
Consultant	$47,450
Advertising/Promotion	$6,750
Estimated Total	**$77,200**

All of the above costs are included in the 2011/12 Approved Budget under Cost Centre A302.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Project and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Project and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ALTERNATIVES
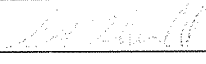
1. The Executive Standing Committee could recommend to Regional Council that a 2012 Citizen Survey not be conducted.

2. The Executive Standing Committee could amend the proposed citizen survey.

3. The Executive Standing Committee could adjust the survey development work plan and/or schedule.

ATTACHMENTS
Attachment A – Proposed 2012 Citizen Priority Survey

Report Approved by:	_____
	Ed Thornhill, Manager, Corporate Planning, 490-4480
Report Approved by:	_____
	James Cooke, Director of Finance/CFO, 490-6308

Attachment A – Proposed 2012 HRM Citizen Priority Survey

PROPOSED 2012 HRM Citizen Priority Survey

QUALITY OF LIFE

1.   **How many years have you lived in the HRM?** _____
     (Includes prior to amalgamation)

2.   **On a scale of 1 (very poor) to 4 (very good), how would you rate the overall quality of life in HRM?** _____
     1 – Very Poor
     2 – Poor
     3 – Good
     4 – Very Good

3.   **I feel that the quality of life in HRM has _____ in the past five years (check one).**
     ☐   Improved
     ☐   Worsened
     ☐   Stayed the Same

4.   **If HRM could do 3 things to improve the quality of life for residents, what would they be?**

_____

_____

_____

5. **Do you feel that you have sufficient opportunity to participate in local decision-making?**
    ☐   YES
    ☐   NO

6. **If you answered NO to question 5, what sort of things can HRM do to help you become more involved / make your voice heard?**

_____

_____

_____

VALUE FOR TAXES

7. **Thinking about all the programs and services you receive from the Municipality, on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree) would you say that you receive good value for the level of property taxes that you currently pay? _____**
    1 – Strongly Disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Agree
    4 – Strongly Agree
    5 – Don't know
    6 – Don't pay property taxes

8. **What specific improvement(s) would lead you to feel you get better value for the property tax you pay?**

_____

_____

_____

9. **When the Municipality is creating the municipal budget, do you think it is more important to keep property taxes low or keep municipal services the same or higher?**
    ☐   Keep property taxes low

☐   Keep municipal services the same or higher

10. **What type of change, if any, would you be willing to accept in tax and service levels in HRM?**
☐   Small increase in taxes for a small improvement / increase in service levels
☐   Moderate increase in taxes for a moderate improvement / increase in service levels
☐   Large increase in taxes for a large improvement / increase in service levels
☐   Small decrease in taxes for a small decrease in service levels
☐   Moderate decrease in taxes for a moderate decrease in service levels
☐   Large decrease in taxes for a large decrease in service levels
☐   Same taxes with same level of Municipal services
☐   Same taxes but shift funds between services
☐   Don't know
☐   No opinion

11. **In an effort to reduce reliance on land fill capacity, HRM must consider waste strategy options to reduce the amount of material going into the land fill. Of the following options, which would you be most likely to support:**
☐   Bag limits (maximum number of black bags per household per pick-up)
☐   User Pay (fee charged based on the number of black bags picked up)
☐   Diversion "incentives" (rebates for green bin and blue bag use)
☐   A combination of Bag Limits and User Pay
☐   A combination of User Pay and Diversion "incentives"
☐   A combination of Bag Limits and Diversion "incentives"
☐   A combination of all three.

THE ECONOMY

12. **If you were given the choice of where to focus spending over the next five (5) years to improve <u>ECONOMIC PROSPERITY</u> in the HRM, what would be your TOP THREE priorities?**

Please place a (1) beside your top priority, a (2) beside your second highest priority, and a (3) beside your third highest priority

**For example: Increase Public Safety: 1 **

Change in tax structure	
Improvements in the appearance / beautification of the Municipality	
Improvements to HRM's roadway system / road conditions	

