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**Halifax Regional Council**  
**August 31, 2004**

**TO:** Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:**

  
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George McLellan, Chief Administrative Officer

  
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Mike Labrecque, Director, Real Property & Asset Management

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**DATE:** August 12, 2004

**SUBJECT:** Renaming Big Pinehill Park

### **ORIGIN**

Regional Council requested a report on the possibility of renaming Big Pinehill Park the Jason MacCullough Memorial Park (Sept. 2/03 Item 11.1).

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that:

1. Council approve the renaming of Big Pinehill Park to Jason MacCullough Memorial Park in memory of Mr. MacCullough and as a reminder of society's need to continue efforts to curb violence within our communities.

## **BACKGROUND**

Jason MacCullough was nineteen when he was shot and killed in Big Pinehill Park while walking home from a friend's house on August 28, 1999. MacCullough was a well-liked youth who was a Junior Leader with the Dartmouth Boys and Girls Club. Police determined that Jason MacCullough's death was a random act of violence. His senseless death touched the community and the region.

Since Mr. MacCullough's death, the North Dartmouth community has taken up a number of initiatives in memorial to him. A community policing office, a bursary fund, and an annual March Against Violence were established in response to MacCullough's murder, and the criminal activity that was highlighted by MacCullough's death.

Staff was unable to determine the specific origin of the move to rename Big Pinehill Park. Instead, it seems to be an idea that was discussed intermittently in the community from a few months after MacCullough's death up to today.

Councillor Smith requested a report on renaming Big Pinehill Park at Regional Council (September 2, 2003), soon after the fourth anniversary of MacCullough's death.

## **DISCUSSION**

There a number of factors that must be considered when renaming a park:

1. The origin and historical value of the existing name
2. Characteristics of the park proposed to be renamed
3. The significance of the candidate name
4. The Purpose/Outcomes from renaming the park
5. Community opinion and/or opinion of concerned parties
6. Possible precedents and/or municipal policy regarding renaming parks

### *History - Big Pinehill Park*

No evidence of Miqamag encampments or significance can be directly attributed to Big Pinehill Park; however, owing to it's location and proximity to the harbour and lakes it certainly would have been familiar to the first nations people. An 1898 map shows in detail the area now known as Pinecrest and Highfield Park. It is unsettled, except for a building at what is now the corner of Pinecrest and Albro Lake Road. A path or rough road in the approximate location of Pinecrest Drive leads from the building, up over the highest peak of "Pine Hill," which is clearly identified on the map as being below Big Albro Lake. The present-day Big Pinehill Park is a portion of Pine Hill. Staff was not able to discover the origin of the name "Pine Hill." Pine Hill is a very

common place name. It has more descriptive significance than historical meaning.

According to maps at the Dartmouth Heritage Museum, the Pinecrest/Brule Street area of North Dartmouth appeared to be uninhabited up to 1953. By 1959, there is evidence of some development. However, a report commissioned on the Pinecrest area in the early nineties reports that in 1915, some of the land below Albro Lake was subdivided into blocks twice the length of ordinary city blocks to provide living space for the rope factory workers. The purpose of the large lots was ostensibly to provide space for the factory workers to raise crops and livestock, since their wages could not adequately support their families.

The hill leading up to Little Albro and Albro Lake has been known as Pine Hill since at least the Halifax Explosion. Newspaper articles the summer after the Halifax Explosion indicate that hundreds of Dartmouth and area residents hiked up "Pine Hill" to take pictures of the cannon from the munitions ship Mont Blanc (now restored close to its landing place, on the corner of Albro Lake Road and Pinecrest Drive). They also took pictures of the "ploughed-up turf" on Pine Hill (See John Martin's book *The Story of Dartmouth*).

Dartmouth, especially North Dartmouth, experienced a building boom during the war years and after the opening of the Angus L. MacDonald Bridge in 1955. The area north of Albro Lake Road did not become part of Dartmouth until 1961, when it was joined to the town. The previously mentioned rope factory subdivision was then re-zoned to a higher density, to allow population growth that would support the burgeoning Wyse Road and Windmill Road commercial development. This area encompasses much of the present North Dartmouth, including Pinecrest Drive and Big Pinehill Park.

