

**Transportation Standing Committee - July 3, 2013  
Special Events Advisory Committee - July 10, 2013**

**TO:** Chair and Members of the Transportation Standing Committee  
Chair and Members of the Special Events Advisory Committee

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original signed  

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Brad Anguish, Director, Community & Recreation Services

**DATE:** May 13, 2013

**SUBJECT:** Street Closure Policy for Special Events and Parades

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**INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

February 28, 2013 Transportation Standing Committee motion:

**MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Fisher, that the Transportation Standing Committee request a staff report outlining current street closure policy for special events and parades. This report will include a survey of best practices and pricing practices in HRM benchmark cities, and address engineering and traffic and right of way concerns balanced against issues of community building, encouraging place making and supporting unique and special events.**

**MOVED by Councillor Dalrymple, seconded by Councillor Mason, that the motion be amended to also provide the report to the Special Events Advisory Committee.  
AMENDMENT PUT AND PASSED.  
AMENDED MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

Councillor Mason specified issues to be address in the report including:

- when does HRM consider waiving fees
- do other cities waive fees
- does the RCMP in HRM waive fees
- do we have a uniform policy across the municipality
- is our process for application more complex than other municipalities

## **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

*Halifax Regional Charter*, Section 332 (b), temporary street closures

## **BACKGROUND**

Every year special events are held across Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). These events can vary significantly in size and scope, ranging from small events located in specific communities to large scale civic events to commemorate holidays such as Canada Day. Often organized by community groups and volunteers, special events enhance the cultural lives of communities and are recognised as an important element of the quality of life of citizens. Through the delivery and coordination of special events, HRM is required to balance the need to maintain public safety and open transportation links within HRM with the needs of event organizers.

At recent Transportation Standing Committee meetings, there has been discussion on the processes and concerns surrounding the closures of streets for special events. As a result, at the February 28, 2013 meeting, staff was directed to prepare a report to outline the current street closure policy as well as best practice research, pricing practices, and address the balance between engineering and traffic concerns with community building. This report provides an overview of those aspects as they relate to special events.

## **DISCUSSION**

HRM manages all requests for special event street closures and parades through the Special Events Task Force (SETF) approved by Regional Council in July 1996. This operation-based task force was created to coordinate all municipal services required and impacted by events, provide for consistent and standard processing of event requests as well as provide a single point of contact for event organizers. It is chaired by civic events staff with representation from various HRM Business Units, as well as both Provincial and Federal Government departments. Staff representatives from Traffic and Right of Way Services, Halifax Regional Police Service, RCMP, Metro Transit and Fire & Emergency Services are members of the SETF. The terms of reference for the SETF are attached in Appendix A.

### **Parade and Street Closure Process**

Section 90(7) of the Motor Vehicle Act states that “No parade, procession or walkathon shall march, occupy or proceed along any highway within the boundaries of a city or town unless a permit has been granted by the traffic authority of the city or town prescribing the route to be followed and the time when the parade, procession or walkathon may take place”. The Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal (NSTIR) has jurisdiction over provincially owned roadways and, as a result, approval is required from the provincial traffic authority for any portion of a parade route that utilizes a provincially owned roadway(s). Typically, parades do not require a street closure unless they are quite long (Natal Day, Parade of Lights, etc.)

For municipally owned streets, HRM’s Charter provides the direction under which the permission for closure of the street can be granted. Section 332 (b) states “The Engineer may temporarily close a street, or part thereof, for the protection of the public, to allow work to be done on the street or on lands and buildings adjacent to the street or for any other purpose beneficial to the public interest”. The HRM Engineer allows for the closure and use of streets for special events under the provision that the use of a street is deemed as “beneficial to the public interest”. The determination of the benefit to the public is discussed by the SETF prior to a final decision by the Right of Way Engineer for the issuance of a street closure. There are many factors which are considered in the assessment of the application for a street closure including public safety, alternate routes and traffic flow. As well, for most events, the applicant is required to obtain written agreement from all affected abutting property owners in order to receive approval for the street closure. Details of the process and the requirement for abutter agreement can be found in the Special Events Task Force Application Process and Operation Information (Appendix B).

