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**Item No. 9.1.1**  
**Audit & Finance Standing Committee**  
**January 21, 2015**

**TO:** Chair and Members of HRM Audit & Finance Standing Committee

Original Signed

**SUBMITTED BY:**

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Greg Keefe, Director of Finance & ICT/CFO

Original Signed

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Chief Doug Trussler, Fire & Emergency Services

**DATE:** December 18, 2014

**SUBJECT:** **Volunteer Search & Rescue Grants Program: Proposed Administrative Order 2014-018-ADM**

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**ORIGIN**

2014 budget approval of an additional \$100,000 for grants to volunteer search and rescue organizations located within the Halifax Regional Municipality.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

*Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (2008) s.79(1)(av)* respecting Regional Council's power to make grants and contributions.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Audit & Finance Standing Committee recommend that Regional Council:

1. Adopt Administrative Order 2014-018-ADM Volunteer Search and Rescue Grants Program, effective immediately;
2. Amend the *Community Grants Program* eligibility criteria to exclude volunteer search and rescue organizations, commencing in fiscal year 2015.

## **BACKGROUND**

Prior to amalgamation the provision of search and rescue services was provided by four independent teams and was supported mostly through the former Halifax County with funding only provided on separate and sporadic grant applications of that time. With the formation of the Halifax Regional Municipality in 1996 the funding was eventually changed to a budgeted line item in the Fire & Emergency Services budget to allow for more stable funding support to the teams. The four teams have been working with HRM Emergency Measures Operations (EMO) since amalgamation and meet on a regular basis. One of the outcomes of this group has been the creation of a regional forum called the Regional Emergency Search and Rescue (RESAR) to discuss and resolve issues and ensure services are delivered consistently across the Municipality, while at the same time respecting each team's autonomy.

To date, partial operating funding has been provided by Fire & Emergency Services to registered volunteer search and rescue groups. Under the current process the search and rescue groups are allocated a fixed amount of funds to offset some of their annual operating costs. The allocation of these funds is done through the RESAR group and teams are reimbursed upon submission of original receipts.

With expansion of the budget to support volunteer search and rescue teams, and within the context of the Auditor General's review of grants and contributions, Fire & Emergency Services proposes to formalize the program through policy and expand upon the scope of funding. If approved, eligible groups could apply for capital and project-specific funding in addition to operating funding.

Presently, the following registered search and rescue organizations operate within the HRM:

- Eastern Shore Ground Search & Rescue, 5688 Highway 7, Chezzetcook
- Halifax Regional Search & Rescue, 116 Lakeview Road, Lakeview
- Musquodoboit Valley Ground Search & Rescue, 11974 Highway 224, Middle Musquodoboit
- Sheet Harbour Ground Search & Rescue, 22835 Highway 7, Sheet Harbour

While searching for missing persons is each team's primary mandate, the teams also provide other services to the Municipality like evidence searches for HRM Police and the RCMP, evacuation assistance, logistical service support during large events, etc. The teams are highly trained, work well independently and in combined task forces, and are an overall well disciplined, uniform group with a combined membership in the hundreds.

## **DISCUSSION**

- **Search & Rescue Grants (Fire & Emergency Services C801-8004)**

In addition to operating assistance, it is proposed that the scope of funding include capital grants and one-time project-specific grants. Application is made to the EMO office of Fire & Emergency Services and will be reviewed by departmental staff. Recommendations with respect to annual awards would be routed through the Grants Committee to Regional Council for approval.

- **Community Grants Program (Finance M311-8004)**

If approved, expansion of funding to volunteer search and rescue groups necessitates revision to the *Community Grants Program* to avoid duplication, enhance administrative efficiencies, and align funding with intended outcome measures.

Note: Only those organizations eligible for funding under the *Volunteer Search & Rescue Grants Program* would be excluded from eligibility under the *Community Grants Program*. Non-profit organizations that promote emergency preparedness, formally recognized emergency evacuation facilities, and

organizations party to a formal Memorandum of Understanding with Fire & Emergency Services will continue to be eligible for consideration.<sup>1</sup>

- **Proposed Role of Grants Committee**

It is proposed that awards recommended under the proposed *Volunteer Search & Rescue Grants Program* be reviewed by the HRM Grants Committee prior to submission for Council's approval. This approach is consistent with the committee's terms of reference and oversight provided to new funding programs such as the *Rural Transit Grants Program* and *Interim Grants to Professional Arts Organizations Program*.

By following a consistent process, members of the Grants Committee and the Municipality's administration will be in a better position to screen for duplicate funding or overlap, enhance policy and procedural consistency across different municipal funding sources, and develop a broader understanding of the type and scope of assistance provided to a particular organization, the type of community-based service, or the region's non-profit sector overall.