Increased cleanliness of the Municipality (graffiti removal, vandalism, etc.)	
Increased efforts to attract immigrants / new residents	
Increased efforts to attract and retain young workers/professionals	
Increased marketing of HRM as a destination of choice for business	
Increased public safety	
Investments in public transit system	
More emphasis on arts, culture and major events	
More emphasis on downtown growth	
More emphasis on 'rural' growth	
More emphasis on recreation facilities	
More emphasis on recreation services	
New stadium	
Nothing	
Don't know	
Other (please specify):	

INFRASTRUCTURE

13. **If forced to choose, which of the following would you rather see the HRM focus on, with respect to spending on facilities, assets, and infrastructure:**
    - ☐ Invest a greater proportion toward new facilities, assets, and infrastructure
    - ☐ Invest a greater proportion toward fixing and maintaining the existing facilities, assets, and infrastructure

14. **The Municipality spends a portion of its yearly budget on new buildings, facilities, and infrastructure to meet both growth requirements and community expectations. Please rank your TOP THREE (3) projects according to which you feel are the <u>most important capital projects</u> that you would like to see the Municipality pursue over the next 5 years.**

    HOW: Please place a (1) beside your top priority, a (2) beside your second highest priority, and a (3) beside your third highest priority.

    For example: Arts and Cultural Facilities _1_

Project	Ranking
Active transportation improvements (Bike lanes)	
Arenas / Ice surfaces	
Arts and cultural facilities	

Build landfill cells (garbage waste site)	
Community beautification (landscaping / floral displays, etc.)	
Community centres	
Construction of new sidewalks / upgrades to existing sidewalks	
Develop capability to reduce waste program costs and flexibility in waste program to reduce the demand for additional land fill cells.	
Expanding the harbour ferry network	
Improve condition of existing streets / roads	
Improve existing recreation facilities	
Improve response time by building new fire stations	
Invest in expanding recycling infrastructure	
More buses on existing routes to improve services	
More buses so that service can be expanded to new areas	
New compost plant to meet capacity and regulatory requirements	
New outdoor recreation facilities (playgrounds / bike parks / sports fields, etc.)	
New / refurbished community branch libraries	
Outdoor skating facilities	
Public restrooms	
Redevelopment of downtown core - Dartmouth	
Redevelopment of downtown core - Halifax	
Renewable energy projects (e.g. wind farms / solar power / etc.)	
New Stadium	
Upgrade major roadways to provide increased capacity (e.g. road widening, reversing lanes)	
Water / Wastewater facilities	
Other (please specify):	

15. What existing facilities, assets, and infrastructure would you would like to see HRM focus on maintaining?

HOW: Please place a (1) beside your top priority, a (2) beside your second highest priority, and a (3) beside your third highest priority, and so on until your Top 5 are ranked.

For example: Parks / Playgrounds: _1_

Arenas / ice surfaces	
Arts and cultural facilities	
Beaches and waterfront areas	
Bike paths / walking trails	

Compost and recycling plants	
Fire stations / fire trucks and equipment	
Harbour ferry service	
Indoor recreation facilities (e.g. pools / multi-purpose facilities / etc.)	
Landfills (garbage dumps)	
Libraries	
Metro Centre	
Outdoor recreation facilities (e.g. sports fields / ball diamonds / etc.)	
Parks / playgrounds	
Public transit facilities	
Public transit vehicles	
Public restrooms	
Sidewalk maintenance	
Skateboard / bike parks	
Street and road maintenance (e.g. repaving / pavement condition management)	
Water / wastewater facilities	
Other (please specify):	

PLANNING AND GROWTH

16. **How would you describe the location of your current neighbourhood?**
    - ☐ **Within the Regional Centre (Halifax peninsula and Dartmouth within the circumferential highway)**
    - ☐ **Within a suburban area**
    - ☐ **Within a rural area**

17. **What can HRM do to make the downtown more attractive for residents and businesses?**

    _____

    _____

    _____

18. **_"Quality of place"_ describes how liveable and functional a neighbourhood is. Typical quality of place factors include: beautiful streetscapes and public space, trees and greenery, convenient proximity to transit and amenities, quality of home and building design, pedestrian and bicycle friendliness, and more. Thinking about the quality of place factors within HRM's mandate:**

What were the top 3 quality of place factors that led to your choice to live in your current neighbourhood? (In order, starting with the most influential)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

