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**Western Region Community Council
September 25, 2006**

TO: Members of Western Region Community Council

SUBMITTED BY: 

Bob Nauss, Acting Director, Community, Culture & Economic
Development

DATE: September 25, 2006

SUBJECT: **Western Commons Advisory Committee**

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Western Region Community Council requested that staff establish the Western Common Advisory Committee with the primary objective to advise on planning issues for the area designated as Wilderness Common in Western Common.

BACKGROUND

The current area of Western Commons is approximately 8,000 acres located generally west of Highway 333 South, South of Highway 103 and East of Nine Mile River waterway system (see Attachment "A"). The former City of Halifax originally owned and partially developed a small parcel around Ragged Lake as a business park. In 1995 a significant parcel of 6,000 acres was acquired from the Water Commission. A portion of these lands became the site of the new municipal waste resource facility in 1996.

In 1998, HRM planning staff in conjunction with a community base steering Committee (The Western Common Needs Assessment Committee), developed a term of reference and initiated a planning study for this area. As a result of this process a Conceptual Land Use Plan was developed for these lands which were renamed the Western Common. The assessment process also established a functional long term vision for land uses in this area. This was done to direct future, more specific planning initiatives in this area. One of the recommendations of this study was that the area designated for Wilderness Common would be planned with citizen involvement. The final document of this planning process had been adopted by Regional Council in 1999.

The delay to initiate the planning process for the Wilderness Common was created by other municipal objectives taking priority. The lands associated with the Wilderness Common have been relatively stable. All activities related to the Western Common have taken place near the Prospect Road outside of the Wilderness Common lands. The only exception was the acquisition of a 350 acre parcel which was purchased by HRM in 2003 to add to the Wilderness Common and protect the Nine Mile River. Staff have attended to other Western Common related issues including New Life Baptist Church, Prospect Road Recreation Centre as well as the expansion of Sunlife Cemetery and Indian Lake golf course. In addition to these main initiatives, several smaller issues have been addressed in relation to land ownership and land acquisition in this general area. None of these transactions would have come under the auspices of the proposed Wilderness Common Advisory group.

DISCUSSION

In accordance with Community Council resolution, Western Common Advisory Committees' main objective is to advise staff and Council on land use, planning and development matters in the area of Wilderness Common designation of Western Common. The Committee may also provide comments and recommendations to planning and development issues in the area of Western Common directly adjacent to this designation. This will be particularly applicable when the proposed use or development will affect primary objectives proposed for the particular area of Wilderness Common.

In the opinion of staff, the initial list of interested peoples included on the list generated on May 3 2000 may not be fully representative of the current interest of community groups in this area. This opinion was expressed by residents several times at the Community Council meetings. It order to

address this issue staff will advertise and initiate a process to establish a new Western Common Wilderness Advisory Committee. Applications will be received from interested and qualified persons in accordance with standard HRM practices. A Committee of ten(10) individuals will be selected with the area councillors having ex-officio member status. It is recommended that structure of the Committee will be selected by staff in consultation with Community Council and will represent, as much as possible, the interest of all applicable individuals and community groups. The designated staff will coordinate work of this committee and assist in conveyance of all recommendations to a design team for the Wilderness Common Master Plan. The Advisory Committee will provide comments and recommendations to the planning process until adoption of the Plan by Regional Council.

Conclusion

As a result of reviewing all background information and to implement recommendations of the Regional Council, staff recommends that in October 2006 Real Property Planning be authorised to advertise the selection process for the Western Common Wilderness Advisory Committee. The Committee will be selected from the list of the qualified interested individuals. The role of the committee will be to advise the design team for the Wilderness Common on planning and development issues related to these lands.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Support for the Advisory Committee is expected to be minimal and will come through Real Property Planning operating budgets including the advertising costs to solicit members. A \$40,000.00 capital item to begin planning Western Common was included in the 2005 Capital Budget.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

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

ALTERNATIVES

- 1) Community Council may not accept establishment of Western Region Advisory Committee as outlined in the staff report. This may lead into gradual deterioration of environmentally sensitive values areas within Wilderness Common section of Western Common.

Halifax Common Boundary



Legend



Halifax Common boundary

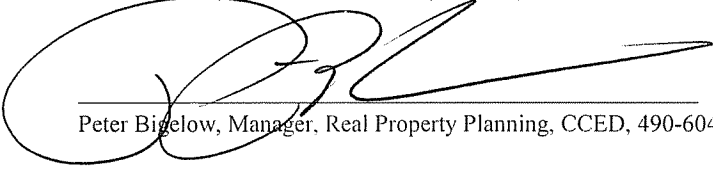
ATTACHMENTS

A Plan - Property Location, Wilderness Common portion of Western Common

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

Report Prepared by: Jan Skora, Coordinator, Real Property Planning, CCED, 490-6783

Financial Review: Barb Palmeter, Financial Consultant, Finance, 490-7221

Report Approved by: 
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<input type="checkbox"/>	First Draft for Information Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consultation <input type="checkbox"/> Approval				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Stakeholder -Internal	Approved By	Date & Time	Revised Date	Initial
	Not Required (Issue unique to originating Business Unit)				
	By-Law Rationalization				
	EMS				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Finance	Barb Palmeter			
	Fire				
	H R				
	Legal				
	P & D				
	Police				
	TPWS				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CCED	Peter Bigelow			
	Regional Planning				
	Shared				
	Library				
	RCMP				
	Water Commission				
	Councillor (s)				
	Stakeholder - External				