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Item No.
Community Planning and Economic Development Committee
December 17, 2015

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: **Original Signed by:**

Bruce Zvaniga, P. Eng, Director, Transportation and Public Works

DATE: September 3, 2015

SUBJECT: Graffiti Operational Stakeholder Group - Update

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Regional Council, November 18, 2014, Item 11.3.1: Council requested a staff report to include an update on the creation of an internal Operational Stakeholder Group which was directed to be established by motion of Regional Council on October 23, 2012 Item 11.1.4.

The request also detailed that the report should include information on possible changes to the structure of the Stakeholder Group including consideration of whether the group should fall under the responsibility of the Public Safety Office versus Transportation and Public Works. In the review, Council also requested a validation of both internal and external stakeholders on a go-forward basis.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter
Chapter 39 of The Acts of 2008
Part XV Dangerous Or Unsightly Premises

BACKGROUND

On October 23, 2012, as detailed in Council minutes Item No 11.1.4, Council accepted Staff's recommendations to rescind the Graffiti Management Plan and to disband the Graffiti Task Force in favor of the establishment of an Operational Stakeholder Group comprised of staff representatives and various partner agencies and community groups to take on the outstanding issues. Further, it was suggested that the Group meet quarterly for the first year to design a stakeholder agreement, and then be reduced to semi-annually to discuss any outstanding issues or concerns.

Consistent with the preceding Graffiti Management Plan, the Graffiti Abatement Plan contains the four key objectives as well as the lead agencies responsible for each: Graffiti Removal (TPW Road Operations and Construction); Education and Civic Responsibility (combination of HRP, Parks & Recreation, Planning & Development and Corporate Communications); Enforcement (HRP); and finally, Reporting and Communications (TPW/ROC with input from all to create standardized reporting).

As a result of multiple departmental changes, the full stakeholder group had not previously met as a whole, however, a majority of the key issues envisioned to require continued efforts have been progressing. Notable of these efforts has been the quarterly capturing of data and reporting of the identified reporting points to the DCAO office, including:

- a) number of reported incidences of graffiti on HRM assets; partner assets and private property
- b) number of incidences of graffiti removed from HRM assets; partner assets and private property
- c) participation rate of community cleanup program
- d) number of graffiti kits dispensed to the public
- e) level of successful legal action that has been taken against apprehended offenders
- f) participation by Partners
- g) level of participation by local businesses in graffiti removal and prevention
- h) number of people accessing information about graffiti removal and prevention from website
- i) initiatives undertaken to educate the community

DISCUSSION

In September 2014 HRM hosted the fifth annual "The Anti-Graffiti Symposium" (TAGS) Conference in Halifax bringing together experts across many of the disciplines involved with the efforts of Enforcement, Abatement, Education, Civic mindedness and Communication as related to the fight against graffiti. This collection of experts and their stories helped to not only highlight the issues and efforts of other cities across North America and the world, but also to reinforce our successes within the HRM and the continued need for vigilance to maintain those successes.

As a result of the Council motion, the Operational Stakeholder Group met to: review the intent of the initial guidance to the Group; identify areas of success as well as those that required additional effort to refine responsibilities and the way ahead; and, to discuss, as directed in the motion, whether the lead for the Group should shift to the Public Safety Office as suggested.

At the meeting representatives of the following internal groups were in attendance: HRP, Parks and Recreation, Transportation and Public Works, Planning and Development, Corporate Communications, 311 Call Center and the BID Coordinator Office. Legal, Traffic Management, and Marketing were to be included in future meetings.

While it was generally agreed that the graffiti situation within the HRM has been well contained, especially relative to many of the cities represented at the TAGS conference, the following were highlighted as potential areas requiring additional effort to clarify lines of responsibility or to ensure continued successes already experienced:

