



P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 4
Halifax Regional Council
December 7, 2010

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by Acting CAO

Wayne Anstey, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: November 24, 2010

SUBJECT: Response – Convention Centre Petition

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Petition submitted to Regional Council by Councillor Sloane on November 16, 2010, Item 9.4.2.

BACKGROUND

The petition submitted by Councillor Sloane on November 16, 2010, which contained 159 names, requested that Halifax Regional Council stop the proposed Convention Centre plan until there can be a meaningful public consultation process about the economics and vision for the public investment in the Centre.

A Council Motion at the November 9, 2010 Regional Council meeting: (a) supported the development of a new convention centre, pending the conclusion of successful negotiations with the Province and the Federal Government; and (b) directed staff to enter into negotiations with the Province based on the conditions included in the in-camera presentation of November 9, 2010.

DISCUSSION

As per Regional Council's November 9th motion, HRM is proceeding with negotiations in an attempt to conclude an agreement with the Province on the proposed Convention Centre. If these negotiations result in favourable conditions to move forward, further negotiations will be conducted with Rank Inc. There is no specific project to move forward until these negotiations are complete. While the negotiation process is ongoing and the project has yet to be approved, it is important to highlight that public consultation is an important aspect of the proposal under consideration.

If public funding for the project is approved, there will be significant opportunities during the initial phase of implementation for public input. The initial Expression of Interest released by the Province contained a requirement for the successful proponent to undergo a public consultation process. The Province, in a release dated November 4, stated that "Hearing from the public on the design of the proposed convention centre is a key component of the development process of the new centre". As part of its submission, Rank Inc. included a comprehensive plan to engage citizens in the design process, which will be enacted if negotiations lead to approval of the project.

As well, there is a requirement in the new Downtown Halifax Plan for public review and comment on the design before it is submitted to the Design Review Committee (DRC) as part of the Development Approval Process. The Committee reviews qualitative elements such as design, quality of materials, and sidewalk experience, while municipal staff reviews the quantitative elements such as height, mass, setbacks, etc. Although development decisions on the quantitative elements of applications are not appealable, decisions on the qualitative aspects are appealable to Council. Regardless, no project can be approved that does not meet or exceed the rigorous design controls of the new downtown plan.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no anticipated budget implications as a direct result of the information in this report.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Project and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Project and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As noted in the Discussion section above, the convention centre proposal, if approved, will include a significant public consultation process.

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.

Report Prepared by: Paul Johnston, Coordinator of Corporate Affairs, 490-6616

Report Approved by: Original Signed by Acting CAO
Wayne Anstey, Acting CAO, 490-4229