Finance staff (Grants & Contributions) will provide support to Fire & Emergency Services as requested. For example, information on past funding, tax relief, policy and procedures, less than market value leasing or sales.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The recommendations contained in this report do not have any financial implications. The Fire & Emergency Services 2014-15 operating budget includes \$148,500 in account C801- 8004 "Emergency Measures Administration: Grants" to provide grants to search and rescue organizations in HRM. No change to this budgeted amount is being proposed.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Not applicable. Regional Council has approved a budget increase for a designated purpose. This report addresses the administrative process through which Council's intent will be delivered in the form of a designated grant program.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

None.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

The Audit & Finance Standing Committee could amend the proposed Administrative Order.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Proposed Administrative Order 2014-018-ADM Respecting Grants to Volunteer Search & Rescue Organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> Examples include Halifax Radio Club, Disaster Animal Response Team Nova Scotia, Canadian Red Cross.

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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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Report Approved by: Original Signed  
Roy Hollett, Deputy Chief, Fire & Emergency Services, 902.490.5036.

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Report Approved by: Bruce Fisher, Financial Planning & Policy, Finance & ICT, 902.490.4493

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Attachment 1

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NUMBER 2014-018-ADM  
Respecting Grants to Volunteer Search and Rescue Organizations**

**WHEREAS** the Council of the Halifax Regional Municipality values the contribution of residents who serve the public interest in a volunteer capacity;

**AND WHEREAS** the Council of the Halifax Regional Municipality wishes to support the efforts of local volunteer search and rescue organizations through operating, capital and project-specific grants;

**BE IT RESOLVED AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER** of the Council of the Halifax Regional Municipality under the authority of the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, as follows:

**Short Title**

1. This Administrative Order shall be known as the *Administrative Order on Grants to Volunteer Search & Rescue Organizations*.

**Interpretation**

2. In this Administrative Order,

- (a) “Applicant” means an organization applying for funding under this AO;
- (b) “Council” means the Council of the Halifax Regional Municipality;
- (c) “Municipality” means the Halifax Regional Municipality;
- (d) “Non-profit Organization” means a search and rescue organization that is registered as:
  - (i) a society incorporated pursuant to the *Societies Act*, R.S.N.S 1989,c.435, as amended;
  - (ii) a charitable organization registered pursuant to the *Income Tax Act (Canada)* and the regulations made pursuant to that *Act*; or
  - (iii) a non-profit organization otherwise incorporated pursuant to an Act of the Nova Scotia Legislature.
- (e) “Volunteer Search and Rescue Organization” means a non-profit organization whose mandate is the recruitment, training and deployment of volunteers in assisting municipal and provincial government authorities in responding to a natural or man-made disaster, or assisting the Halifax Regional Police, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or affiliated public

safety agency in the rescue of missing persons, evidence searches, and emergency response.

(f) “Operating Grant” means a financial award towards recurring annual operating costs incurred by a volunteer search and rescue organization such as but not limited to rent, insurance, telecommunications, utilities, medical supplies, office supplies, and small equipment/furnishings. Salaries and wages, stipends and honoraria are not eligible for consideration.

(g) “Capital Grant” means a non-recurring financial award towards the purchase of large equipment, the purchase of real property, construction, expansion or retrofit of a facility or amenity including in-ground infrastructure and telecommunications capacity, instrumentation or specialized safety equipment, and major structural repairs to existing amenities.

(h) “One-Time Project-Specific Grant” means a financial award towards a non-recurring activity undertaken by an organization that is outside the normal course of annual operations such as but not limited to a training and accreditation workshop, conference, or non-recurring event.

### **Purpose**

3. The purpose of this Administrative Order is to provide for cash grants from the Municipality to volunteer search and rescue organizations located within the geographic boundary of the Halifax Regional Municipality to support and promote volunteer participation in emergency preparedness, emergency response, public safety, and the provision of compassionate aid to citizens.

### **Type of Grant**

4. There are hereby established three (3) funding streams:

(1) Operating Grant: supports the general and on-going operational capacity of the organization in the recruitment, retention and training of volunteers.

(a) The applicant organization shall have operated continuously for one (1) year with a demonstrated Board of Directors, constitution and by-laws, membership and financial records.

(b) The payment of eligible expenses shall be on a reimbursement basis upon submission of original receipts to HRM by the stated deadline.

(c) Eligible expenditures include rent, insurance, telecommunications, utilities, medical supplies, office supplies, furnishings and small equipment.

(d) Expenditures deemed not eligible include any payment by way of salaries, wages, stipends, honoraria, grants, or loans to an individual or business interest.

