

Item No. 6
Halifax Regional Council
August 6, 2013

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed by Director

SUBMITTED BY: _____
Jane Fraser, Director, Planning and Infrastructure

DATE: July 4, 2013

SUBJECT: Planning Amendment – Floodplain Mapping for Little Sackville River

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

September 17, 2012, Regional Council Report from the North West Community Council recommending that Halifax Regional Council direct staff to initiate the process of amending the appropriate planning documents to use the most recent floodplain mapping for Little Sackville River.

September 25, 2012, Regional Council, Item 11.3.2: Motion. MOVED by Councillor Harvey seconded by Councillor Dalrymple that Halifax Regional Council direct staff to initiate the process of amending the appropriate planning documents to use the most recent floodplain mapping for the Little Sackville River. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

HRM Charter: Sections 234 (Adoption of a Land Use By-Law or Amendment) and 235 (Content of a Land Use By-Law).

BACKGROUND

A hydrotechnical study of the Little Sackville River was completed in 1987 under the Canada-Nova Scotia Flood Damage Reduction Program (FDRP). The study produced a 1:20 year floodplain (Floodway) and a 1:100 year floodplain (Floodway Fringe) boundary. Urban development continued in the floodplain until 1994, when the former Halifax County Council adopted policies and controls governing development in the floodplain in accord with the 1987 study. In 1998, a follow up study was commissioned to provide a revised floodplain boundary to reflect developments that occurred between 1987 and 1994. To date, the subsequent floodplain boundary, related policies and controls have not been adopted by Halifax Regional Council.

Since 2008, the Sackville Business Association has advocated for the adoption of the 1998 floodplain boundary. The Association has asserted that, in some cases, proposed commercial developments on lands abutting the Little Sackville River are being unnecessarily restricted by the 1987 boundary whereas the adoption of the 1998 floodplain boundary would enable new development. In response to the Association, the North West Community Council submitted a report to Regional Council recommending that staff initiate the process to amend relevant planning documents and use the most recent floodplain mapping for the Little Sackville River. The report was subsequently endorsed by Regional Council.

DISCUSSION

Floodplain delineation is primarily based on the interpretation of topographical features and their vertical elevations. This information is then shown in map contours. Floodplain mapping for the 1987 and 1998 Little Sackville River floodplain studies was based on 2m contour mapping with .5 m contour intervals derived from aerial photography flown in 1979. The mapping information gathered at that time was considered to be highly accurate however recent technological advances have greatly increased the accuracy of maps produced for the purpose of floodplain delineation. Lidar, a remote sensing technology capable of measuring elevations to within a few centimeters has now become the standard for floodplain mapping. Staff recently concluded a comparative analysis of existing floodplain contours with those derived from lidar. The analysis revealed significant differences in elevations leading to the conclusion that a new floodplain study is required to accurately depict the extent of the floodplain.

Staff will prepare cost estimates for Council's consideration in the 2014/15 budget.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

None

ATTACHMENTS

None

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/cc.html> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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Report Approved by: Austin French, Manager, Regional Planning, 490 6717