



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

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

TO: Chair and Members of Community Planning & Economic Development

SUBMITTED BY: Original signed

Bob Bjerke, Chief Planner and Director, Planning & Development

DATE: February 5, 2015

SUBJECT: Acquisition of Lands in the Purcell's Cove Backlands

ORIGIN

At the May 20, 2014 Council Meeting, a motion was adopted that PID # 41342080, 41342098, 00052407, 41342106 (Clayton Developments) and PID 40060410 and 00269753 (Bess Developments) and PID 00269282 (Battery Hill Developments (as provided by Councillor Adams) be referred to appropriate staff to initiate a public engagement process to examine options and possibilities to bring some or all of these PIDs into public ownership.

At the October 21, 2014 meeting, Council requested a status update on the May 20, 2014 motion that the property identification numbers (PIDs) provided by Councilor Adams re: Clayton Developments, Bess Developments and Battery Hill Developments be referred to appropriate staff to initiate a public engagement process to examine options and possibilities to bring some or all of the PIDs into public ownership.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Section 61 of the Charter allows the Municipality to acquire and own property for a public purpose.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this Committee recommend to Regional Council that any process to consider public acquisition of the lands identified in the May 20, 2014 Regional Council Motion be deferred pending completion of Phase I of the Greenbelting & Open Space Plan.

BACKGROUND

This motion was adopted during the deliberations of the Regional Plan review. The properties encompass approximately 632 acres extending back to over 6,000 feet (1.1 miles) from Purcell's Cove Road to the rear property lines with a combined width of roughly 6,200 feet (see Map 1). These lands form part of an area known as the Purcell's Cove or Williams Lake Backlands which are characterized by frequent surface bedrock.

During the Regional Plan review, a submission was made on behalf of property owners within this area that plan policies be amended to allow these lands to be developed with on-site services. The Regional Plan identifies these lands as Urban Reserve where serviced development may be considered after the life of the plan (2031). Currently, limited development provisions are made under the Mainland Halifax Land Use By-law.

In addition to the property owners' request, numerous submissions were received in support of acquiring these lands for public open space.

DISCUSSION

There is no urgency in making any decision regarding public acquisition as these lands are designated Urban Reserve under the Regional Plan and therefore any potential planning for future development is not contemplated to commence until sometime after 2031. There are currently many opportunities for development serviced with municipal water and wastewater within the established service boundary. Last year, staff estimated that the land supply would last 28 to 35 years under conservative assumptions. The Regional Planning Strategy states that "HRM also seeks to support a competitive housing market by maintaining a 15 year supply of serviced lands".

In accordance with a Regional Plan policy directive, a greenbelting and public open space priorities plan process has been initiated "to help determine an economically and environmentally sustainable strategy for the equitable maintenance and distribution of parks and natural open space throughout HRM and to provide guidance for community planning". Among the matters under consideration are:

- (a) coordinating and managing a program to research, identify and designate potential natural areas, systems and distinct landscapes, natural corridors and critical ecosystem linkages, and significant natural habitats to guide future development;
- (b) coordinating and managing a program to research and identify potential public open space, parks and corridors for the provision of quality open space for recreational and social development, restoration of natural corridor and urban ecosystem function, greenway networks to connect communities and provide mobility options and significant natural habitats to guide considerations of future development;
- (c) establishing selection criteria, investment and management guidelines for public open space lands, infrastructure and sustainable natural open space management strategies;
- (d) examining criteria for classifying and developing HRM parks including comprehensive criteria for designating regional parks;

The Greenbelting and Open Space Priorities Plan will establish a framework for HRM's open space planning and land management program to enable an economically and environmentally sustainable strategy for the maintenance and distribution of parks and natural open space throughout the Region. This framework is needed to assess the merits of acquiring all or a portion of these lands as part of the Municipality's public lands portfolio.

This planning process has been initiated and Phase I, which will provide a framework for assessing these lands (and others across the Halifax region), is expected to be completed by the end of 2015. A consultant has been hired to work with the core HRM planning team to advance the work.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funds to purchase these lands have not been identified in the current budget. In the event that the Greenbelting and Public Open Space Priorities Plan suggests that there is merit in acquiring a portion or all of these lands for public open space, there will be significant financial implications which will be presented to Council for consideration in a future report.

The funding for the development of the Greenbelting & Public Open Space Priorities Plan is provided through Project Account No. CDG 01283 – Regional Plan Studies.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As required by the Regional Plan, community engagement for the study will be undertaken in accordance with the *HRM Community Engagement Strategy*, approved by Council in 2008. The Greenbelting & Public Open Space Priorities Plan process will include a comprehensive public and stakeholder engagement process to identify open space values, objectives, and strategic priorities for the protection of a regional network of open space.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Work done through the Greenbelting & Open Space Plan is expected to provide a more thorough understanding of the environmental significance of these lands and the potential implications of public acquisition.

ALTERNATIVES

The Committee could recommend that a public engagement process be initiated at this point in time to examine options and possibilities for public acquisition of the lands referenced in the Council motion. This course of action is not supported by staff as a more comprehensive framework is first needed to ensure that public funds are well spent. Phase I of the Greenbelting & Public Open Space plan will develop selection criteria, investment and management guidelines for public open space lands, infrastructure and sustainable natural open space management strategies.

ATTACHMENTS

Map 1: Properties Identified in May 20, 2014 Council motion


A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/agenda.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: Paul Morgan, Senior Planner, Planning & Development, tel: 902.490.4482



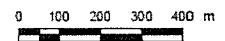
Map 1 - Properties Identified in May 20, 2014 Council Motion

Purcell's Cove Backlands,
Purcell's Cove

 Subject Lands

Halifax Plan Area
South End Detailed Plan Area

HALIFAX



This map is an unofficial reproduction of a portion of the Generalized Future Land Use Map for the plan area indicated.

The accuracy of any representation on this plan is not guaranteed.