



Item No. 10.1.3
Halifax Regional Council
April 23, 2013

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original signed by 

SUBMITTED BY:

Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer

Original Signed by 

Mike Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: March 26, 2013

SUBJECT: Former Northcliffe Recreation Centre

ORIGIN

- Council's August 12, 2008, motion authorizing the planned closure of the Northcliffe Recreation Centre such that the closure occurs concurrent with the opening of the new Canada Games Centre.
- Council's September 20, 2011, motion approving the postponement of the tender for the demolition of the Northcliffe Recreation Centre, in order for staff to review an unsolicited offer for the property.
- Council's July 3, 2012, motion instructing staff to take all proposals for the Northcliffe lands to a public meeting for input on the future use of the property, prior to any further action on the property.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

This report complies with the Municipality's powers with regard to real property, under Section 61 and Section 63 of the *HRM Charter*.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

- 1) Declare the former Northcliffe Recreation Center building and its associated lands, as shown on Attachment 1 of this report, surplus to municipal requirements as per Administrative Order 50, under the category "Ordinary Properties" for disposal at market value;
- 2) Instruct staff to proceed with the demolition tender for the building; and
- 3) Retain the balance of the HRM land for park and recreation purposes, with adequate retention of street frontage and means for public access.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Northcliffe Recreation Center closed for recreation programming upon the completion and opening of the municipally owned Canada Games Centre in January 2011. No other municipal use for the building was identified and Regional Council subsequently declared the building surplus to programming and operations and instructed staff to plan for the demolition of the building and develop options for the property. The tennis infrastructure and programmed recreational open space are not surplus to municipal requirements.

Comprised of three separate parcels, the Northcliffe lands have served the public as parkland, playground, sports courts and an indoor recreation centre, in some format since 1976. The two parcels to the south, including the building, are zoned Park and Institutional and the wooded parcel to the north (along Lacewood Drive), including the storm water retention pond, is zoned R-4.

Staff has examined several scenarios whereby the property could be re-zoned and developed for mixed use; however, the more intensive redevelopment concepts did not garner support with the local community as they constituted major change for the property and loss of existing neighbourhood park/woodlands and outdoor recreation facilities. Ideas related to demolition of the former recreation center building and disposal of a portion of the lands for new institutional development use, were more readily supported by the community.

Attachment 1 of this report provides a general concept for recommended reconfiguration of the Northcliffe lands.

Staff recommends Regional Council declare the former Northcliffe Recreation Center building, and its' associated institutionally zoned lands, surplus as per Administrative Order 50, under the category Ordinary Properties, for disposal at market value with the following objectives:

1. Maintain the existing community outdoor recreation facilities and passive park and woodland to the north of the recreation building;
2. Allow room for the future relocation/replacement of the existing neighborhood play structure from the surplus portion of the site to the retained portion;
3. Maintain adequate vehicle and pedestrian access to the public lands; and
4. Allow for potential future expansion of the existing tennis facilities.

BACKGROUND

Since 2011, staff carried out a review and investigation into what municipal requirements remain for the property and what opportunities there were for reconfiguration of the property for sale and development, as well as retention of various aspects of the park. on September 20, 2011, at the request of Councillor Walker, Regional Council approved a motion to delay demolition tender for the building. This was to allow for some discussion with a local business respecting an opportunity offering possible re-use and purchase of the property and the existing building. Those specific discussions did not advance and the business owner has since made alternate plans for its' premises. However, there continues to be institutional development interest in the

land without the building.

The current tennis operator also expressed interest in securing a long term lease or purchase of the tennis courts. For the last twelve years, the current tennis operator has utilized a portable air structure (bubble) to provide heated indoor tennis to club members, from early October to early May, each year. The general public had access on a membership fee basis and youth programs were offered through HRM Recreation Services in October and May. In the spring of each year, the bubble was removed and the courts returned to regular public use. The arrangement was seen as an alternate service delivery program aimed at meeting some of the needs of the tennis community. The tennis infrastructure and programmed recreational open space are not surplus to municipal requirements.

DISCUSSION

On the direction of Regional Council, the select proposals and ideas from the general public were brought forward for discussion at a public meeting hosted by the area Councillor. Public feedback favoured a continuation of institutional use on the building portion of the site through new development, in keeping with the existing zoning. There was also support for continuation of the tennis facility in both public and private configurations; and there was also a strong sentiment to retain the passive park and woodland portion of the lands for the neighbourhood as they have functioned for the past 37 years.

In considering selling the building portion of the lands, there are two areas of municipal importance to protect:

1. access to the remaining public lands; and
2. provision of adequate lands for storm water management.

Access:

Currently, there is only one vehicular and parking access associated with the property off Clayton Park Drive. Pedestrian access exists from Dunbrack Street, Lacewood, Northcliffe Lane and Hazelholme, where HRM owns 175 feet of street frontage. Sale of the surplus portion of the lands without an easement would eliminate the primary vehicular access for users and maintenance to the tennis facilities and park. This could be addressed through:

- 1) placing an easement along the west boundary of the property for access and utility servicing corridor to the municipal property prior to disposal; or
- 2) developing the potential Hazelholme access with a park driveway and suitable parking area (See Attachment 1).

It is possible to combine these two measures to provide better circulation for both the remaining public park and any new development.

Storm Water Retention Pond:

The Northcliffe lands along Lacewood Drive are associated with the existing large storm water retention pond. This area is fenced off for safety purposes and not available for public park use. These lands will be transferred to the Halifax Water Commission in accordance with the Service Transfer Agreement of 2007.

As a result of the consultation and analysis, staff recommend that Regional Council declare the former Northcliffe Recreation Center building, and its associated lands, surplus to municipal requirements and instruct staff to proceed with the demolition tender for the building and subsequent disposal of the surplus land. Staff also recommends that Regional Council retain the balance of the HRM land for park and recreation purposes, inclusive of the tennis infrastructure, with adequate retention of street frontage and means for public access.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The net proceeds, adjusted for costs associated with the real estate transaction, will be placed in Sale of Land Reserve Q101. Demolition of the existing building will be funded from Project No. CBX01162 – Building Demolition. Any costs associated with relocation of the existing playground or construction of access drives and parking areas to support the retained public parkland, will be subject to Council approval through the Project Budget Process.

Demolition costs are available in Project No. CBX01162 – Building Demolition. Funding has been confirmed by Finance.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Staff and the Area Councillor undertook a public meeting to gather public input in July, 2012.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no implications at this time.

ALTERNATIVES

- 1) Regional Council could elect to declare a larger portion of the lands surplus to municipal requirements. This action is not recommended.
- 2) Regional Council could elect not to surplus the Northcliffe property pending future municipal considerations. This action is not recommended because there is no identified municipal requirement.
- 3) Regional Council could elect not to surplus the Northcliffe property pending future municipal considerations and proceed with the demolition tender for the building. This action is not recommended because there is no identified municipal requirement for that parcel as the remaining lands are recommended to be retained for recreation purposes.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 –Map of proposed surplus lands.

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.

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Proposed Reconfiguration of Northcliffe Lands

