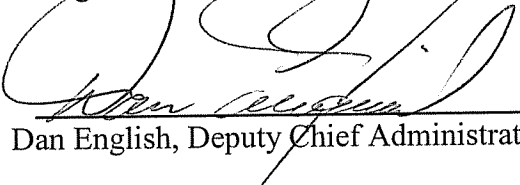


**Halifax Regional Council**  
**December 7, 2004**

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

**SUBMITTED BY:**

  
George McDellan, Chief Administrative Officer

  
Dan English, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** November 28, 2004

**SUBJECT:** **Halifax Public Libraries Needs Assessment and Master Facilities Plan**

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**ORIGIN**

HRM Administration requested the Halifax Regional Library Board develop a Master Facilities Plan detailing short and long-term planning needs.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Regional Council accept the Halifax Regional Library Board Needs Assessment and Master Facilities Plan and refer same to the Capital Budget Plan process.

## **BACKGROUND**

In phase one of the plan development Library staff and Real Property and Asset Management staff completed a Facilities Inventory evaluating facilities and identifying maintenance issues. In phase two, after public tender, Terrain Consultants were engaged to complete a Needs Assessment and Master Facilities Plan. The Final Report was approved by the Halifax Regional Library Board in September 2004 a copy of which is attached.

## **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of the Needs Assessment and Master Facilities Plan is to make recommendations and establish priorities with respect to capital development within Halifax Public Libraries system, within the planning timeframe of 2004-2014. Issues identified at the project outset include the need to:

- Build capacity in an environment of fiscal constraint.
- Strengthen Branch facilities while establishing a Central Library.
- Consider trends and factors impacting operations such as population, demographics, commuter patterns, urban/rural shifts and service needs.
- Establish development priorities and timeframes.
- Align priorities and plans with HRM's Regional Plan.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The Terrain Consulting Team followed a multi-phase research approach to complete the Needs Assessment and Master Facilities Plan. Key steps in the research process included a review of reports and studies completed for the Halifax Public Libraries, secondary research covering best practices within other Library systems in Canada and the United States, an assessment of space standards, population analysis and projections, an overview of future development in HRM, extensive interviewing of Library stakeholders and focus groups as part of community consultation.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YEARS 0-5 (2004 - 2009)**

### **First Priority: Spring Garden Road Library/Central Library**

It is recommended that a new Central Library be established on Spring Garden Road, or in the immediate vicinity, and that it serve as both a Branch to the immediate catchment area and the Central Library for the Region.

## KEY FINDINGS SUPPORTING THE PRIORITY

- Stakeholders expressed strong support for the valuable role played by the Library and its support of lifelong learning and literacy.
- Stakeholders supported location of the Central Library in downtown Halifax, the commercial, cultural and educational centre of HRM.
- First choice for site selection was the corner of Spring Garden Road and Queen Street; second choice was on Queen Street at Clyde Street.
- A Central Library consolidates collections, services and staff resources providing centralized support to the network of branches from a strong core.
- A Central Library serves as a resource centre to business, government and the public and consolidates rather than duplicates expensive technologies and collections to meet community need.
- A Central Library stands as a testament to the importance a municipality places on public institutions and its commitment to provide excellent education resources and information to its citizens.
- The report confirms the findings of previous studies, most significantly the A.J. Diamond report, that renovation of the current facility would not be fiscally prudent since the return on funds expended would not result in cost savings or accommodate space needs.
- The report further confirms that demolition and construction on the current site is more expensive than construction of a new building and would incur additional costs of up to \$1.8 million to move the library contents twice.

Spring Garden Road Library is a key facility within the Capital District anchoring the Spring Garden Road business district. The Capital District Public Facilities Needs and Opportunities Report recommended development of a Central Library as a first priority.

The present facility has serious and urgent building deficiencies that pose potential health and public safety liabilities. While the future of the facility remains uncertain, maintenance and repair efforts coordinated with Real Property and Asset Management have managed to keep the building in operation. More and more money needs to be spent annually with minimal return on investment. The worst case scenario is that the building will be forced to close resulting in a complete loss of public service.

