

**Item No. 3**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**March 29, 2011**  
**April 5, 2011**

**Committee of the Whole**

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

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed by Director  
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Paul Dunphy, Community Development

**DATE:** March 24, 2011

**SUBJECT:** Community Facility Master Plan – Project Updates  
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**INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

Regional Council approved the Community Facility Master Plan (CFMP) in principle on May 27, 2008.

Subsequently, the following reviews were approved by Regional Council:

1. March 9, 2009 Dartmouth Sportsplex Renewal and Revitalization Report
2. June 2, 2009 Peninsula Recreation Facilities and Services Review
3. October, 2010 Halifax Forum Renewal Analysis (additional scope related to Peninsula Recreation Facilities and Services Review)

**BACKGROUND**

The Community Facility Master Plan (CFMP) provided a policy framework for community facility development and maintenance. It also identifies topics requiring further detailed work. The 3 reports identified in the origin section of the report are such studies. The initiation of these reports is noted in the Origin section of this report. Each has been initiated in response to Council direction.

This report is intended to be a milestone update for Council on these significant community facility studies which have been undertaken.

Further work is required on each before it can be considered as a project. Once this work is done, each one will be discussed in the context of future business planning and budget priorities.

The one exception is the Bedford Hammonds Plains Community Centre which is a proposed partnership project with the Province of Nova Scotia as a result of a new High School project.

## **DISCUSSION**

Strategic planning for the construction, operation, consolidation and decommissioning of community facilities is imperative. In an effort to provide fiscally sound principals and alternatives to Regional Council, the CFMP outlines recommendations that are structured to allow the inventory and operations of community facilities to be more effective for communities, and more responsive financially relative to cost recovery.

The vast majority of the inventory owned by the Municipality is aging, and less effective than newer purpose built inventory from a “building operations” perspective. Some facilities also fall short of their mark, given their age and building type, relative to community expectations for service delivery.

Recently, the opening of several new community facilities, regional facilities, and a new multi-district facility have provided citizens and Regional Council with a renewed expectation for appropriate leisure, sport, and recreation experience.

The attached reports review the operational realities at several of the Municipally owned facilities in the older regions of the HRM. The Regional Centre is designated through the Regional Plan as an area for planned repopulation. It is imperative to ensure that the recreation, sport and leisure infrastructure available is recapitalized or replaced appropriately in order to meet the needs of residents.

The analysis in each of the attached reports included a significant component of Community Engagement, and the recommendations developed in most cases reflect the wishes of citizens. Following is a brief overview of each study:

### **1. Peninsula Recreation Facility and Services Review**

Study focus for this analysis specifically included St Andrews Centre, Needham Centre, George Dixon Centre, Citadel Community Centre, Halifax Forum Complex, and a replacement discussion regarding the Bloomfield Gymnasium. Analysis relative to the Centennial Pool was not done as the recent upgrades for that facility have positioned it nicely into the future. However, consideration was taken for future siting of a replacement 50M pool.

In each of these cases, the facilities are aging and are very limiting in terms of the quality of experience staff are able to provide for citizens. Significant recapitalization needs have been identified in every case, and a replacement facility is recommended for one site. Recommendations for each facility are summarized as follows:

- a. St Andrews Centre – This facility is located in the heart of a diverse and dynamic neighbourhood, and is to be described as vibrant and alive. Staff and community are working well together to provide well rounded and well supported programs

and services at this location. The facility is bustling at all hours, with day-time focus on adults, new Canadians, and regional seniors programs. After school, evening and weekend hours are filled with local programs and services and some regional gymnasium rentals. Wheelchair basketball utilizes this facility as well. The building, though clean and as welcoming as possible, is an old school with limited windows, poor lighting, old heating and mechanical infrastructure, and no outdoor play / community space. The driveway to the facility is much like that of entering a deserted and dilapidated area. The driveway and parking area are in complete disrepair.

The full Report recommends that this facility be retrofitted to enhance the quality of experience and operations of the facility. It is suggested that such a retrofit will allow for 20-25 years of additional benefit for the local and regional community at that site. This proposed retrofit is suggested to be in the \$3M +/- range and is therefore thought to be a significant value for significant benefit to the community, and is a solid example of the value of upgrading a facility vs replacement.

- b. Needham Centre – This facility suffers from extreme design flaws which limit overall benefits for the community. The facility is aging and very expensive to operate. Some of that operational expense is as a result of a small pool located in the facility, other costs from program spaces not being functional for staff and community. It should be noted that, during the public consultation process, there was a significant volume of concern raised by the community relative to the future of this facility. A large voice of concern came from clients of the Needham Day-Care business that leases space in the facility. These parents enjoy the convenience of the Centre's location as well as access to the facilities other features such as a pool and gymnasium. Other vocal user groups included a local group of senior citizens who utilize the pool on a regular basis for water exercise classes, and youth who participate in regular programs.

The full Report recommends that there be a new community recreation facility constructed in this community, and that this existing facility be replaced. This replacement will allow for the construction of a purpose-built facility that will meet the needs of this growing North End community. The replacement will allow for a higher level of participation from residents, and will perform at a higher operational level from a "systems" and cost recovery perspective. The analysis however does not support the construction of a pool at a replacement facility. The CFMP does not recommend that pool inventory be constructed as part of community recreation centres. It is a highly specialized and expensive facility type that is more effectively provided to citizens as part of the Multi-District facility inventory.

- c. George Dixon Centre, Citadel Community Centre, Bloomfield Gymnasium – Analysis at these facilities did not result in significant capital recommendations.

