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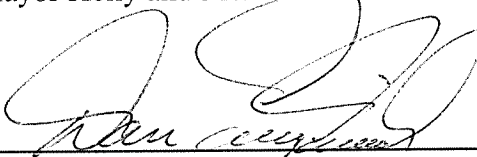


PO Box 1749
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Halifax Regional Council
November 16, 2004

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:



Dan English, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: November 8, 2004

SUBJECT: Enhancements - New Western HRM High School

ORIGIN

On July 13, 2004, Council approved the following motion related to item 7.2 (Sir John A. MacDonald High School proposed Auditorium):

“that staff provide a report at the end of August on the viability of extending the gymnasium in order to have a cafetorium in the school.”

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

Council not approve the requested \$200,000 contribution to enhance the gymnasium in the new Western HRM High School.

BACKGROUND

The Sir John A MacDonald High School in Hubley is being replaced. The School Advisory Committee has requested \$200,000 from HRM to increase the size of the gymnasium in the new school, from 8,400 square feet to 10,500 square feet. This would accommodate enhanced community usage of the facility.

DISCUSSION

In review of catchment area school facilities, the demand for gymnasium space is high. In response to this need, on April 20, 2004, Council approved enhancements to the St. Margaret's Community Centre, which will include a gymnasium for community use. Indications from the community are that this additional gymnasium space will not adequately meet the needs in the community.

Staff have concerns with the proposed contribution of \$200,000 to this project as follows:

- HRM funding has been allocated in the same catchment area, for the St. Margaret's Bay Community Centre, which includes a gymnasium. HRM has insufficient capital resources to address the many municipal needs of our communities and capital budget requests must be prioritized against those needs. When requests come to Council outside the capital budget process, it is not often clear that Council is making choices and that those choices might be different if made against other priorities.
- The approval of this project constitutes another pre-approval of the 2005-06 capital budget. This is an alarming trend, given other pressures on the capital budget. Staff will bring this issue forward for further debate in conjunction with the 2005-06 budget process.
- School construction is the responsibility of the Province of Nova Scotia. If it is Council's intent to continue to contribute to school gymnasiums in the future, discussions should take place with the Department of Education, so staff and Council are aware of these projects in advance and the capital plan can be adjusted for these additions.
- Any contribution Council makes to the new Western High School gymnasium would have to be contingent on community access to the facility. The terms of a Joint Use Agreement must be detailed and approved by Council as a condition of any HRM contribution.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Existing HRM funding has been allocated in the amount of \$1,575,000 for the St. Margaret's Bay Community Centre, which includes a gymnasium. The approval of \$200,000 for the new Western High School gymnasium constitutes a pre approval of the 2005-06 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.

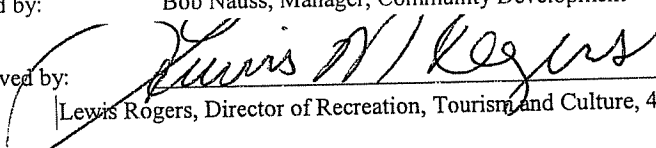
ALTERNATIVES

1. Provided the gymnasium is intended for community use, it could qualify for an area rate under Council's interim area rate guidelines. Council may therefore approve funding the enhanced gymnasium through an area rate, conditional on community consultation and successful negotiations regarding community access. Funding through an area rate does not alter the fact that municipal taxpayers dollars have already been committed to a community facility which includes a gymnasium.
2. Council may approve funding the enhanced gymnasium through the general rate, conditional on successful negotiations regarding community access. Staff will indicate during the 2005-06 budget process how this addition will impact the 2005-06 capital plan.

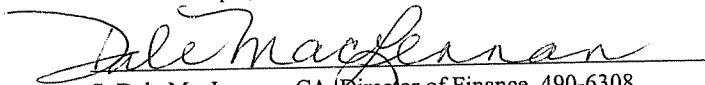
Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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