(2) Capital Grant: supports the purchase of real property, substantive structural repairs or expansion of an existing facility or infrastructure owned by the non-profit organization, the purchase of instrumentation, specialized or safety equipment valued in excess of \$500 per item, including ancillary parts or operating system.

(a) Any carry-forward of funds shall be restricted to an extension of one (1) year after which time the balance of funds shall be returned to HRM.

(b) With the exception of highly specialized equipment, a minimum of two (2) quotes shall be submitted to substantiate the value of grant requested.

(c) Leasehold improvements shall not be considered for contractual agreements of less than 20 years duration.

(3) One-Time Special Project Grant: supports an extra-ordinary expenditure not eligible for consideration as a recurring operating cost or a capital grant.

(a) The project must demonstrate an enduring benefit to the operational viability and capacity of the applicant organization.

(b) The maximum value of a grant issued under this funding stream shall be \$2,500.

### **Ineligible Expenses**

5. A grant shall not be used for the following purposes:

- (1) private property, excepting a long-term lease agreement of 20 years;
- (2) remuneration to an individual;
- (3) loans or debt retirement;
- (4) investments or savings;
- (5) awards;
- (6) banquets, dinners, and receptions;
- (7) personal apparel except where such apparel is required for personal safety or identification to the general public; or
- (8) souvenirs or personal gifts.

### **Application Requirements**

6. There shall be one intake period for eligible organizations. Applications will be accepted beginning January 1<sup>st</sup> and must be received in person or postmarked on or before March 31st.
7. The applicant shall disclose any additional form of municipal support including a cash grant, tax relief, rent subsidy, or in-kind contribution of goods or services.
8. In the case of a Capital Grant application, the applicant shall disclose any application or receipt of funds from any other government, corporate, foundation or personal donation sought or obtained in support of the capital project.
9. Late or incomplete applications may be deemed ineligible for consideration.

### **Application Evaluations**

10. The following criteria shall be used to evaluate applications:
  - (1) Operating Grants:
    - (a) financial stewardship as demonstrated through a financial statement and proposed budget;
    - (b) good governance as demonstrated by the organization's constitution and by-laws, operating viability and membership; and
    - (c) accreditation or demonstrated expertise of the membership and/or organization's leadership.
  - (2) Capital Grants:
    - (a) the incremental impact of municipal financial assistance;
    - (b) projects that maintain the value, utility or safety of real property;
    - (c) projects that enhance organizational capacity; and
    - (d) an ability to leverage other funding or in-kind contributions.
  - (3) One-Time Special Project Grants:
    - (a) expertise of project organizers or participants; and
    - (b) objective measures of the benefit to local search and rescue or emergency response capacity.



- (4) All applicants shall be screened for debt to the Municipality. Applicants not in good standing shall be given notice and an opportunity to remedy the situation within a stated timeline.

### **Application Review Process**

11. The program shall be administered by Fire & Emergency Services.
12. Applicants will be notified promptly if their application is ineligible.
13. Fire & Emergency Service staff shall review applications and prepare a report for consideration by the HRM Grants Committee for recommendation to Regional Council for approval.
14. Applicants will be notified in writing of Council's decision.
15. The approval and value of awards is subject to the program's annual budget capacity.
16. Applicants must make annual application. Multi-year commitments will not be considered.

### **Conditions of Approval and Payment of Funds**

17. Grant recipients shall be required to submit a final report on the program reporting form provided by Fire & Emergency Services to include a minimum of:
  - (1) name of organization, amount and type of grant, terms and conditions (as per the letter of notification);
  - (2) total costs and a breakdown of expenditures;
  - (3) original receipts and/or proof of payment;
  - (4) for Capital and One-time Special Project Grants a description of the project and immediate or anticipated outcomes shall be provided in addition to the financial information required in subsections (2) and (3).
18. Operating grants shall be issued on a reimbursement basis upon receipt of a financial statement for the prior year, receipts and proof of payment.
19. Capital and One-time Special Project Grants may be issued in full or in installments based on the type and cost of the project.
20. The applicant shall notify Fire & Emergency Services in the following circumstances:
  - (1) the applicant's operations cease or diminish; or
  - (2) the project is not completed, in whole or in part.

21. If an applicant notifies Fire & Emergency Services under section 20, HRM may:

- (1) grant an extension of up to one (1) year; or
- (2) require the unused funds to be returned to HRM.

22. The Municipality's support must be recognized as outlined in the "Requirements for Acknowledging Funding" guide.

**Scope**

23. Nothing in this Administrative Order shall be interpreted to limit or otherwise prescribe Council's general discretion to provide grants under the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter* or otherwise.

Done and passed this        day of        , 2015.

Mayor

Municipal Clerk