**HRM Price Processes**

HRM strives to recovers all Municipal service costs which are the direct result of hosting a street closure for a special event or parade. Core operating budgets for relevant Business Units reflect the cost recovery practice in that there is no funding capacity for costs associated with the delivery of events included. This practice has been in place since the creation of the SETF and is reflected in one of the key roles of the SETF “to provide special event organisers with a mechanism for acquiring financial information concerning municipal services”.

These costs can be for either the direct delivery of the event (Police, Traffic, Parks, etc.) or for the disruption and relocation of a service (Metro Transit, Traffic Signage, Street Cleaner, etc.) caused by a special event, road closure or parade.

As noted in Table 1, there are numerous types of services and costs that are impacted by events and parades. The costs associated with these services vary depending on the scale of the event. However, a high level assessment of the costs between April 2012 and April 2013 indicates that the Municipality would need to allocate an additional \$375,000 a year to cover the current level of municipal costs recovered from both external and internal event organizers if costs were not recovered.

Table 1 outlines a breakdown of HRM services by business unit and whether there is cost recovery:

<b>Business Unit</b>	<b>Charge</b>
<b>Transportation and Public Works</b>	
Parade Permit	No
No Parking Signs (if required)	Yes
Street Closure Signage	Yes
Removal or bagging of parking meters	*Yes/No
Over-Street Banner Permit	No
Street cleaner	Yes
French barricades for road closure	Yes

Production of event specific signage	Yes
Parks clean up	Yes
Garbage cans delivery/pickup	Yes
Concrete jersey barrier services	Yes
Stage delivery/ setup/ load out	Yes
Electrical Services	Yes
Repair/Maintenance of park space damage by event	Yes
Cost Recovery of parking meters	Yes
<b>Police Services</b>	
On Site Policing	Yes
<b>Metro Transit Services</b>	
Special Shuttle Service	Yes
Extended Ferry Service	Yes
Re-routing of Normal routes	Yes
Relocation of bus stops	Yes
Cost of supervisor responsibilities	Yes
<b>Fire Services</b>	
Tent permit	Yes
Fire inspection	Yes
<b>Community &amp; Recreation Services</b>	
Facility Bookings	Yes

\*This service can be free depending on the scope of the event

There are only limited exceptions to HRM’s Municipal service cost recovery requirement which are the result of grandfathered agreements from former municipal units. Historically, HRM absorbed expenses related to military parades and processions associated with Remembrance Day, royal visits, designated protected persons visits and the right to exercise the “Freedom of the City”. While annual events such as Remembrance Day are not approved by Regional Council each year, permission to hold unique events such as royal visits and exempt the associated costs has been granted by Council. As such, requests to the Municipality for cost exemptions for unique events are treated on a case by case basis.

In addition, there are a series of events held in the previous Halifax County which are under the jurisdiction of the RCMP and the NSTIR since the roadways are provincially owned. At this time, the RCMP and NSTIR do not recover costs associated with municipal and community events so as a result there is no cost for policing services on those streets. However, RCMP has charged private sector events, such as the LPGA and TELUS Skins events, for their services.

### **Benchmark Data**

Three cities in Canada were contacted to research their special event right of way processes and management of municipal costs. These cities were London, Ottawa and Victoria. The city of London is often compared to HRM due to its size and population. Ottawa and Victoria both have vibrant event sectors which can provide a good comparison for HRM. Table 2 provides the summarized findings from HRM and each respective city.

Table 2: Summary of Findings:

	<b>HRM</b>	<b>City of London</b>	<b>City of Ottawa</b>	<b>City of Victoria</b>
<b>Which department issues permits:</b>	Traffic & Right of Way Services	Traffic Services	Traffic Management	Events & Cultural Services
<b>Non-profits charged for services?</b>	Yes	Combination of “User Pay” and absorbed Municipal services costs	Yes	No
<b>For-profits charged for services?</b>	Yes	Combination	Yes	Yes
<b>Military, Royal Family, protocol or similar events/marches charged?</b>	No	Combination	No	No
<b>Municipal coordinated events charged?</b>	Yes	No	No	Yes

In addition to the above noted items, some additional relevant information was obtained from each city that provides a more detailed overview of their event processes for comparison purposes. These items include:

