

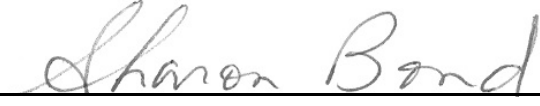


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**Item No. 2**

**Halifax Regional Council  
June 16, 2009**

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

**SUBMITTED BY:**   
Sharon Bond, Acting Director, Community Development

**DATE:** May 25, 2009

**SUBJECT:** The Halifax Town Crier

### **INFORMATION REPORT**

#### **ORIGIN**

March 31, 2009 Regional Council meeting (Item 10.4.1)

MOVED BY Deputy Mayor Hendsbee, seconded by Councillor Blumenthal that Halifax Regional Council request a staff report regarding the planning succession, in collaboration with the Town Criers Guild of Nova Scotia, for the succession of a Town Crier, with regard to a Town Crier competition to possibly coincide with Tall Ships 2009; therefore, ensuring HRM has a Town Crier in place for the 2009 Natal Day festivities. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **History of Town Criers:**

At the time of amalgamation, the former municipalities had a variety of Town Criers active within the region. In the City of Halifax, Peter Cox was the official Town Crier and was in the position since 1974. Bill Brookes held the position of Town Crier for the City of Dartmouth after a competition was held in 1990, but resigned from the position at the time of amalgamation. In the Town of Bedford, the official Town Crier was Stuart MacMillan and he continues to maintain this position. Finally, Ron Amy was the Town Crier in Waverley and area at the time of amalgamation, and by motion of the Marine Drive Community Council, August 1997, was appointed the official Town Crier for the Marine Drive, Valley and Canal Community. Ron held this position until his death in the summer of 2008.

Peter Cox officially acted in his duties as Town Crier for Halifax until 2008. In this role, Peter appeared at a variety of municipal functions including Canada Day, Natal Day, specific programs and celebrations co-ordinated by the Mayor's Office, and welcoming cruiseship passengers at the Pier 22 Pavilion from early May until late October. In addition, Peter Cox continued freelancing as the official Town Crier for Halifax participating in many private conferences, celebrations, gatherings and other functions throughout the year. The other Town Criers were also actively involved in local community programs, participating in parades and civic celebrations, as well as freelancing at private functions throughout the year.

### **HRM's Support to Town Crier:**

At the time of amalgamation, the Town Crier position was aligned with HRM Tourism Marketing Department. Upon the creation of Destination Halifax, the responsibility for the Town Crier was transferred to Culture, Recreation & Heritage. Finally, the position was realigned to Civic Events in 2003.

Only Peter Cox (City of Halifax) and Bill Brookes (City of Dartmouth) received compensation for their services. After the resignation of Bill Brookes, the position was not refilled and the annual stipend was suspended. Peter Cox continued to receive an annual honorarium of \$5,000 from Halifax Regional Municipality until 2008. The Municipality also maintained the operation of the Halifax Town Crier promotional van through HRM Fleet Services. However, this practice was discontinued in 2005 when the promotional van became the sole responsibility of Peter Cox. On March 11, 2009 Peter Cox passed away at the Dartmouth General Hospital after serving as the Halifax Town Crier for 35 years.

## **DISCUSSION**

Since the passing of Peter Cox there has been considerable discussion as to the future of a Town Crier in Halifax, and indeed the entire HRM. Much of this discussion has been centred around two specific topics:

- (1) a proper tribute to recognize Peter Cox's 35 year contribution to the community, and
- (2) the need for a succession plan to replace the Halifax Town Crier.

### **Commemoration:**

Regional Council suggested the need for a fitting tribute to Peter Cox in recognition of his 35 years of service to both the former City of Halifax and subsequently HRM. Specifically, staff was directed to consider a street or park renaming as an option. Business Planning & Information Management will be coming forward to Regional Council with an information report in early June to address these options.

### **Future Role of Town Crier:**

Regarding the future of a Halifax and/or HRM Town Crier, Civic Events and Cultural Affairs staff are exploring the best approach for a succession plan in the event that HRM Regional Council wishes to establish the position of a new Halifax / HRM Town Crier. There are a variety of considerations, research, and consultation with stakeholders, including the Town Criers Guild, before a final recommendation can be made to Council. There is also the question of whether this service is something that may be better positioned with Destination Halifax, HRM's tourism marketing division, as their role is more of an ambassador, marketing and branding the HRM. Staff will explore this over the coming business cycle.

### **Selection of Town Crier:**

There are two processes in which a Town Crier can be selected to serve a community. The first is through a traditional competition in which interested parties can submit an application to compete for the position. This would entail a request for submissions, and either a juried selection process or selection by popular vote. This could be held as its own public event or in conjunction with another civic celebration. However, the Nova Scotia Guild of Town Criers has raised concerns that this process may not produce the best candidate. Mr. Randall, Vice President of the Nova Scotia Guild of Town Criers, suggests a selection committee to interview for the position.

### **Next Steps:**

While these discussions evolve, staff will implement a number of steps to honour Peter Cox and his 35 years of service. The Halifax-Dartmouth Canada Day Committee will include a recognition page within the official 2009 Canada Day website, paying tribute to Peter Cox who officially proclaimed July 1<sup>st</sup> Celebrations in Halifax since 1974.

The Halifax-Dartmouth Natal Day Committee will also honour Peter Cox by placing a full colour tribute advertisement in the 2009 Natal Day official program which goes to 225,000 households. Peter Cox was actively involved in the Natal Day Parade for 35 years and the Natal Day Committee will also be honouring Mr. Cox at the 2009 Parade. The Natal Day Committee will post a tribute page on the official Natal Day website.

In April 2009, Peter Cox's family donated his three corner hat and the official City of Halifax Town Crier bell to the Municipality. These items have been accepted and will be cared for by the Halifax Regional Municipality. At present, staff are uncertain where these items might be put on display within HRM.

The Halifax-Dartmouth Natal Day Committee will consider hosting a Town Crier Competition as part of their 2010 program.

Discussions have been held with Stuart MacMillan, the official Town Crier for Bedford and he has agreed to take on the role of Town Crier for, 2009 Canada Day, Natal Day, and Bedford Days.

#### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

If Regional Council proceeds with a competition or selection process, a budget will have to be established. A proposed budget will be outlined for consideration and Council approval in a future 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**

None

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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