19. **If you were to move from your current neighbourhood to the Regional Centre (or to another part of the Regional Centre if you already live there), what are the top 3 quality of place factors that would be key to that decision? (In order, starting with the most influential)**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

20. **As the Halifax Regional Municipality continues to grow traffic congestion is expected to increase. To help mitigate this problem, what priority would you assign to each of the following strategies: (1= Very Low, 5= Very High)**

Improve public transit system	
Add vehicle lanes on congested roads (i.e. Bayers Road, etc.)	
Improve bike lane network	
Establish tolls into downtown to encourage commuters to use public transit	
Create more reversing lanes on major routes (i.e. Quinpool Rd, Robie St., etc.)	
Increase population density in city centres to reduce amount of driving required to commute and access services	
Invest in commuter rail if feasible	
Encourage residents to consider sustainability when making their choices	
Do nothing	
Other (please specify): _____	

21. **The cost of delivering municipal services is rising, and even maintaining some service levels costs more. Maintaining or increasing some service levels without additional revenues may require reducing or eliminating other services. Considering the financial implications of service delivery, what would you like the Municipality to do in the following service areas? (Check your preference for each service)**

Service Area	Increase service levels (+$$)	Maintain service levels (+$)	Reduce service levels (-$)	Eliminate this service (-$$)
Animal Control Services	☐	☐	☐	☐
Arts and Cultural programming	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bike path / walking trails maintenance	☐	☐	☐	☐
By-law Enforcement	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cleanliness and litter control	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communications / Public Affairs	☐	☐	☐	☐
Community beautification (e.g. landscaping / floral displays)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Community Branch Libraries	☐	☐	☐	☐
Community Grants	☐	☐	☐	☐
Composting (green bin) programs (increased pick up)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Economic development	☐	☐	☐	☐
Environmental protection and management	☐	☐	☐	☐
Festivals and community events	☐	☐	☐	☐
Firefighting services	☐	☐	☐	☐
Garbage collection	☐	☐	☐	☐
Graffiti removal	☐	☐	☐	☐
Green cart compost collection	☐	☐	☐	☐
Harbour Ferry Service	☐	☐	☐	☐
Major street improvement projects (i.e. street reconstruction and traffic safety measures)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ongoing regular parks maintenance	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ongoing regular street maintenance (e.g. repaving / pothole filling)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Park / playground maintenance	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parking Enforcement	☐	☐	☐	☐
Police protection and patrols	☐	☐	☐	☐
Processing garbage before going to landfill	☐	☐	☐	☐
Public Transit Service	☐	☐	☐	☐
Publicly supervised beaches	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recreation programs	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recycling programs	☐	☐	☐	☐
School crossing guards	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sidewalk maintenance	☐	☐	☐	☐
Snow and ice removal	☐	☐	☐	☐
Youth drop-in services	☐	☐	☐	☐

COMMUNICATION

22. **Please indicate what mediums you currently use to receive the majority of your information about HRM (check all that apply):**
    - ☐ Television
    - ☐ Radio
    - ☐ Newspaper
    - ☐ HRM Publications (e.g. Naturally Green Newsletter)
    - ☐ Social networking (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)
    - ☐ www.halifax.ca
    - ☐ Other online sources

23. **Given your answer to Question 22, can you provide any more information on your chosen medium? (For example, if you chose television or radio, what station do you watch / listen to? If you chose online, what websites do you frequent?)**

    _____

    _____

    _____

24. **What aspects of the Municipality would you like more information about? (check all that apply)**
    - ☐ Infrastructure projects
    - ☐ Arts and Culture
    - ☐ Mayor and Council
    - ☐ Events and festivals
    - ☐ Recreation services
    - ☐ Grant / funding information
    - ☐ Recycling / garbage collection
    - ☐ Public transit
    - ☐ Employment / volunteer opportunities
    - ☐ Budget / financial / taxes
    - ☐ Community safety
    - ☐ Public consultations
    - ☐ Resources to improve your neighbourhood

25. **Would you use social networking sites to communicate with the Municipality about your chosen answers to Question 24?**
    - ☐ YES
    - ☐ NO

