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**Halifax Regional Council**  
**June 26, 2007**

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

**SUBMITTED BY:**

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Donna Davis", written over a horizontal line.

Donna Davis, A/Director, Business Planning & Information Management

**DATE:** June 20, 2007

**SUBJECT:** Civic Address Corrections Project

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### **INFORMATION REPORT**

#### **ORIGIN**

Request from Regional Council for a report and presentation to address questions raised on June 12, 2007 regarding the Civic Address Corrections project.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Civic Address Corrections project is a Regional Council sanctioned project which has been operating since 2002. The purpose of the project is to correct civic address problems/ data which could impact the delivery of 911 services as well as other municipal services. The objective of the project is to reduce liability and risk associated with known problems in the current civic addressing system. Specific deliverables from the project include:

- a) correction of civic address problems impacting the delivery of 911 services (i.e. public safety issues) and other municipal services.
- b) coordination of all activities related to implementing civic address changes (i.e. street and community signage, notification of address changes, database reconciliation, and updates)
- c) deployment and maintenance of one central repository for civic address data within HRM ensuring all business units are accessing corporate data
- d) centralized coordination ensuring external agencies are accessing and utilizing HRM's corporate civic address database.

The Civic Address Corrections project began in 2002/03 with a pilot project in the Tantallon area and the correction of high priority issues identified by Regional Council. These high priority issues included Joseph Howe Drive/ Dutch Village Road (Halifax), High Street (Dartmouth), Oldham Road (Goffs) and Cherry Brook Road (Cole Harbour). In 2004, Civic address corrections were completed in the western portion of HRM. In 2005, corrections were completed in the communities of Eastern Shore, Musquodoboit Valley, and North Preston. The urban core project commenced in the summer of 2006 and changes emanating from the first phase went live on May 21 and June 18, 2007.

During 2007/08 budget deliberations, Regional Council was advised the Civic Address Corrections project will transition into the Civic Addressing program at the end of 07/08. Remaining address corrections required in the urban core will continue on a smaller scale basis under the Civic Addressing program.

On June 12, 2007, questions regarding the Civic Address Corrections project were raised by members of Regional Council. Staff were requested to prepare a report and presentation for Regional Council for June 26, 2007.

## **DISCUSSION**

Civic Address staff were not in attendance at the Regional Council meeting on June 12, 2007. Staff have reviewed the recording from the meeting in order to understand the specific questions raised by members of Regional Council. No further issues have been brought to the attention of staff since the meeting on June 12<sup>th</sup>. The questions are discussed under the following topics:

## **1. Public Safety Committee**

The current membership of the Public Safety Committee consists of representatives from HRM Fire Services, Halifax Regional Police, HRM Integrated Dispatch Services & 911 Center, HRM CAD/RMS, and EHS - Emergency Health Services. Civic Addressing staff, including the Civic Addressing Coordinator, also sit on the committee. The committee held four meetings since January 2007 to review proposed civic address changes in the current project phase. In a number of instances, the committee reviewed the same issues a number of times, usually at the request of the area Councillor or as a result of a petition received from residents and businesses experiencing an address change.

Members of the Public Safety Committee also supported staff by conducting site visits, talking to residents concerned about proposed address changes, writing letters to explain and confirm the position of the respective emergency response sector, conducting GPS exercises to test new technology, and reviewing issues on an individual basis from the perspective of their agencies when requested by civic addressing staff.

In addition, direct consultation with 17 Fire stations within the project area were held in May 2006 at commencement of the urban core project. See Appendix A for a listing of fire stations consulted. The purpose of the meetings was to gain an understanding of issues fire responders have with respect to existing streets and civic addresses. Civic Addressing staff met with 4-5 members of Fire Services at each of these stations over a one month period.

Over the past five years, the membership of the Public Safety Committee has changed as the project moved across HRM. To date, total membership has involved 46 members of staff and emergency personnel. The following is the break down of the committee over the five year period:

EHS - 2 members  
HRM Police - 3  
911 dispatch & EMO - 7  
Fire Services- 19  
RCMP - 8  
Staff - 7

Four of the current Public Safety Committee members have been serving on the volunteer committee for the entire five year period. The commitment of the emergency response community to the Civic Address Correction project has been astounding. The work of the civic addressing project would not have been possible without the dedication and commitment of these volunteers to support the project and help staff assess situations of public safety. The committee has been instrumental in helping develop guidelines and criteria for making decisions concerning public safety issues. The committee has been a sounding board, an educational vehicle for staff, and a check on the consistency of decisions across HRM regarding addressing and public safety concerns.