<b>London</b>	
Structure	The City of London does not have a Special Events Task Force so external event organizers deal directly with individual business units for each request.
Service Costs	London has a pricing agreement with events using a combination of “User Pay” and absorbed municipal services costs.
Road Closures	The approval is contingent upon the event site plan meeting the requirements of the Police, Fire, Emergency Services and the City Engineer. The site plan must also be presented to all affected abutters. If an event organizer is able to achieve 66 % approval from affected abutters, there is no charge for the road closure approval
Other information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All parades in London are approved through the Police department and are not full street closures but rather “rolling closures”. In high traffic areas the event organizers are required to hire professional traffic controllers to manage the parade. If extra duty police officers are required, the costs are incurred by the event organizer. Transit does not charge event organizers for temporary re-routing fees.</li> </ul>

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<b>Ottawa</b>	
Structure	The Event Central Division is the point of contact for any organization, business or member of the public seeking information on organizing an on-street event.
Service Costs	Ottawa recovers all Municipal service costs for special event street closures, road races and parades including on-duty Police officers, Traffic Management staff, Parks and Solid Waste staff.
Road Closures	Special Events on City Streets By-law requires approval of the General Manager of Transportation, Utilities and Public Works for street closure. All organizers must also submit a comprehensive Emergency Plan, Site Plan, Structures and Rally Point information.
Other information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event volunteers or privately contracted Traffic Management personnel are approved to install road closure barriers and to manage these barriers with the permission and approval of both the Police and Traffic management staff.</li> <li>• Event organizers can contract their own waste management and clean-up services from a private contractor as long as they maintain the standard of clean-up required by the Municipality.</li> </ul>

<b>The City of Victoria</b>	
Structure	A submitted application is shared with relevant departments (Fire, Police, etc.). Once approved, a cost estimate is generated and the city determines if the event organized has to pay the costs associated with the event based on the type of event.
Service Costs	There is a \$160,000 budget to cover Municipal costs associated with non-profit events. There is also a cultural grant award program with a \$100,000 budget for in-kind municipal contributions.
Road Closures	New events must canvas businesses within the closure area. If there is opposition, staff determines issues and mitigates where possible. The Events and Cultural Services division within the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture issues the permit for street closures when it is for a special Event.
Other information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In order to minimize the increasing amount of disruption to traffic and citizens, Council recently passed a motion that no new 10k road races or walks will be approved.</li> <li>• The Police Department recovers some costs for non-profit event work. The department covers the costs of the first 3 officers and should the event require additional police officers that cost can be covered by the in-kind service budgeted grant.</li> <li>• All municipal costs associated with Canada Day are absorbed by the departments working on the event.</li> </ul>

Through the benchmark review, it appears that HRM practices are in line with the majority of Canadian Municipalities. The HRM process is no less rigorous than any of the other municipal unit that were benchmarked and, in some cases, the coordination of the SETF provides a higher level of service by minimizing the requirement for event organizers to have to navigate through separate departments for approvals. HRM's Special Events Task Force model has been adopted by some other Municipal events units in Canada for events including street closures, parades and

use of other right of ways. As well, staff is continually reviewing other models in both Canada and the United States to ensure that HRM's event delivery system does not remain static.

### **Community Building versus Traffic Requirements**

Events are integral to community vitality and prosperity, local and regional economic development and overall quality of life. To that end, Policy 3.23 of HRM's Cultural Plan states that HRM recognizes the importance of and supports the development of community and regional events and celebrations. However, it is important to balance these aspects while ensuring that the safety of the public and the requirement for functional traffic flow are met.

One of the key functions of the SETF is to deliver a balanced approach to decision making through negotiations between event organizers and HRM business units to reach solutions that meet the objectives of all parties. The analysis and decisions to ensure public safety and mitigate risk may not always be perceived to be in the best interest of the event organizer and in some cases the community, however civic events staff and the members of the SETF work collaboratively to determine the best approach for each situation. As a result, the SETF and Right of Way Engineer have approved the majority of event requests. Approval for a street closure is typically only denied when there are insurmountable concerns such as public safety, risk to HRM or inability to find a suitable compromise to accessibility and traffic flow. The validity of this collaborative process is demonstrated by the successful track record of delivering events without major incident or injury to the citizens of HRM.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Not applicable

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Appendix A – SETF Terms of Reference

Appendix B – SETF Application Process & Operation Information, excerpt from HRM Operational Guide to Planning Events