26. **If yes, what social networking websites do you subscribe to and use?**
    - ☐ Facebook
    - ☐ Google +
    - ☐ YouTube
    - ☐ Twitter
    - ☐ LinkedIn
    - ☐ Other: _____
    - ☐ None

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

27. **What do you like most about living in HRM?**

    _____

    _____

    _____

28. **In your opinion, what are the <u>top three issues</u> facing the HRM over the next 5 years that you feel should receive the greatest attention from your Municipal leaders?**

    1. _____

    2. _____

    3. _____

29. **Are there any additional things you can think of that have not been addressed in the survey that you think HRM should consider when attempting to balance the expectations of residents with the need to deliver critical programs and services?**

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Our last questions are about you and your household. As a reminder, your response to this survey is anonymous, and the results of the survey will be reported in group form only.

30. What area of HRM do you live in?

☐   District 1 - Eastern Shore / Musquodoboit Valley
☐   District 2 - Waverley – Fall River – Beaver Bank
☐   District 3 - Preston – Lawrencetown – Chezzetcook
☐   District 4 - Cole Harbour
☐   District 5 - Dartmouth Centre
☐   District 6 - East Dartmouth - The Lakes
☐   District 7 - Portland - East Woodlawn
☐   District 8 - Woodside - Eastern Passage
☐   District 9 - Albro Lake – Harbourview
☐   District 10 - Clayton Park West
☐   District 11 - Halifax North End
☐   District 12 - Halifax Downtown
☐   District 13 - Northwest Arm - South End
☐   District 14 - Connaught - Quinpool
☐   District 15 - Fairview / Clayton Park
☐   District 16 - Rockingham – Wentworth
☐   District 17 - Purcell's Cove – Armdale
☐   District 18 - Spryfield – Herring Cove
☐   District 19 - Middle and Upper Sackville - Lucasville
☐   District 20 - Lower Sackville
☐   District 21 - Bedford
☐   District 22 - Timberlea – Prospect
☐   District 23 - Hammonds Plains – St. Margaret's
☐   Don't know
☐   NOT a resident of HRM

If you don't know which District you reside in, you can find out by visiting the Municipality's website at: http://eservices.halifax.ca/districtLookup/ and input your address.

This information will remain anonymous, and will be used for analytical purposes only.

31. What is your postal code? _____

32. Are you female or male?
☐   Female
☐   Male

33. How old are you?
- ☐ 18 – 24 years old
- ☐ 25 – 34 years old
- ☐ 35 – 44 years old
- ☐ 45 – 54 years old
- ☐ 55 – 64 years old
- ☐ 65 – 75 years old
- ☐ Older than 75 years

34. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- ☐ Elementary school / Junior high school (Grade 8)
- ☐ Some high school
- ☐ Graduated high school
- ☐ Some community college / technical school
- ☐ Graduate community college / technical school
- ☐ Some university
- ☐ Graduated university
- ☐ Post-graduate

35. What is your total annual household income, before taxes?
- ☐ Under $25,000
- ☐ $25,000 - $49,999
- ☐ $50,000 - $74,999
- ☐ $75,000 – $99,999
- ☐ $100,000 - $124,999
- ☐ $125,000 - $149,999
- ☐ Over $150,000

36. Do you own or rent your home?
- ☐ Own (includes live with parents)
- ☐ Rent

37. If you answered that you own your own home in Question 36, your most recent annual property tax bill is?
- ☐ Under $1,000
- ☐ Between $1,000 and $1,500
- ☐ Between $1,500 and $2,000
- ☐ Between $2,000 and $3,000
- ☐ Between $3,000 and $4,000
- ☐ Over $4,000
- ☐ Don't Know
- ☐ No answer

COMMENTS OR FEEDBACK

Is there something missing from the survey that you would like to see addressed in the future, or is there any feedback that you would like to provide the Municipality?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

PRIZE DRAW:

Please enter your contact information to be eligible to win movie passes to Empire Theatres.

To be eligible for the contest, you must answer all of the questions on the survey.

Name: _____

Tel. #:   _____

Address: _____

_____

Thank you very much for your participation. Your time and effort is appreciated, and we will take every effort to ensure that your input is reflected in the decision-making efforts for the Municipality.

Results will be presented to Council once analyzed, and a full report on the results will be available on HRM's website.