- a) Graffiti removal – while the HRM efforts here include (but are not limited to) in-house crews within ROC and a contracted service with Goodbye Graffiti for removal efforts inside the core, as well as outside, it was felt that there needs to be coordination among ROC, BIDs, HRSB and the Partners to realize standard processes and to examine potential cost sharing efficiencies
- b) Enforcement – while electronic photographic evidence is being obtained and stored by various organizations for various reasons (ROC for invoice payment, HRP for investigative or legal action, Municipal Compliance for complaints on private property under the Halifax Charter, and BIDs for service completion records, etc.) it was felt that there needs to be a central repository of all stored records for use by the various agencies for their own particular requirements. Given legal evidence rules, HRP identified the requirement for more stringent collection needs while the maintenance of information by the other organizations needs to be further defined through continued discussion
- c) Education – while there has been good progress on the education part of the fight against graffiti, it was completed some time ago and the Group felt it would be timely to refresh this approach. Discussion included what forms should be progressed, who should take the lead and finally whether there was any risk with “raising the issue and calling attention to the successes being realized” in concern that this may have a negative effect (increased tagging activity). Further discussion among all the internal stakeholders will take place to frame an updated education and communication program
- d) Civic responsibility – experience has demonstrated that the public areas are generally well looked after, and the Group confirmed that within the existing By-Law structure the ability exists to cause private property owners to comply and remove graffiti as directed. This was one of the areas seen to potentially significantly affect the external partners given that a number of them have infrastructure within the right-of-way and therefore are required to adhere to removal standards (key players here include NSP, BellAliant, CN, HRSB, and HW) but there is also interest in working with Canada Post, NSTIR, Waterfront Development Corporation and the BID organizations to provide assistance where deemed necessary.

With respect to the structure of the Stakeholder Group, it was felt the appropriate players (internal) were in attendance at the meeting and that those organizations have remained well engaged within their areas of responsibility. Discussion around further review and potential revision to programs confirmed the requirement for quarterly meetings of the entire Group, but smaller, focused teams to look at areas such as collection of evidence will meet on a more frequent basis and report back to the Group at the next scheduled meeting.

With respect to interaction with external partners, past experience has shown a definite lack of interest to participate in combined removal efforts, however, ROC, on behalf of the Group will seek to schedule a meeting early in the new year to again offer assistance through ongoing removal efforts, and By-Law representatives will be in attendance to reinforce the existing ability to force partners to comply with removal standards for infrastructure within the right of way.

As the public safety advisor role has just been filled, it is premature to assess the appropriate location for leadership of the overall graffiti abatement program. It was felt that additional meetings to clarify some outstanding items would be the best approach in order to better determine whether the responsibility/focus should be changed. The committee felt that the success that has been achieved so far is the result of the focus being on abatement and therefore changing from that focus too soon may reduce some of the success.

In closing, the work of the Group is ongoing, with the continued focus on abatement being the main effort for continuing successful outcomes. A review of a potential change of lead agency for the issue will be re-examined once: the Group has attempted to engage external partners and, a more fulsome review is completed.

Graffiti Abatement

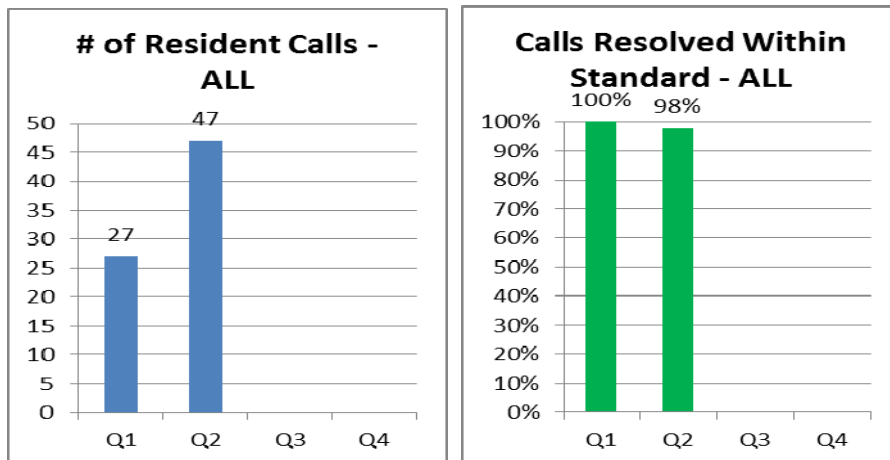
Quarterly Report

July 1, 2015 to September 30, 2015

Reported Incidences of Graffiti

HRM Assets

There have been 74 calls received to date with a cumulative resolution of 99% within standard.