Staff estimate the current advisory network established among the emergency response community from the various phases of this project numbers in excess of 100. Staff continue to draw upon these established contacts to review various situations and aid in decision making regarding public safety issues around civic addressing.

## **2. By-Law C-300 and Administrative Order #29**

The Civic Addressing By-law and Policies were adopted by HRM Regional Council in February 2002. At the time of adoption, staff advised the documents were a major step forward for the municipality and that considerable research and input had been received in the preparation of the documents. Council also were advised that since the by-law and policy were inaugural, staff expected fine tuning of the provisions would be required after working with the documents for a period of time.

In a presentation to Council in June 2005 regarding the progress of the Civic Address Correction project, staff advised it is necessary to review and revise aspects of the by-law and policies, in particular revision to the guidelines associated with Administrative Order #29. Five years experience in working with the Public Safety Committee have highlighted a number of inconsistencies in the civic addressing guidelines appended to the policies. There are contradictions in the guidelines with what is now known to be public safety concerns associated with civic addressing. These areas focus on civic suffixes (i.e. alphas), street name lengths, and double barrelled street names, to name a few. Several of the appended guidelines are contrary to the guidelines and principles on which the Public Safety Committee have been providing advice. Section B9 and B10 of the Civic Numbering guidelines are a case in point. Based on work with the committee, it is clear the application of these guidelines would in fact cause more public safety concerns.

Staff have been cataloguing recommended changes and are preparing revised versions of the by-law, policies and guidelines. A specific set of guidelines need to be developed and incorporated in the policy guidelines for renaming and renumbering streets that take into account the complexity of these decisions and the now known public safety factors involved in making these decisions. Staff anticipate review of these revised documents by HRM business units as well as the Public Safety Committee prior to the end of the calendar year. Any changes to the by-law and policies will require Regional Council approval.

Several examples were brought forward by Council members regarding apparent confusion between the By-law C-300 and Administrative Order #29. It is staff's opinion the issue quoted by two Councillors regarding Section 5 of By-law C-300 does not constitute a contradiction with policies in Administrative Order #29. Section 5 (2) (b) speaks to the posting of civic numbers and specifically that civic numbers shall be posted in numeric form versus the written word (i.e 79 instead of "seventy- nine"). It is important to clarify that this section has not been interpreted by staff to be the basis to exclude or change civic addresses including suffixes (i.e. alphas or halves).

Similarly, the question regarding the “apparent discrepancy” between Section 3, 4 and 5 of Administrative Order #29 was responded to accurately by Councillor Walker. Section 3 states a street shall not be renamed unless there is a recognized issue with the name. Recognized issues for street renamings are validated through the Public Safety Committee. Sections 4 and 5 deal with non-safety related changes to street names, often referred to as “vanity” name changes. In this circumstance, a fee of \$2000 is charged for such requested changes and unanimous consent is required to proceed with the name change. Unanimous consent is not required for street name changes involving a public safety concern. If this were the case, none of the street name changes that occurred over the past 5 years would have happened.

### **3. Specific Issues of Council Members**

#### **a) Spring Avenue- Councillor McCluskey**

The issue of Spring Avenue was reviewed by the Public Safety Committee on January 9, 2007 at the request of Councillors Karsten and Younger. The discussion was held in the context of reviewing general issues associated with the use of suffixes in civic address numbering. Other streets being renumbered such as Rocky Lake Drive and Shore Drive, Bedford, were reviewed as well. The Committee reconfirmed the need to re-address these streets to improve the safety of response.