HRM Council and the Halifax Regional Library Board need to work in partnership to move this priority forward.

### **Second Priority: Woodlawn Library**

It is recommended that space constraints at Woodlawn Library be addressed by expanding in the current location or by establishing a new branch in one of a number of potential sites in the area.

#### KEY FINDINGS SUPPORTING THE PRIORITY

- The Woodlawn Library is heavily used by the community and has the 5<sup>th</sup> highest circulation per capita (13.2 items) and highest circulation per square foot (84.06 items) in the system.
- The catchment area population is currently stable but projected to grow based on proposed development in the Russell/Morris Lake area and justifies a branch of at least 12,000 sf. (current 4000 sf.)
- Stakeholders expressed a preference for remaining at the current site in Staples Plaza but would like more resources, program rooms and space, more computers and public seating.
- If the library were relocated, ample parking and access was considered the most important site selection criteria. Site options include Penhorn Mall, Tacoma Drive, the Atlantic Superstore and the NSCC Akerley Campus.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YEARS 6-10 (2010 - 2014)**

### **Third Priority: Bedford Library/Keshen Goodman Library**

It is recommended that within 5 years or less, consideration should be given to acquiring more space through a new Bedford Library, potentially located in the northern portion of Bedford and that the Keshen Goodman Library be expanded.

#### KEY FINDINGS SUPPORTING THE PRIORITY

- Bedford South and Bedford West will be receiving the majority of new development growth in HRM.
- Growth will put substantial strain on the Keshen Goodman Library given the location of the current Bedford Library at the more easterly end of Bedford.
- New North Bedford Library could serve Fall River and Waverley that will also see development within the timeframe.

- Consideration should be given to securing a site in Bedford North given the potential for new development in Rocky Lake area, extension of Burnside Drive, and shifting traffic patterns in the area.
- New residential and regional commercial uses will form a new hub within the Region.
- Keshen Goodman will require expansion since the population will almost double to 91,410 by 2021 in the branch catchment area.

#### **Fourth Priority: Musquodoboit Harbour/Eastern Rural HRM**

It is recommended that this area be monitored to determine future capital requirements.

#### **KEY FINDINGS SUPPORTING THE RECOMMENDATION**

- No significant growth is anticipated in the short term but the area will experience impacts from HRM growth management policies with few projects in line for approval.
- Middle Musquodoboit meets the benchmarks for a rural branch which could be considered if HRM plans any recreational or similar development in the area.
- Musquodoboit Harbour adequately serves its area and will remain at its current location; a joint facility could be considered if Recreation has plans for development in the area.
- Mobile Library use is low in the Porter's Lake area and residents prefer to use the Cole Harbour Library.
- Eastern Shore use of Cole Harbour Library needs to be monitored.
- Eastern Passage and Fall River need to be addressed through Library service delivery from other suburban facilities.

#### **ONGOING MAINTENANCE**

Halifax Public Libraries needs to maintain Branches as safe, pleasant, accessible and efficient facilities for clients and staff. Maintenance requirements should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

## **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:**

### **First Priority - Spring Garden Road Library/Central Library**

The total capital cost (including collection and furniture and equipment) is projected to be \$26,000,000 estimated in 1998 (may have to be adjusted by inflation). The current facility has an operating budget of \$2,200,000. There are no library reserve funds to draw on and no off-setting cost savings with the exception of maintenance costs. Since 1997/98, \$761,200 in Capital budgets has been spent to keep the facility operating by Real Property and Asset Management and the Library.

The Halifax Regional Library Board has engaged Ketchum Canada to prepare a Central Library Capital Campaign Study to evaluate fundraising capability. This report will be completed in January 2005.

