



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

Item No.
Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee
March 26, 2015

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Brad Anguish, Director, Parks and Recreation

DATE: March 6, 2015

SUBJECT: Halifax Town Crier Appointment

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

July 30, 2013, motion of Regional Council:

“MOVED by Councillor Hendsbee, seconded by Councillor Nicoll that Halifax Regional Council accept the recommendation of the Nova Scotia Guild of Town Criers and appoint Mr. David Nimmo, a resident of Dartmouth, as the Interim Town Crier for central HRM, with a stipend of \$300 per month, to include expenses of \$100, effective August 1, 2013. This appointment is to run until a competition is held to identify and appoint a permanent Town Crier for HRM.”

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Section 79(1)(k) of the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter* provides that Council may expend money required by the Municipality for recreational programs.

BACKGROUND

Historically, Town Criers were used to spread the day's news in the streets and to make proclamations. However, in recent years, their roles have been ceremonial. They welcome politicians and visitors, make proclamations at local events, and generally represent the city or community. Town Criers are registered with the Nova Scotia Guild of Town Criers (NSGTC) whose objectives include:

- the preservation of the ancient and very honorable appointment of Town Criers;
- create a better understanding and appreciation of the importance of the art of Town Crying; and
- provide oversight to the competition process for Town Criers in Nova Scotia.

Prior to amalgamation, the former municipalities had a variety of Town Criers active within the region. Mr. Bill Brookes held the position for the City of Dartmouth. In the Town of Bedford, the official Town Crier was Mr. Stuart MacMillan, and Mr. Ron Amy was the Town Crier for the Waverley area. Mr. Peter Cox was the Town Crier for the City of Halifax. Post amalgamation, Community Council appointed Mr. Amy as the official Town Crier for the Marine Drive, Valley and Canal Community. He held that position from 1997 until his death in 2008. Mr. Peter Cox held the title of Town Crier for the City of Halifax until his death in March 2009.

Currently, Halifax is being served by two active Town Criers who are both members in good standing with the Nova Scotia Guild of Town Criers. Mr. Greg Fenwick is the Sackville Town Crier and Mr. Bob Raoul is the Spryfield Town Crier. While Mr. Fenwick and Mr. Raoul have expressed interest in continuing their services across the city and have been participating in different events and functions held within the Municipality, both acknowledge that as persons in full time employment it is challenging to fulfill all the requests.

On July 30, 2013, Regional Council passed a motion to appoint an interim Town Crier until a competition could be held to identify and appoint a permanent Town Crier for Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). David Nimmo was appointed as the interim Town Crier, however, he resigned from the position for personal reasons within two weeks of the appointment.

DISCUSSION

The appointment of an interim Town Crier was intended to provide sufficient time to undertake the process for determination of the scope of the role, preparation of a competition for a permanent Town Crier as well as establishment of an appropriate budget for both the competition and the ongoing appointment to the position. Mr. Nimmo's resignation left an uncertainty of the viability of the position and the timing of a new appointment.

As a result, staff met with the NSGTC to discuss a variety of aspects associated with the role. The issues included clarification around the role profile (i.e. part-time vs full-time), the selection process and definition of the involvement of the Guild during the process. The Guild has indicated the role of the Halifax Town Crier should be held by an individual who can provide services on a more regular and accessible basis. As referred above, currently the part-time Town Criers provide the services when they can outside their full time employment positions.

Discussion was also held with the NSGTC related to the competition to ensure it can meet their recommendations and criteria for a Town Crier Competition. While the Guild has a strong interest in a Halifax Town Crier, as volunteers, they have limited capacity, and therefore, support the Municipality undertaking the appointment and related process directly. Finally, the Guild recommends that a selection committee is appointed to review the final submissions before the public competition is held.

HRM Town Crier Appointment Process

As a result of the discussions with the Guild, staff is currently preparing a process for the selection of a HRM Town Crier. The process will be similar to that used to fill the Halifax Poet Laureate role. It will include a public call for applications, followed by an interview process with support from the Guild

culminating with a competition of the short listed candidates. The process is intended to be completed in the spring of 2015 so that the position would be filled in time to accommodate requests during the summer event season.

It is estimated that a total of \$20,000 is required in 2015 to host the competition and appoint the Town Crier. That estimate would include:

- Advertisement and marketing: \$3,000;
- Competition event: \$6,000;
- HALIFAX branded Town Crier costume: \$5,000; and
- Annual stipend: \$5,000 – (\$200.00 per appearance to a total of 20 for Municipal functions and \$1,000 allowance for mileage).

The Halifax Town Crier Program would require an additional annual budget of \$5,000 for the stipend during subsequent years. The funding for the competition and annual stipend will be covered by operating funding in the upcoming 2015/16 Operating Budget for Parks & Recreation for Council's consideration. Upon approval of the budget, planning and execution of the process would commence.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Staff met with the President and senior members of the Nova Scotia Guild of Town Criers.

ATTACHMENTS

None

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

Report Prepared by: Elizabeth Taylor, Manager, Events & Cultural Initiatives, 902.490.4387
Paul Forrest, Event Coordinator (Grants Administration), 902.490.6979

Report Approved by: Original Signed

Denise Schofield, Manager, Regional Recreation & Culture, 902.490.6252