Partner and Private Property

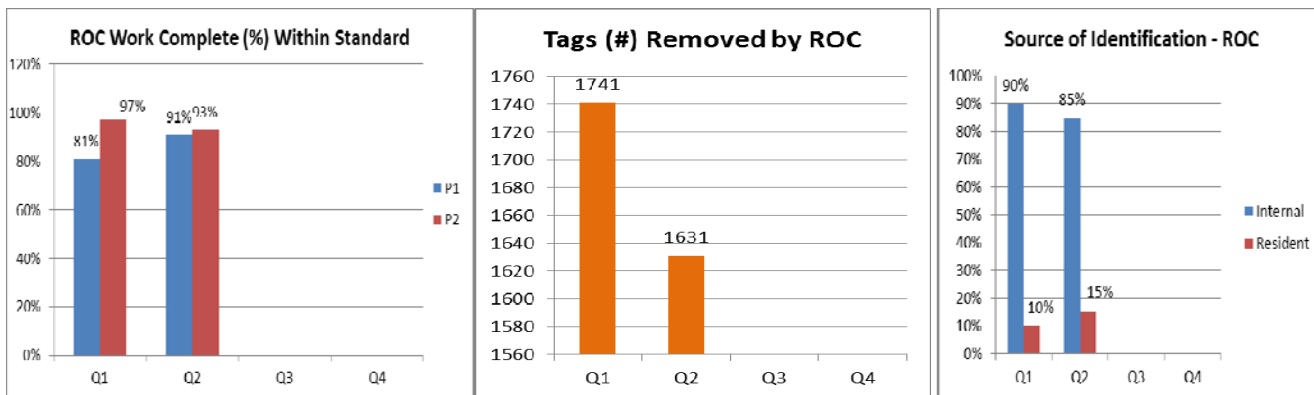
There were 9 partner property calls for the period (3 Aliant, 1 Canada Post, 1 NS Power, 3 HRSB, and 1 Unknown) and 0 private property calls.

Requests for Graffiti Kits

3 requests for graffiti kits were received during this period. 17 requests were received during the same period in 2014.

Graffiti Removal

HRM Assets – Work Orders

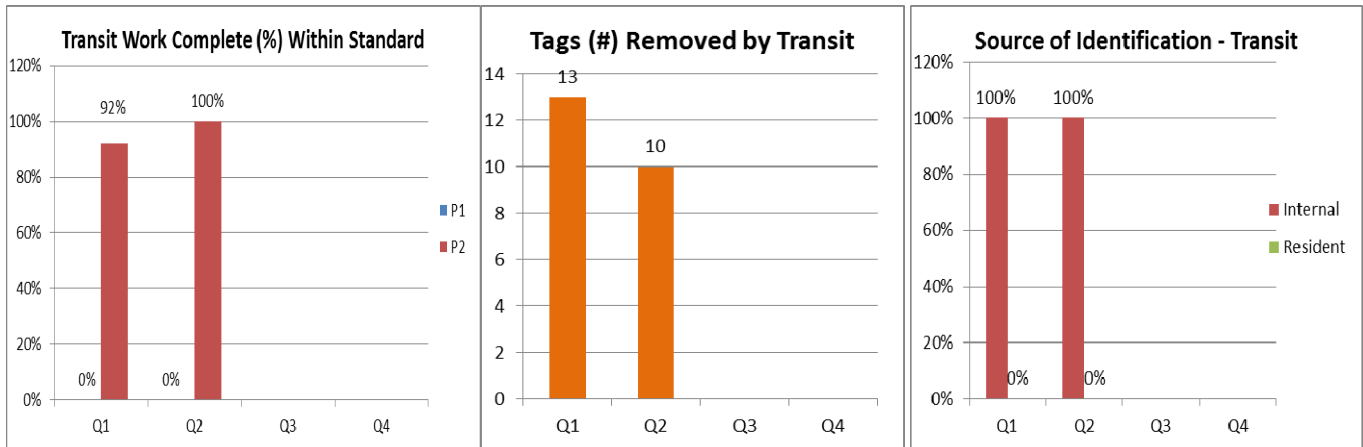


Graffiti Abatement

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Transit Assets – Work Orders



Participation of Graffiti Partners

Halifax Transit, Halifax Water and HRSB have been actively engaged. HRSB utilizes their own in-house resources to remove graffiti from HRSB assets. Halifax Water has contracted Goodbye Graffiti to remove graffiti on HW assets.

Community and Participation of Local Businesses

Road Operations and Construction continues to provide graffiti removal kits to residents who have been the victims of graffiti.

The Local Business Improvement Districts, specifically Spring Garden Road, Quinpool Road, Main Street, Downtown Halifax and Downtown Dartmouth remain engaged in addressing graffiti on their members' properties.

Community & Education

Halifax Regional Police hosted a lecture to a group of citizens who attended an RCMP volunteer workshop.

Enforcement and Legal Action

30 incidents were reported to the Police during this period. In one of those incidents 2 adults were arrested. There are 3 other files still open that are currently under investigation and pending arrest/charges.

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Graffiti Web Page Traffic

There were 311 webpage views to all HRM graffiti webpages for the period. The average view time was 1:15 minutes.