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/cc.html> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by: Elizabeth Taylor, Manager Events & Cultural Initiatives, 490-4387  
Andrew Cox, Senior Events Coordinator, 490-4729

Original signed

Report Approved by: Denise Schofield, Manager, Regional Recreation & Culture, 490-6252

Original signed

Report Approved by: Ken Reashor, P.Eng., Director, Transportation & Public Works, 490-4855

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## Appendix A

Halifax Regional Municipality Special Events Task Force Terms of Reference  
(Approved by HRM Council on July 16, 1996)

- NAME:** HRM Special Events Task Force
- MEMBERSHIP:** Community & Recreation Services  
Regional Police Services  
Fire & Emergency Services  
Real Property  
Traffic Services  
Parks & Open Spaces  
Metro Transit  
Electrical Services  
Procurement & Liability  
Solid Waste Resources  
Mayor's Office  
RCMP
- CHAIRPERSON:** Co-chaired by the Civic Events Co-ordinators
- TERM:** Indefinite
- PURPOSE:**
- 1) To review potential special events based on a set of accepted criteria, assess the risk for the corporation and make recommendations to staff and council on the feasibility and potential success of new special events.
  - 2) To act as an advisory body to existing and new special event organizers in the areas of municipal services, property and regulations.
  - 3) To provide special event organizers with a mechanism for acquiring financial information concerning municipal services.
  - 4) To act as an expert forum on the development of long term planning and policy as it pertains to special events within the Halifax Regional Municipality.
- REPORTING:** Manager – Events & Cultural Initiatives

## **Appendix B**

### SETF Application Process & Operation Information

Organizations applying for a special event and parade street closure submit a SETF Application Form which is circulated to all members for review. A Civic Events staff lead is appointed to assist the organizer in navigating the process with each HRM Business Unit, Provincial and Federal Government department involved with the final operations plan for the use of the street or roadway. The services required are determined by both the complexity of the road closure and the effect that the street closure or parade will have on traffic flow, the businesses and residents in the immediate area of the closure.

The initial assessment of the request relates to its “benefit to the public interest” criteria. This assessment may result in several alternative outcomes for the organizer. These can include the relocation of the event to a less complex street or roadway location; an adjustment of the request to accommodate a more convenient solution; or in some cases, the application is denied a permit by Traffic Services & Right of Way. Usually, in this later case, the lack of approval is the result of the special event activity creating a hazard or risk to the Municipality deemed unacceptable by the SETF.

Once the application has been reviewed, external organizers are required to make a formal presentation to the members of the SETF. At that time, both conditions and requirements are negotiated between staff of HRM, other government departments and the organizers. In some more complicated event plans, internal negotiations may occur before or after the presentation between members of the SETF in order to give the event the most alternative solutions or adaptations.

Another standard requirement for all organizers who wish to close a street for a special event is that they secure 100 percent sign-off from all the abutters affected by the street or roadway closure. This requirement has existed since 1996 for new special event road closures that were not “grandfathered” (Natal Day, Canada Day, Grand Parade New Year’s Eve, Dragon Boat Festival, etc). The understanding at the time was that the public had an expectation that some of the existing event street closures would continue to exist during Civic and National holidays and with long established community events so sign off for grandfathered events were not required. The abutter approval eliminates many of the communication issues between organizers and the affected residents and businesses. This requirement for abutter sign-off may place considerable work on event organizers, but it has been found to be a successful tool in uncovering considerable opposition to a proposed event by the affected community, which might have not become evident without this process, prior to approval.

Equally important to HRM’s process is the required sign-off by all HRM Business Units whose operation is either affected by the street closure (Metro Transit, Fire & Emergency Services) or charged with maintaining public safety and traffic control (Halifax Regional Police, Traffic Services) while the road closure or parade is in progress. HRM Business Units work with the event organizer to develop a final special event plan for all street closures and parades which reduces the risk and liability to HRM.

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The final special event plan is also used to determine the cost of the required Municipal services. These Municipal service costs can be for either the direct delivery of the event (Police, Traffic, Parks, etc.) or for the disruption and relocation of a municipal service (Metro Transit, traffic signage, street cleaner, etc.) caused by a special event road closure or parade. Each business unit uses external work orders to allocate costs associated with event services which are then invoiced to the organizer following the event by the HRM Finance Department.