The Halifax Regional Library Board seeks Council support to include the Central Library as a high priority within the Federal infrastructure program, and explore cost sharing opportunities with the Province. Capital funds will be required beginning in 2005-06 and each year thereafter to complete the project by 2009. The 2004-05 Library approved capital budget is \$49,000 and projected by Finance to remain flat. In 2005-06, the Library will need \$500,000 to engage an architect and initiate design drawings needed to spark a community capital campaign. Additional funds may be required to acquire the building site. Funds are required within the operating budget to conduct a fundraising capital campaign.

### **Second Priority - Woodlawn Library**

Cost implications vary depending on the expansion solution.

1. If the Library remains in leased space, the operating budget would require an increase to cover additional lease costs, additional staff, collections, furniture and equipment of approximately \$343,000.
2. If a Library is constructed by a developer leasehold and fit up, capital costs are estimated at \$1 million (comparable to Tantallon Library).
3. If a stand-alone facility is constructed, capital costs would increase to \$2.5 million.

### **Third Priority: Bedford Library/Keshen Goodman Library**

Relocation of the current facility to a larger location in South Bedford could take some pressure off the Keshen Goodman Library pushing out the timeframe for expansion. Planning needs to be initiated to establish a site and acquire land if necessary for a North Bedford Library.

Capital and operating funds will be required for both projects. In year 5, costs will be determined.

**Fourth Priority: Musquodoboit Harbour/Eastern Rural HRM**

No change is projected.

**OTHER BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

The Library Capital budget needs to be increased beyond the base of \$49,000 in order to refurbish one branch Library per year. If it is not feasible to increase the capital budget, sufficient funds could be added to the maintenance account in the operating budget. In 2005-06, the Library proposes to refurbish the Captain William Spry Library. Funds required are estimated at \$375,000 based on the cost in 2004-05 to renovate the Halifax North Memorial Library. Similar amounts will be needed annually to close the maintenance gap.

**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN**

This report complies with the Halifax Public Library Business Plan. Recommendations need to be incorporated into the Multi-Year Financial Strategy and Capital and Operating Budget beginning in 2005-06.

**ALTERNATIVES**

The following alternatives were considered:

**Spring Garden Road Library/Central Library**

- a. Maintain status quo (do nothing). Continue to budget approximately \$250,000 annually for repair and maintenance to keep the building operating. The repair cost could be higher as a result of unforeseen systems failure.

**Risk: Facility may be closed without notice with no service provided.**

- b. Renovate existing building with no addition in square footage. 1998 cost estimate is \$7.3 million plus \$1.8 million for moves plus lease cost for a temporary space. Return on investment would be minimal.
- c. Renovate existing building and add addition of 58,000 sf. on current site. 1998 cost estimate of \$7.3 million for renovation plus \$14.6 million for addition plus \$1.8 million for moves plus lease cost for temporary space.

Results in a building at the same cost as building new but with reduced functionality, less space and high annual maintenance costs.

### **Woodlawn Library**

Maintain status quo. Facility does not meet the needs of the community and remains below space standards for the catchment population.

### **Bedford Library/Keshen Goodman Library**

- a. Close current branch and build one large library serving Bedford West and South and Waverley/Fall River.
- b. Construction in Bedford could delay the need for expanding Keshen Goodman Library in the short term but expansion remains necessary.

None of the alternatives are recommended.

### **Musquodoboit Harbour/Eastern Rural HRM**

Proceed sooner than recommended with construction of a Library in Middle Musquodoboit.

### **Ongoing Maintenance**

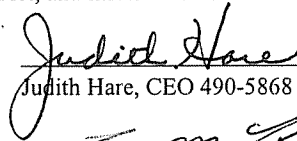
Maintain status quo. Buildings continue to deteriorate and service to the public is impacted.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Needs Assessment and Master Facilities Plan - Final Report - July 2004

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.

Report Prepared by:

  
Judith Hare, CEO 490-5868

Report Approved by:

  
Leo McKenna, Chair, Halifax Regional Library Board