

**Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee
April 16, 2012**

TO: Chair and Members of the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee



SUBMITTED BY: _____
Peter Stickings, Acting Director, Planning & Infrastructure

DATE: February 23, 2012

SUBJECT: Climate Change Workshop Round II – Eastern Passage and Cow Bay

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

This report originates from:

- Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee (ESSC) Information Report, May 5, 2011: Climate Change Workshop – Eastern Passage/Cow Bay

BACKGROUND

In 2003, the Climate SMART (Sustainable Mitigation and Adaptation Risk Toolkit) program was initiated in response to community concerns regarding global climate change and the impacts being felt in the Region. The goal of the Climate SMART initiative was to develop management and planning tools to prepare for climate change impacts, and to develop strategies to reduce practices that contribute to climate change in the first place. A number of tools were created and completed by 2007 including the *Climate SMART Community Action Guide to Climate Change and Emergency Preparedness (Community Action Guide)*, which was updated in 2010.

Regular communication and education efforts within the Region are needed with respect to climate change. As part of communicating the contents of the updated Community Action Guide and working with the community to prepare them for climate change emergencies, Halifax Regional Municipality's (HRM) Energy & Environment and Emergency Management Organization (EMO) submitted a joint funding application to the Province of Nova Scotia Climate Change Directorate's Climate Change Adaptation Fund. HRM was awarded funding to further the goals of the Community Action Guide through a project titled: **Public Participation Vulnerability Mapping Project, Halifax Regional Municipality – Pilot Project Eastern Passage-Cow Bay**. A community engagement session was held as part of this project on February 17, 2011, at Fisherman's Cove Interpretive Centre.

The mapping project was intended to build on the Climate SMART Initiative. The project focused on engaging an HRM community to take initiative in the creation of a Climate SMART Community Action Plan, the process for which is outlined in the *Community Action Guide*. The guide encourages communities to come together and develop Climate SMART Action Plans to help prepare for, respond to and recover from climate change-related emergency events. Since the development of the guide in 2007, HRM is not aware of any communities that have taken on the initiative to create such a plan. Therefore, Energy & Environment identified a need to bring an updated version of the *Community Action Guide* to the community to promote this resource and to start them in the process of creating such a plan through the active engagement of residents in mapping risks, vulnerabilities and resources for their communities. This project also provided an opportunity for HRM to gain helpful community knowledge relating to climate change impacts from individuals who live in the area, for use in Emergency Preparedness Planning.

This initiative helped bring attention to the Community Action Guide, created relationships between Energy & Environment, EMO, District 8 Area Councillor and community members, and has allowed HRM to develop a creative process that allows us to help communities help themselves prepare for and respond to climate change emergencies in their areas.

The community members in attendance, worked together to identify the following on maps:

- Specific areas (buildings, activities) where damage/impacts from past emergencies with natural weather events have occurred (i.e. Hurricane Juan, Hurricane Earl, heavy rains, storm surge events, forest fires);
- Specific residents that are vulnerable to emergencies (i.e. seniors, those without transportation, single parent families, families with small children);
- Specific residents/buildings/facilities that are particularly exposed to hazards (i.e. located on the coast, located in a flood plain, located in low lying areas, located on a hill);
- Sensitive natural environments in the community that are vulnerable to climate change emergencies (i.e. wetlands, beaches, forested areas);
- Potential safe places in or near the community (i.e. community centres, churches, fire halls);
- Evacuation routes; and
- Location of equipment for sharing (i.e. generators).

EMO has set up Joint Emergency Management (JEM) Teams in five communities to-date in HRM, with a mission to promote awareness of local community resources, to train local agencies to work together and to provide a structure for coordinated local emergency response.

The JEM concept was created to allow community organizations to prepare for and respond quickly to a wide range of emergencies. In times of crisis, EMO can activate JEM Support Centres to coordinate humanitarian response to the JEM coverage area. These centres are facilities where trained individuals can meet to provide local input to the Emergency Operations Centre located in Dartmouth.

The JEM concept is based on the principle of "neighbour helping neighbour". In the critical hours following a crisis situation, while local and provincial response agencies are dealing with the immediate and urgent needs of the municipality, residents in affected communities need to be prepared to help themselves and to assist their neighbours, who may have been seriously impacted by the event. It is during this period that the JEM will be activated and will mobilize local resources.

Much of the rationale behind the creation of the climate change workshops was to use the existing JEM structures to work on empowering communities in climate change emergency preparedness planning.

DISCUSSION

At the time of the first mapping workshop in Eastern Passage and Cow Bay, HRM made a commitment to return to conduct a second round of mapping with residents. This second workshop was completed November 24, 2011, at Cow Bay Hall, Cow Bay.

Prior to the workshop, the symbols used for mapping were updated to be in accordance with standardized Geographic Information System (GIS) symbology.

Participants included seven local residents, Councillor Jackie Barkhouse, MLA Becky Kent, two staff members from Clean Nova Scotia, a professor and four planning students from Dalhousie University (workshop volunteers) and four HRM staff members.

Many efforts were made in an attempt to promote the event to residents well in advance of the workshop. Promotion involved placing newspaper and radio ads, putting up posters throughout the community, and contacting key local organizations and community groups to request promotion of the event. The event was also listed on several websites and in Councillor Barkhouse's newsletter and webpage.

Now that workshops are completed in Eastern Passage and Cow Bay, the focus will turn to holding these workshops in each of the five JEM areas. The Eastern Shore JEM is the next area of focus. HRM has committed to conducting this workshop in one new community each year. Energy & Environment will continue to work with EMO on this initiative.

It will be valuable to run this workshop in several different communities to see if interest and findings differ from the Eastern Passage and Cow Bay experience. Gathering information from citizens in other HRM communities will also expand HRM's corporate knowledge of climate change vulnerabilities and weather-related impacts in our region, which will continue to be digitized in our GIS.

Initial Project Assessment

This project has been successful in terms of obtaining citizen feedback on climate change vulnerabilities, weather-related impacts and adaptive capacity in Eastern Passage and Cow Bay. The GIS information will likely be used by various departments for different projects. EMO will use the information gathered for its emergency preparedness planning.

However, although HRM has promoted the idea of communities creating action plans for emergency preparedness, this has not been adopted by any community in HRM to-date. The workshop will have to be run in several other communities before HRM can gauge the level of success for this aspect of the initiative.

This mapping exercise needs to be combined with more education and information sharing on the part of HRM. A brief climate change overview was provided to participants, but little time was spent on what HRM is doing with respect to climate change and as a municipality, we are doing some great things that the public should be made aware of. There was much discussion on 'what's next' for HRM in dealing with several climate change-related issues in the community.

In moving forward with community engagement on climate change, we may wish to investigate alternative or additional approaches in an attempt to increase participation and deliver a more

robust engagement program to residents. This engagement should inspire and encourage residents to take action against climate change. The Community Energy Plan may be a useful tool in continuing with climate change education, mitigation and adaptation throughout the municipality.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no Budget Implications for this work in the 2011/2012 or 2012/2013 Operating or Project Budget. Minor expenses for the workshop were covered by D935 Energy and Environment.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Project and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Project and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT


This work involves engaging communities on climate change adaptation. The community engagement session held in Cow Bay on November 24, 2011, was in line with HRM's *Community Engagement Strategy*.

ATTACHMENTS

None

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.

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