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Item No. 3

Halifax Regional Council
February 5, 2008

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Labrecque".

Mike Labrecque, P.Eng., Director, Transportation and Public Works

DATE: January 9, 2008

SUBJECT: Street Light Outage - Report and Repair Process

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Item 11.2.2 from the September 4, 2007 meeting of Halifax Regional Council, requested a report “regarding the possibility of community groups such as Citizens on Patrol being given the authority to identify and report on burned out street lights so that they can be replaced/repared in a timely manner.”

BACKGROUND

Council expressed concern that burned out street lights were not being repaired in a timely manner. This is considered an ongoing problem that requires resolution.

DISCUSSION

Subsequent to the Council's suggestion of engaging community groups to determine whether they would have an interest in playing a role in reporting street lights, HRM staff contacted the Halifax Regional Police (HRP). Sherry Burns, Coordinator, Volunteer Programs, indicated that HRP coordinated three Citizens on Patrol (COPS) groups - Dartmouth, Burnside and Bedford. Other COPS groups within HRM, but outside the urban area, are coordinated by the RCMP. For this exercise, the participation was limited to the three volunteer groups that worked with HRP. They were provided with a spread sheet for identifying street light outages, and had the option of phoning in identified lights needing repair to NSPI, or faxing identified fixtures to HRM staff, who would input the request to the Utility.

All three COPS groups were briefed and ready to start reporting October 15th. The first outage report was received October 17th. It was from COPS East (Dartmouth) and it included one (1) outage and was phoned into NSP Call Centre. This was followed by three (3) additional spreadsheets faxed to HRM staff over the next two weeks, from the COPS East volunteers, and one spreadsheet faxed from the Burnside volunteers. They reported a total of 101 burned out street lights. This included fixtures that were the responsibility of NSPI (68), Department of Transportation (26), and Halifax Regional School Board (7).

HRM staff met with the COPS East and the COPS Bedford volunteer groups to discuss their participation in the street lighting reporting exercise. The COPS East group indicated that incorporating a street light outage reporting function into their patrol routine would not distract from their main focus. In fact, they suggested that it could fill in during quiet times. The Bedford group had not actively participated in the exercise, and were not convinced that this task was a good fit for their nightly patrols. However, they had not ruled it out. The discussions did highlight difficulty around the identification of poles and associated civic addresses, as well as safety concerns relating to getting out of a car to confirm a civic address. Both groups suggested that an NSPI/HRM education program is needed to highlight the importance of reporting burned out street lights, and the processes available to residents for identifying fixtures needing repair.

It was concluded that if utilization of COPS to report street light outages was to be implemented on a more permanent basis, there should be consideration given to

- recognition and support by the Utility for this service
- improvement to identification process such as putting reflective numbers on power poles that have street lights
- examining the feasibility of providing the patrols with portable GPS units for outage identification.

RELATED STREET LIGHT INITIATIVES

1. HRM staff has been focusing on improving the reporting process that is used to request street light outage repairs from NSPI, and improving communications between the two groups. HRM's Call Centre and its Street Light Maintenance group respond to all requests for street light repair by informing the caller who is responsible for the specific outage repair. However, regardless of who is responsible for the repair, HRM offers to process and forward the service request to the proper organization. HRM has tracked this service for the past three months and for that period has processed 619 service requests, of which 63%, or 390 were for NSPI.

NSPI is now providing a report which identifies all HRM requested repairs that have been responded to over the previous two weeks. In addition, the report provides reasons why those not acted on have not been repaired, and their anticipated completion date. NSPI repair statistics for all outage requests within the Municipality, as well as running totals for the year is also, now, included in the report. In 2007, the utility repaired over 9,000 street lights in HRM. 1,462 of that number were repaired during the four week period beginning the middle of November, as a result of a backlog caused by two significant storms in November. NSPI attempts to repair all reported outages within seven working days of receipt of a request. In 2007, they were able to meet this turn around target 82% of the time. This is despite a turn around level of 52% during December.

2. HRM and NSPI have been jointly working to better understand the extent of unreported street lights in the Municipality. To provide some statistical basis for this, six polling districts have been targeted to determine the percentage of fixtures that are not operating at a given point in time. The districts targeted include:

NS Power Responsibility

- District 3 - Preston/Lawrencetown/Chezzetcook
- District 6 - Dartmouth East
- District 20 - Lower Sackville
- District 22 - Timberlea/Prospect

HRM Responsibility

- District 10 - Halifax North End
- District 15 - Fairview/Clayton Park

NSPI is in the process of documenting the quantity, type and location of each fixture in each of these districts HRM has agreed to identify burned out lights in each of these districts by carrying out a survey using a hand-held GPS unit. NSPI will follow up with a repair of

burned out lights based on maps created by HRM's GIS Department. This exercise is in progress and is expected to be completed by the end of January 2008. It will provide a statistical representation of unreported outages in HRM which will define the scope of the problem and lead to necessary actions, as required. In addition, the exercise will identify the cost of surveying street light information, as well as the feasibility of utilizing GPS for outage reporting.

3. The data collection being undertaken by NSPI will represent about 30% of the HRM polling districts that it is responsible for maintaining. In addition to providing a basis for outage statistics and repair timelines, this data will enable more accurate unmetered rate class bills for HRM to be developed. Bills will now be broken down to reflect the areas that have been separately inventoried. It is also hoped that this data will become a basis for a GIS data base of light fixtures for the Municipality.
4. HRM is evaluating technologies that could assist with the identification and reporting of street light outages, as well as improve reliability and reduce power consumption. These include:
 - a broader application of GPS technology. There is potential for interfacing with the existing GIS data base to provide maps with pole locations for NSPI repair crews;
 - a UNSM coordinated street light study, which is expected to be finalized this month. HRM will be made aware of street light best practices across the country as well as new and emerging technologies that offer potential energy savings. One technology of particular interest, is a remote street light monitoring system, which has the ability to conserve energy through dimming of fixtures, while at the same time provide a detailed record of light fixture status and power consumption.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Budget implications are limited to overtime costs associated with doing outage surveys.

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

There are no recommended alternatives.

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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