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Item No. 5
Halifax Regional Council
February 25, 2014

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed by Director

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

DATE: 15 January 2014

SUBJECT: Regional Council Request for Halifax Common Plan Review

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

At Halifax Regional Council's meeting of December 11, 2012, Council requested a staff report on the feasibility of staff developing "a Master Plan for the historic Halifax Common that builds on the 1994 Halifax Common Plan that is integrated with the development of the Open Space Plan for the Urban Centre and includes a public consultation process. Staff is requested to return to Council within 18 months with a proposed Master Plan."

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

- Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, Part VIII, Planning and Development
- Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (RMPS)

BACKGROUND

The Halifax Common was granted by the Crown in 1763 to a board of trustees “for the use of the inhabitants of the Town of Halifax forever.” In 1841 that trust was ceded to Halifax Town Council. In 1996, Halifax Regional Council became the succeeding responsible Trustee.

The Historic Halifax Common entails 240 acres of public and private lands making up streets, parks, public institutions, and private lands. Owing to its history of development and use it is a distinct district within the Halifax peninsula.

In 1992 the Halifax Common Plan was adopted by Halifax Council as guidance for the future direction for the Historic Halifax Common. In the last ten years the plan has guided the restoration of the Public Gardens, Victoria Park, and current work on the North Common, land negotiations with the Province, North Parks Street Improvements and private development. While the plan has been very useful, there is staff recognition that;

- 1) at 22 years old, the plan should be reviewed to align with today’s regional planning and open space planning objectives;
- 2) the plan is a guiding policy document and would benefit from a physical master planning process to better articulate relevant policies, similar to the Dartmouth Common Plan. (e.g. policy objectives around pedestrian access through large blocks)and;
- 3) that, as one of the key open spaces in HRM, the Common should be examined in the context of the entire portfolio of public open spaces.

DISCUSSION

With the pending completion of the Regional Plan Review (RP+5), Planning and Infrastructure, under the direction of Council, will be undertaking a Greenbelting and Public Open Space Priorities Plan (GPS). Within that effort, staff will be developing a regional direction for its public parks and open spaces followed by more detailed examination of open space in priority areas including the Regional Centre, suburban and rural areas. In addition, several key sites have been singled out for particular attention through master planning. One of these is the Historic Halifax Common which will be addressed through the GPS as a regionally significant open space and through the Regional Centre Open Space Strategy as a core element of the urban open space network. This will include a review of the 1994 Plan and development of a physical master plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding for the Historic Halifax Common process is included in the proposed allocation for the Greenbelting and Public Open Space Priority Plan to be approved by Council as part of normal budget deliberations.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The process for the GPS and for the Halifax Common examination will include public consultation, carried out in accordance with HRM's Community Engagement Strategy.

ATTACHMENTS

None

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: Peter Bigelow, Manager Public Lands Planning, RELM - 490 6047

Original Signed

Report Approved by: _____
Peter Stickings, Manager, Real Estate and Land Management, P&I - 490 7129
