

Item No. 10.1.4
Halifax Regional Council
January 15, 2013

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original signed by 
Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer

Original Signed by 
Mike Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: January 7, 2012

SUBJECT: Cole Harbour School Enhancement

ORIGIN

- April 2012 announcement by the Minister of Education for the construction of an Alterations and Additions project for the Cole Harbour District High School, with the project to be completed by September 2014.
- April 17, 2012 Motion of Council that: “Staff prepare a report regarding the recently announced high school project in Cole Harbour including any needs for community enhancement in the area, potential partnerships with the Province and possible infrastructure funding opportunities.”
- December 11, 2012 Regional Council Information Report, Recreation Needs Assessment – Cole Harbour.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

- *HRM Charter*, Section 79 (1) including:
 - (k) recreational programs; and
 - (x) lands and buildings required for a municipal purpose.
- Community Facility Master Plan, approved by Regional Council on May 27, 2008.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON PAGE 2

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Approve entering into a joint partnership with the Province to add 2,100 sf of gymnasium space, at an estimated net cost of \$630,000, as a community enhancement to the Cole Harbour Additional and Alterations Project;
2. Request the addition of required funding in the 2014-15 project budget as outlined in the financial implications section of this report; and
3. Approve entering into a Joint Use Agreement with the Halifax Regional School Board to ensure appropriate community access to the gymnasium as a condition of municipal funding to the Project.

BACKGROUND

Community Facility Master Plan

In May 2008, Regional Council approved in principle the Community Facility Master Plan (CFMP). The CFMP analyzed demand for recreation facilities in HRM and compared it with the existing facility inventory. The resulting planning document incorporated previous plans and presented guiding principles and implementation models for decisions regarding existing and future facilities. The CFMP discusses HRM's relationship with the Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB) including joint opportunities to deliver programs and operate facilities.

The CFMP also recommends HRM build upon the past successful relationship with the HRSB and explore joint project opportunities where new school facilities are being planned. The CFMP further outlines the need to ensure that, when new or replacement facilities are developed, the facilities are placed in the most relevant locations and are consistent with other planning documents such as the Regional Plan and Transportation Plan.

In addition to the Citadel Community Centre enhancement in 2008, HRM successfully collaborated with the HRSB in 2010 for a community enhancement to the new elementary school in Porter's Lake and in the communities of Bedford and Hammonds Plains to enhance the new Charles P Allen High School in 2011.

Additions and Alterations Project: Cole Harbour District High School

In April 2012, the Minister of Education announced an Additions and Alterations Project for the existing Cole Harbour District High School to be completed in September 2014. The announcement of this large renovation project resulted in HRM staff being directed to complete a Needs Assessment in order to identify whether benefits existed for a potential partnership with the Province to expand the school with a community enhancement. The Needs Assessment was required to supplement the CFMP which did not provide sufficient detail to determine potential community needs associated with a new school or other community facilities in the Cole Harbour area. The assessment, carried out between August and November 2012, included: developing a community profile, data research and analysis, community consultations and interviews with key stakeholders. The Needs Assessment is provided in an Information Report to Regional Council on January 15, 2013.

In order to meet the provincial schedule for the Cole Harbour School project, HRM must immediately advise the Province if there is interest to participate in the project with a community enhancement of the school. Originally, the Province requested a response by the end of December 2012, but agreed to an extension to the first regularly scheduled Council meeting in January.

DISCUSSION

The Cole Harbour Recreation Needs Assessment (appended to Information Report to Regional Council on January 15, 2013) produced evidence and feedback from citizens to support the need for additional gymnasium space, an artificial turf field and an indoor walking track amongst other findings. In particular, community sport and non-profit groups, citizens and respondents to online surveys and previous public consultation note that there is currently insufficient gymnasium space or access to gymnasium space in the Cole Harbour area. Current waitlists and the data assessment provided in the Cole Harbour Recreation Needs Assessment support that claim. Additional gymnasium space is the only identified community need that can be facilitated through the Alterations and Additions Project for the Cole Harbour District High School.

Currently, Cole Harbour residents have access to several school gymnasiums. The schools that are accessible to the citizens of Cole Harbour do not have a joint use agreement with HRM; this was a common point of conversation during the Community Consultations and is a challenge for HRM gymnasium booking staff. Without confirmed community space allocations, there is not enough community and sport group usage time available to meet demands as evidenced by long wait lists. The current wait lists include a variety of child, youth and adult activities including many ringette, volleyball, indoor soccer, hockey, basketball and baton clubs. Additional gym space will provide more access opportunities for the community including those users currently on the wait lists.

It should be noted that the community consultation process yielded significant feedback regarding the Gordon Bell Annex building that is owned by HRM and is currently unoccupied. The building is large at approximately 70,000 square feet, over 2 and 3 storeys, on an overall lot of 7.60 acres that encompasses a Class C natural turf field. The building is circa 1980 and includes numerous rooms and a small gymnasium. The gymnasium is approximately 5,400 square feet in area and has a tile on concrete floor. It is not of a size or condition to meet requirements for municipal recreation. Current utility costs for the building are in excess of \$90k per year and are in addition to other operating costs. The Needs Assessment revealed there is a requirement to retain the Bell Annex field until such time as an artificial turf or alternate field(s) is approved and constructed in the community. Staff will assess the impact of retaining the field upon the future disposition of the entire Gordon Bell Annex property and will provide recommendations in a future report to Regional Council.