There are several issues and concerns with the use of suffixes in civic addressing number schemes. Across HRM, suffixes have been used in civic addresses because pre-existing number schemes do not allow for future and infill development. In other cases, suffixes have been self assigned. The result has been an inconsistent application and use of suffixes. The Public Safety Committee have consistently expressed concern about the inconsistent and in some case, downright nonsensical use of suffixes to deal with inadequate, pre-existing numbering schemes. This inconsistency in use can cause confusion and delay in the delivery of emergency services as well as other everyday delivery services (i.e. mail, pizza, furniture, home heating oil, etc.). Emergency responders need and expect relative consistency in addressing and numbering schemes in support of their activities. It is not acceptable to reach a particular street and have to determine what numbering scheme has been applied to the street before trying to find a specific location. This is the case in large areas of Dartmouth, several areas off the peninsula of Halifax and suburban areas in the former Halifax County (i.e. Sackville).

The use of suffixes also causes challenges with some of the computerized call taking systems used to support 911 services. Most systems do not incorporate suffixes as part of the civic address and work around solutions are required. These work arounds introduce risk into the system. Lastly, suffixes and non-interval based civic numbering schemes can impact the effectiveness of GPS location systems which are based on such schema. This is a consideration for HRM given the current investment being made in GPS based technology for emergency and non-emergency services in the municipality.

Once the decision to renumber Spring Avenue was made<sup>1</sup>, it was necessary to examine the best approach to minimize impact on existing residents. Several renumbering schemes were examined to determine how best to achieve this. In order to minimize duplication of pre-existing numbers, which is a serious concern for Canada Post, a numbering scheme using a 15 foot interval and reversing the direction of numbering on the street was used to accomplish this. It is staff's opinion that this complies with the **intent** of the policies. The guidelines were used to make the best decision possible in line with the policy. If there was conflict, staff relied on the interpretation of the intent of the by-law and policies versus applying the guidelines verbatim. The challenges in making this decision again highlight the need for new guidelines which are more specific for renumbering projects and reflect the lessons learned and directions provided by the Public Safety Committee.

It is important to clarify for Council and members of the public that the renumbering of Spring Avenue is not in any way connected to future development proposals on the street nor to readily allow for land use changes on the street. Following receipt of the petition from residents on Spring Avenue, staff received a number of phone calls from residents concerned about the notion that apartment buildings and other high density forms of housing could be built on the street as a result of the street being renumbered thus making many more civic numbers available. It is important for Council and the public to understand this is not the case. Land use changes are governed and regulated by planning policies and by-laws, not civic addressing. Renumbering the street does provide future numbers in the event that land uses on the street do change. This is consistent with the provision of Section 4 (1) of the By-law C-300.

The lack of an interval based numbering schema and the resulting hodge podge of civic numbers with suffixes was one of the reasons behind the complete renumbering of Halifax peninsula in the 1960s. The previous two digit sequentially based numbering system resulted in the same jumble of numbering we currently now see in the community of Dartmouth and parts of the former County within the urban/ suburban core. On peninsular Halifax, the result was a renumbering of all the streets to an interval based system utilizing a block face grid approach. A 15 foot interval was used to develop the scheme and is still in place today.

Interval based civic addressing is an effective, sustainable, and standardized address approach. CBRM has similarly addressed their situation by renumbering streets to eliminate suffixes from civic addresses and to disallow suffixes in new numbers assigned. Suffixes are neither permitted as part of existing civic numbers nor newly assigned numbers.

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the public safety concerns, other factors considered in the decision to renumber Spring Avenue included a) the need to renumber a property in 2003 at the request of the owner because of issues they were having with their existing civic number containing a fraction b) information from a resident who indicated a previous owner on the street had experienced a delay in obtaining ambulance service.

b) Civic Address Process- Councillor Murphy-

Several comments centered on the overall process used for the Civic Address Corrections project and the role of Council in that process. The following is offered to clarify the direction of Regional Council in that regard.

During the process to adopt By-law C-300 and Administrative Order #29, Regional Council discussed the approach to be taken to manage the correction process. The direction of Regional Council at that time was the civic address correction process should be an administratively led process managed by staff and the criteria for decision making relative to whether a street name needed to change or be renumbered should be public safety concerns as articulated by the Public Safety Committee. Council agreed the process should be objectively based on public safety concerns, not political concerns. Council specifically removed themselves from this process by not agreeing to any form of appeal process. It was agreed public consultation would be limited to selecting street names if the option presented itself and the decision around whether a change needed to occur or not was not up for debate. To date, Regional Council has respected and maintained this role. There have been several reviews of the civic address correction project over the past 5 years. The project has been discussed every year during budget approval processes. To date Council has not elected to modify the process it approved in 2002.

