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Item No. 4
Halifax Regional Council
March 22, 2011

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by Director
Phillip Townsend, Director, Infrastructure and Asset Management

DATE: March 4, 2011

SUBJECT: Petition – Take Back Halifax Common

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

A petition was presented on October 12, 2010, by Councillor Watts in which 2,135 persons signed an on-line petition requesting Council “Please! Give us back our Common! --- no more publicly-subsidized profit-driven concerts preventing our use of the Halifax Common, public green space designated for the free access of ALL citizens”.

BACKGROUND

Council approved the terms to host concerts and other events on the Halifax Common in 2007. Those parameters called for a number of different types of events to satisfy a variety of levels of interest, affordability and accessibility to benefit the citizens of HRM. To date, there have been a number of major events including the Rolling Stones Concert, Paul McCartney, Black Eyed Peas, Keith Urban, the Membourtou 400 Mawiomí, Canada Games Skating Oval Public Skates, New Year’s Eve Celebrations and the Canada Games events.

DISCUSSION

Council and staff continue to use the parameters set out in the 1994 Halifax Common Plan approved by the City of Halifax and re-examined and refined by HRM Council on March 6, 2007, as the guidelines for approval of individual events. At that time, specific deliberation and subsequent support was given to private sector cultural and recreational events (see Attachment 1).

On March 30, 2010, Regional Council examined the issue again and rejected a motion to eliminate major concerts from the Common by a vote of 2-19.

Council may at any time choose to consider changes to accommodating major events on the Halifax Common through the Regional Council process.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications at this time.

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

The policy basis for allowing major events on the Halifax Common was the result of a series of public workshops conducted as part of the Halifax Common Plan process.

Since that time, positions on both sides of the issue have been presented to Council and to individual councillors and have been the subject of several public opinion polls.

ATTACHMENTS

Excerpts from the 1994 Halifax Common Plan, pertaining to commercial events on the Common

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/agenda.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: Peter Bigelow, Manager, Real Property Planning, 490-6047

Attachment 1
Extracts from the Common Plan
Policies Approved by Halifax City Council, Halifax Common Plan (1994)

Private Commercial Use and Funding Policies

- 7.1 The city recognizes and supports the contribution made by privately sponsored cultural and recreational events on the Halifax Common.
- 7.2 Private use of city-owned open space for temporary special events will be permitted through Council approval. In giving its permission, Council will be satisfied that the commercial and private event is for the benefit of the city and that it satisfies all goals, objectives and policies in this plan.
- 7.3 In permitting sponsorship of temporary events on the Common, the city will ensure that any promotion or advertising during the event is consistent with and supportive of the overall cultural and social values of the city and its citizens. Council may identify specific products and causes that will not be permitted.
- 7.4 The city will investigate ways to keep the public informed in advance of privately sponsored events.
- 7.5 Commercial sales will be permitted in conjunction with temporary events, subject to acceptable community standards, as judged by Council.
- 7.6 Private donation of permanent facilities should be permitted provided this does not restrict public use and the display of the donor's name meets city standards.
- 7.7 The city will encourage joint ventures with private or non-profit groups to develop and operate cultural and recreational facilities on the Common.
- 7.8 User charges, where applicable, will be the same as for the rest of the City.