Significant feedback was also received regarding concerns related to traffic congestion and safety associated with the school access. Initial discussions have occurred between HRSB, HRM and Cole Harbour Place regarding opportunities for improvements. Further investigation and discussion is continuing.

Recommendation

Based on the Cole Harbour Needs Assessment, the development of community gymnasium space is recommended. An enhancement of the redevelopment of the Cole Harbour High School is seen to be the most cost effective and appropriate mechanism to construct additional space of this type at this time. It is proposed that a gymnasium enhancement of 2,100 sf be approved in order to construct a 10,500 sf gymnasium (8,400 sf of which is to be constructed by the Province for the school). This will provide a full-sized gymnasium (suitable for curtained separation) for both school and community use. The proposed enhancement of the gymnasium would create the equivalent of another full gymnasium providing guaranteed access for primetime usage by the community including minor sport groups, recreational family access and some adult recreation usage. Appropriate HRM Recreation programming and community access will be ensured through the administration of a Joint Use Agreement for that site with the Halifax Regional School Board and will allow the municipality to construct the enhancement at a reduced capital and operating cost.

The overall estimated cost of construction of a 10,500 sq ft gymnasium as part of a capital renovation of the school is estimated to be \$3.15 Million. HRM's share of this amount would be 20%, or \$630,000, based on the 2,100 sq ft expansion. The savings from combining a new community component with the school project arise from reduced exterior wall construction, reduced footprint and reduced land development costs for site development and parking.

These proposed enhancements are representative of community need, are supported by both analytical review and community consultation and are consistent with other planning documents for the region.

Finally, when community enhancements are undertaken as part of a school project, typically the enhancement is entirely contained within the school. In this case, due to the close proximity of the school site to Cole Harbour Place, HRM staff approached Provincial and HRSB staff to determine whether there was merit to considering construction of the enhanced gym at Cole Harbour Place rather than the school. This was not seen as a viable option as the current siting would allow for more effective use of the space both during the day by the school and in the evenings by the community through the Joint Use agreement.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Cole Harbour District High School Enhancement Proposal: expansion of gymnasium space by 2,100 sq ft.

Estimated Net Costs:

Provincial share (8,400 sq ft):	\$2,520,000
HRM share (2,100 sq ft)	<u>\$630,000</u>
Total Gymnasium (10,500 sq ft) Net Cost:	\$3,150,000

- There is no HST charged to HRM in this type of partnership.

100% of the project is proposed to be funded from project no. CB000005. The funding is contingent on the project being requested and approved in the 2014/15 project budget.

Any project cost overruns are the responsibility of the Province. The annual Operating Cost of Capital for utilities and programming is estimated to be \$16,000 starting in September, 2014 when the school is scheduled to open.

Under Council's approved tax structure, recreation and community facilities of this nature are general rated when located within the urban/suburban area (e.g. East Dartmouth, Citadel, North Preston) and area rated when located in the rural area (e.g. Porter's Lake, Prospect). Since the proposed school expansion is located within the urban/suburban tax boundary, staff recommends that the project be general rated. However, it should be noted that Council has previously made exceptions to its policies and area rated three facilities that would otherwise have been general rated (Bedford-Hammonds Plains, Sackville Heights, Gordon Snow).

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Citizens in Cole Harbour were provided with a variety of feedback methods such as; on-line survey, Facebook, twitter, HRM dedicated phone number, HRM dedicated e-mail and two structured public consultation meetings. The public meetings were held at Cole Harbour Place on October 10 and 15, 2012 with the focus on what is currently working well in terms of community use of indoor and outdoor recreation space and how an improvement to the current space could impact community recreation needs. The detailed findings from the community feedback and consultations are contained in the Cole Harbour Recreation Needs Assessment Information Report to Regional Council, January 15, 2013

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None indicated

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1: Regional Council could choose to not approve enhancement of the gymnasium as part of the Cole Harbour School project. This is not recommended as there is cost savings associated with undertaking a cost sharing project with the provincial school. That creates quality gymnasium space to benefit students and address significant unmet demand in the community.

Alternative 2: Regional Council could direct staff to include construction of a new gymnasium attached to the existing Cole Harbour Place in a future Capital Planning process for inclusion in a future capital budget. This is not recommended as the savings realized by undertaking an enhancement of a gymnasium currently planned as part of the school project would not be achieved.

Alternative 3: Regional Council could direct staff to fund all or a portion of the project cost from an area rate. This alternative would require staff to undertake an area rate survey process. However, should the community not accept an area rate, Council would be required to fund its commitment from the general rate.

ATTACHMENTS

None

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.

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