It is important to clarify that Councillors have played an active role in the civic address corrections process but not from a decision making perspective. Councillors are engaged throughout projects in their area, kept informed of residents' concerns, and help advise staff of concerns expressed by their constituents. In many cases, a request for further review of an issue by the Public Safety Committee comes from the local councillor. To date there has been good support from Councillors for the correction projects in their areas. The process has not always been easy but working together has made it more successful.

It is Council's prerogative to review the current process and examine using a more political process with all of the challenges that such an approach entails. Staff suggest this be done with thoughtful consideration to the implications on Council's time and the implications from a risk and liability point of view if processes are put in place to let public safety decisions be made in a political forum. The one guarantee with changing civic addresses is the vast majority of people do not like to change their address- this is a given.

c) Consultation versus "A Done Deal"- Councillor Kent

Councillor Kent expressed concern regarding an issue in her district where residents were frustrated by not having an opportunity for input into the correction process. This issue came to light in one neighbourhood in particular- the Fenwick, Johnstone, Hershey, Milverton and Esson neighbourhood. As mentioned above, Council's process does not provide an opportunity for citizen input into whether the change should occur. However, if a street name has to change and a new

name has to be selected, such as is the case with duplicate street names, then residents and businesses on the streets are encouraged to participate in the selection of a new name for the street.

In the case of the aforementioned neighbourhood, the changes resulted from a confusing and unintelligent street network pattern. The focus of the correction exercise was the realignment of street names to a street network pattern that reflected the reality of how the streets were connected and typically driven (i.e what made sense in the field in terms of continuous streets). The resulting changes were sanctioned by the Fire Department who played a key role in helping staff decipher what made sense in terms of improving the situation. Unfortunately, this meant the street names were pre-determined and offered limited opportunity for input on street names. Existing street names were used for all streets except one in this neighbourhood.

Councillor Kent also raised an issue regarding confusing information being provided to area residents. Staff provided a resident with a wrong date regarding when the changes in their neighbourhood had been sent to Canada Post. Staff provided the residents with the date associated with the May 21<sup>st</sup> project (which was February 18) instead of the date of March 19 for the June 18 implementation. This was misconstrued as purposeful provision of misinformation. Council needs to be reassured this was not the case. Rather, it was a simple mistake. The situation has been explained to the resident and an apology provided for any confusion the misinformation may have caused.

#### d) Last Minute Consideration to Delay Civic Address Changes

Several Councillors expressed concern regarding the possible delay of civic address changes slated for implementation on June 18<sup>th</sup>. This in fact would have been a very serious issue if Council had seriously contemplated such action. It is important for Council to understand the issues associated with modifying the time line once critical dates in correction projects have passed. This will be addressed in the staff presentation on June 26<sup>th</sup>. These critical dates center on the requirements of Canada Post and other agencies (NSP, Aliant, Eastlink, E911, HRM CAD/ RMS, HRM Finance, ) who must manage and process these changes in line with the effective implementation dates.

### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

There are no budget implications to this report.

### **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



ATTACHMENTS

Listing of Fire Stations Consulted

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.

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Donna Davis, A/Director, Business Planning & Information Management, 490-4769

**Appendix A**

Listing of Fire Stations Consulted

<b>Station #</b>	<b>Fire Station Location</b>	<b>Date Visited</b>
2	University Avenue	09-May-06
3	West Street	08-May-06
4	Lady Hammond Road	15-May-06
5	Bayers Rd (Telephone Consult Only)	08-May-06
6	Herring Cove Rd	09-May-06
7	Knightsridge Drive (Email & Telephone Consult)	03-Mar-06
8	Convoy Run	09-May-06
9	Metropolitan Ave	10-May-06
10	Sackville Dr	08-May-06
12	Highfield Park Drive	12-May-06
13	King Street	10-May-06
15	Pleasant Street	12-May-06
16	Caldwell Road	08-May-06
17	Cole Harbour Road	18-May-06
18	Main Street	12-May-06
48	Beaver Bank Rd	08-May-06
50	Hammonds Plains Rd	08-May-06
51	Pockwock Rd	08-May-06