- i. For the most part, the George Dixon is functioning effectively. Comments, suggestions and concerns heard from citizens related specifically to program and service enhancements.
- ii. Citadel Community Centre is new, and is an operational partnership with the HRSB. Currently, the facility operates more as a “sport hub” than a community centre. There was no evidence at this time that citizens wanted or would benefit from a different operational approach, capital retrofit of the available undeveloped square footage in the facility, or program and service enhancements.
- iii. Bloomfield Gymnasium – In order for the Bloomfield redevelopment project to proceed, there is a need for the replacement of the gymnasium at that facility. Consideration for the replacement to take place at the Halifax Forum was reviewed as part of the Halifax Forum revitalization Report.
- iv. Halifax Forum Complex – This facility review was initiated as part of the Peninsula recreation Facilities Review, and resulted in the initiation of a more detailed analysis. That report will be summarized in the section below.

Regional Council will be asked to consider these enhancements in coming years. They are not proposed for the 2011 / 2012 budget year.

**2. Dartmouth Sportsplex Revitalization and Renewal Project**

The CFMP recommendation for this facility was based on a proposal by the Dartmouth Sportsplex Board of Directors to expand the facility with the construction of a fieldhouse. It was necessary to review this request to determine whether it was a reasonable course of action. The accompanying report explains the extensive consultation and analysis that took place, and the subsequent expansion and operational recommendations that were developed. The resulting course of action is somewhat different than initially proposed, and will ensure that the Dartmouth Sportsplex is positioned once again, as a viable and significant service delivery inventory for the region, as a multi-district sport, recreation and leisure facility. The proposed enhancements are significant, and will require a multi-year approach that will result in appropriate service provision, enhanced revenue generation, community and regional pride. Regional Council will be asked to consider these enhancements in future budget cycles.

**3. Halifax Forum Revitalization Report**

The CFMP recommendation regarding the Halifax Forum Complex was in response to citizen comments regarding the lack of a municipally owned multi district facility on the Peninsula.

The Forum site is desirable for future development or enhancement of recreation, sport and leisure inventory, and this analysis was able to clearly identify the opportunities and risks associated with any anticipated enhancement.

Extensive public consultation, discussion, and analysis identified that, a full redevelopment of the site to enhance service delivery by expanding on the existing

arenas, was not warranted at this time. The existing facility is aging and does require upgrading. The attached detailed report identifies these upgrades and capital costs. Regional Council will be asked to consider these enhancements in future budget cycles.

4. Bedford High School - Community Centre & Artificial Turf Enhancement

This proposed partnership project between Halifax Regional Municipality, Halifax Regional School Board, and the Province of Nova Scotia represents a savings in construction costs to the Municipality in the order of \$2.6M dollars. In addition, public interest and support of such partnerships represent significant overall benefit to the community. Examples of similar partnerships, relationships and benefits currently exist as a result of recent enhancements at Citadel High School and Porters Lake Elementary School. A Recommendation Report is included in the Committee of the Whole agenda for Council consideration related to the Community Enhancement of the new Bedford High School.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

With the exception of the Bedford Hammonds Plains Community Centre and Turf enhancement, Council is not being asked at this time to allocate any funds in the 2011 / 2012 Budget, or future budgets. Staff will undertake further work on these projects and bring them forward for consideration, prioritization, and phasing in future budget cycles.

**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**

Community Engagement took place as a significant cornerstone in each of the four CFMP projects listed above. Each Community Engagement is described in detail in the attached bound Reports.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Peninsula Recreation Facility and Services Review
2. Dartmouth Sportsplex Revitalization and Renewal Project
3. Halifax Forum Revitalization Report
4. Community Facility Master Plan Recommendations

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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: Betty Lou Killen Coordinator Client Services, Community Development 490.4833

Report Approved by: Original Signed  
Doug Rafuse Manager, Service Delivery, Community Development 490.6205

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#### ATTACHMENT 4: Community Facility Master Plan Recommendations

##### 1. Recommendation #15: Peninsula Halifax Facility Study

That the Peninsula Halifax Facility Study is completed and includes a detailed review of the Needham/George Dixon/Bloomfield facilities. The study should be expanded to include future operations of Centennial Pool; a complete operational review of Needham, Bloomfield and George Dixon Recreation Centres; and HRSB future use of Highland Park Junior High School as a consideration for combining servicing for Needham area residents. If HRSB determines to maintain and expand Highland Park, discuss opportunities to jointly develop and operate a smaller gym/community facility on the current school site. A determination should come forward as to whether or not these facilities should be recapitalized.

##### 2. Recommendation # 24: Construct Joint Use Fieldhouse for Dartmouth Sportsplex and High School

That HRM, Dartmouth SportsPlex and HRSB upon completion and acceptance of the business and operating plan for Dartmouth Sportsplex Field-House development addition in the first term of the CFMP, proceed to construction.

##### 3. Recommendation # 25: Peninsula Multi District Facility/Sports Venue

That dependent upon the outcome of feasibility study it is recommended to construct a new Multi District Hub facility on the Peninsula as a consolidation of Needham Community Centre and Centennial Pool (future). This new facility will serve a variety of functions including an incentive to return to living on the Peninsula. This facility will act as the primary competitive swimming facility for Halifax, with leisure aquatic elements, fitness centre and multi purpose space inclusive of arts and culture activity and display areas. The facility may connect to the Halifax Forum/Civic Arena. If this is the chosen site, the project could be built in two stages - construction of a 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> fitness centre added to the existing Forum and the pools added in a second stage development. Other options for 50 metre pool development could be in conjunction with Dalplex or Mainland Common.

4. Recommendation # 33: Junior High and High School Gym Access

That building upon the successful relationship established with HRSB on the development and operation of Citadel Public Access Gymnasium, HRM continues to develop of this type of facility in partnership with HRSB.

A full Recommendation Report is included in the Committee of the Whole agenda for Council consideration related to a Community Enhancement of the new Bedford High School.