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Info Item No. 2
Transportation Standing Committee
July 21, 2016

TO: Chair and Members of Transportation Standing Committee

SUBMITTED BY: **Original Signed**

Bob Bjerke, Director / Chief Planning, Planning & Development

DATE: May 13, 2016

SUBJECT: **Parking on Quinpool Road**

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

January 13, 2015 motion of Regional Council requesting a staff report to:

1. Investigate potential opportunities for the installation of a temporary pay and display parking lot with the property managers of the former service station at the intersection of Quinpool Road and Harvard Street to augment limited parking in the area, and;
2. To assess any temporary parking opportunities within the Quinpool catchment area.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Section 70(1)(d) of the *HRM Charter*:

(1) The Municipality may

...

(d) establish or maintain parking facilities.

Section 79(1)(aq) of the *HRM Charter*:

(1) The Council may expend money required by the Municipality for

...

(aq) parking lots and parking structures

BACKGROUND

At their meeting of December 16, 2014, Halifax & West Community Council raised concerns that increasing development pressure combined with a reduction of surface parking sites may have a negative effect on local businesses in the Quinpool District. A vacant lot at 6321 Quinpool Road at Harvard Street was identified as a potential candidate to supply additional surface parking in the area to relieve some of these concerns. Council sought to develop an understanding of whether the owners of the site would be interested in working with HRM to develop a pay and display lot in this location, and what the cost/revenue implications would be.

DISCUSSION

The lot at 6132 Quinpool Road is a decommissioned service station owned by Imperial Oil that has been vacant for more than a decade. It is 11,685 square feet in size and located a C-2C zone in which parking is considered an acceptable use. The lot could accommodate about 32 parking spaces or 21 spaces if buffers and landscaping were used to screen the parking and improve the site aesthetics.

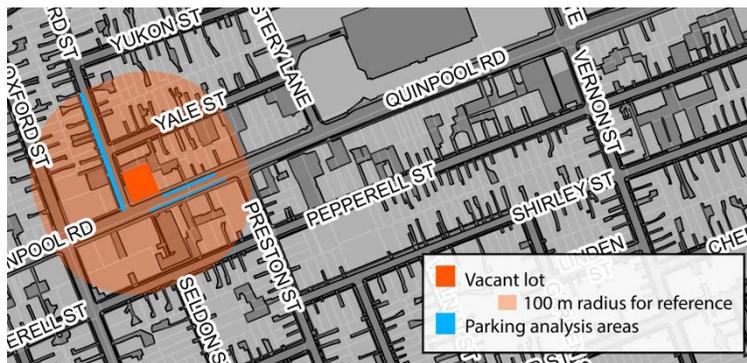
HRM staff reached out to Imperial Oil to determine the status of this parcel but received a generic reply advising that non-operating property may be available for lease, but is only for sale if there is a 'for sale' sign on the site (there is not). Further efforts at communication met with no reply.

Existing Parking Supply

There are approximately **780** parking spaces serving the retail catchment area of Quinpool Road between Parker and Elm Streets. These are located on-street within a four minute walk of Quinpool Road (about **319** spaces) and off-street in various private lots (**461** spaces, not including ones recently lost to construction of 'The Keep' condominiums). The on-street supply consists of a mix of all day parking, as well as short term and metered spaces that can be expected to have regular turnover, i.e. the type of parking that is needed to support business.

Utilization

To assess the usage of on-street parking near the vacant lot, three time lapse cameras were set up from Tuesday October 20th to Thursday October 22, 2015. They captured an image every 15 minutes between 10am and 4pm. The sampled areas included Quinpool Road between Preston and Harvard Streets and Harvard Street within 100 m of Quinpool Road.



The parking occupancy rate is a measure of how well parking is being used and is calculated as a percent by dividing the total number of occupied spaces by the total number available.

On average during the survey period, utilization in the area was 43%, peaking around mid-day (12:15 - 12:30pm) at 71%. Turnover rates were observed to be higher for the metered spaces on Harvard Street.

A separate occupancy analysis based on the 2015 revenue from parking meters on Harvard Street and Monastery Lane revealed an average occupancy of 68%.

Cost/ Revenue

Costs

To establish a parking lot on this site HRM would need to lease or acquire the property. Imperial Oil did not return inquiries about lease costs and the property is assessed at \$1.09 million.

Costs related to site preparation, paving, fencing (a requirement of the Land Use Bylaw where parking abuts residential), landscaping, and purchase & installation of a pay unit would be incurred (about \$40,000 - order of magnitude estimate only).

Costs for insurance and site remediation were not explored, and depending on the method by which HRM acquired access to the site may be additional and could be extensive.

Operating costs were also not estimated, but these would be incurred for snow removal, landscaping, enforcement, and maintenance of the pay station.

Revenues

Assuming HRM would landscape the lot, 21 spaces would be available. Taking into account their 68% occupancy rate, parking meters in the area generate an average of \$10/ weekday resulting in possible future revenues from 21 additional pay parking spaces of \$54,600.

Need for Parking

Considering the medium utilization rate of existing parking, there does not appear to be a serious shortage of parking in this area.

However, discussions with representatives of the area's Business Improvement District (BID) confirmed that there does appear to be a *perceived* shortage of parking in the area. This can still be a very real challenge for local businesses, but the appropriate response may be via efforts aimed at education and marketing rather than increasing parking supply.

For this area of municipality, the HRM Parking Strategy recommends an approach to parking management that emphasizes transportation demand management i.e. low minimum parking requirements and tight maximums to make parking scarcer so as to motivate efficient land use and sustainable transportation (transit, walking and bicycling). While the provision of a shared, pay per use, parking area in this location would not be inconsistent with the Strategy, the occupancy levels of nearby parking may not warrant such a move at this time.

Other Temporary Parking Opportunities in the Area

HRM is completing the demolition of the former St. Pat's High and plans are in place to grass the site until it is sold for development. While this property could possibly be used as an interim parking lot, recent public engagement related to the site revealed that surface parking is not wanted in this location. New policies for the site are proposing to restrict its use for surface parking. It is also located at the end of Quinpool Road that arguably has enough parking (it is between the Quinpool Centre with its large surface parking lot and the parking structure at civic #6017).

A portion of the former Ben's Bakery site is near the subject property identified by Council, and also within the same zone. This site has recently been acquired by Westwood Developments.

The replacement of free on-street parking with pay parking can encourage turnover which is important to businesses. It can do this by discouraging people such as employees from occupying the best spots and making them available for paying customers. Staff reached out to the board of the Quinpool Road Business Improvement District to see if they would like HRM to consider replacing some free on-street parking with more meters, but they did not feel it was necessary at this time.

Members of the board did suggest adding short term on-street parking on the north side of Pepperell Street and on the east side of Kline Street near Quinpool Road. These street sections are signed 'no-parking' and the request has been forwarded to Traffic Management for review and consideration.

FINANCIAL IMPLIATIONS

There are no financial implications of this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Board of the Quinpool Road Business Improvement District was consulted as described above.

The public was recently engaged about the future of the former St. Patrick's High School (6067 Quinpool Road) via a municipally lead planning process: <http://shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/quinpool6067> .

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Former service stations are typically contaminated sites. Paving such sites can reduce exposure pathways to humans, and parking lots may be acceptable uses of such properties. However, no work was done to determine the extent of contamination on the property or the degree of remediation that might be required to establish this particular use.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/index.php> [or other appropriate Committee link] then choose the appropriate [Community Council/Board] 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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