Regardless of when the area was settled (1915 or post-1953), by the 1970s, the Pinecrest Drive area was well established, and small apartment buildings had already replaced many of the previous rope factory housing.

If Big Pinehill Park is renamed, the place name "Pine Hill" will live on, since it occurs so often in the surrounding area. Pinehill Road, Pinecrest Drive, and Little Pinehill Park all refer to the original name of the area. In addition, the hill's name will still be Pine Hill, although the park which comprises *part* of the hill will have a new name. It appears there will be a minimal impact on local heritage if Big Pinehill Park is renamed.

### *Big Pinehill Park Today*

Big Pinehill Park has been used as a pedestrian thoroughfare in the Pinecrest/Highfield Park area since Highfield Park was built. The park is a short-cut, connecting residents from their homes to the homes of friends, as well as commercial areas. The alternative is a round-about trip along Pinecrest, which requires doubling back on Joseph Young Drive.

Prior to the MacCullough murder, Big Pinehill Park was in disrepair. The brush and undergrowth in the park was overgrown, and many of the lights were broken. At the time of the murder, area residents were already interested in establishing the park as a green space for the entire community. These residents were organized, and were working with the city (first Dartmouth, then HRM) to that effect. A steering committee was formed, and the group identified the upgrades they hoped to accomplish. Thinning out the brush, cutting new pathways, replacing and installing more lighting, resurfacing the basketball pad, replacing the basketball hoops, and installing new playground equipment were all priorities.

After Jason MacCullough, community support for the park strengthened. The upgrades are complete, including the introduction of a new "tot lot". The community holds an annual clean-up, as well as community work days. There is also an outdoor art gallery with works supplied by the community and students. The park is well-used during the day by local children and families. Overall, the community feels the redeveloping of Pinehill Park has been a success.

*Significance of Proposed Name*

See Background for information on Jason MacCullough.

*Purpose/Possible Outcomes of Renaming the Park*

The renaming and dedication of the park serve to remind people of the senselessness of violence which has touched our community and which we must remain vigilant against. Memorializing Jason MacCullough in this way motivate people with information about unsolved crimes (specifically Jason MacCullough's murder) to finally come forward.

It should be remembered that MacCullough was only 19 when he died; considering his early involvement in the Dartmouth Boys and Girls Club, his commitment to community service could have lasted his whole life, had he lived. This further adds to the senselessness and loss to our society caused by this act of violence.

*Community Opinion and Interested Parties*

Past North Dartmouth community initiatives have shown there is support within the community for renaming of the park however the community has never had an opportunity or a vehicle to make that suggestion other than as individuals to their Councillor, staff or through the media. There is community representation through the District Nine Residents association. That group has not officially voiced an opinion on the renaming of the park; however, they have indicated that they would be willing to bring the subject up at one of their regular meetings should they be requested to do so. The next District Nine Residents Association meeting is slated for the last

Monday of September.

Council should also remember that Jason MacCullough's death prompted wide-spread attention. Residents all over HRM felt sympathy for the MacCullough family and were shocked by the senselessness of his death. The MacCullough family also supports memorializing Jason MacCullough for two reasons. MacCullough says he feels that renaming the park will help bring attention to both unsolved attacks/murders everywhere, as well as keep his son's death in the public's memory.

#### *Park Renaming - Precedents*

Neighbourhood and community parks are generally dealt with through the Community Council level; district parks and regional parks, as well as high-profile cases are addressed at Regional Council. In addition to geographic names parks are typically renamed for people or groups who have contributed to his or her community or to commemorate a historical event.

There is also a precedent for naming a park after victims of a tragedy. Graves Oakley Park in Spryfield was named after a young girl who became lost and a member of the search party looking for her who both died in a tangled swampy wooded area during a snow storm. The property where they died was later filled and made into a park by the municipality.

#### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

There are no Capital budget implications with renaming Big Pinehill Park. The cost of signage is not significant and can come from the yearly operating 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. Council may chose to have further consultation take place within the surrounding community prior to making a decision on the renaming of the park.
2. Council may choose an alternate means of memorializing Jason MacCullough, such as a plaque, or renaming a different park.
3. Council may decide Jason MacCullough has already been adequately memorialized, and choose to do nothing.

**ATTACHMENTS**

None

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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Report Reviewed/Approved by: Peter Bigelow, Manager, Real Property Planning (490-6047)

