

**Item No. 11.1.2**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**April 1, 2014**

**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 24, 2014

**SUBJECT:** Feasibility of Road Extension: Sussex Drive

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**ORIGIN**

At its meeting of March 5, 2013 (item 13.1), a request was made by Halifax Regional Council for staff to explore the feasibility of extending Sussex Drive in Stillwater Lake to connect to Eider Drive in Tantallon.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

The Halifax Charter states (Section 322) that Council may design, lay out, open, expand, construct, maintain, improve, alter, repair, light, water, clean, and clear streets in the Municipality. The Charter also states (Section 61) that the Municipality may acquire and own property granted or conveyed to the Municipality either absolutely or in trust for a public or charitable purpose.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council direct staff to negotiate with Piercey Investors Ltd. on a plan to extend Sussex Drive as a subdivision street to connect with Eider Drive, at no net cost to the Municipality.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Haliburton subdivision extends southward from the Hammonds Plains Road for several kilometers. It contains approximately 740 households with only two exits to Hammonds Plains Road, in close proximity to each other. Sussex Drive is a minor collector street within the Haliburton subdivision that currently dead-ends at the south end of the community. Despite the proximity of Exit 4 on Highway 103 to the end of Sussex Drive, there is no connection and all traffic from the subdivision must exit to Hammonds Plains Road and the very busy Exit 5 interchange.

## **DISCUSSION**

The idea of extending Sussex Drive to Eider Drive has been promoted by residents in the Haliburton subdivision to their Councillor. The project does not correct any deficient condition within the local roadway network. It does, however, distribute traffic more effectively between the two highway exits and provides greater convenience and connectivity for residents. This would result in an important benefit to HRM by curbing the growth in traffic around Exit 5 on Hammonds Plains Road.

Normally, as subdivisions expand the internal roadway network, which is built at the cost of the developer, grows until the needed connectivity to the regional roadway network is achieved. The Haliburton subdivision, however, is in a unique situation as its ability to connect to a nearby interchange and adjacent communities is blocked by a narrow strip of provincial crown lands. Crown Lands are not normally released for the purpose of residential development, and it would be necessary for HRM to intervene and demonstrate that the public interest is served by creating a roadway corridor through these lands.

Most of what is proposed as the Sussex Drive extension, along with other connecting roads, will be built regardless as subdivision streets within an approved development concept and anticipated as growth in RP+5. Extending the road across NSDNR lands would add a short section of new roadway (300 metres) and a few additional lots (10-14) beyond what is approved. Staff believes the impact of minimal additional growth will be more than offset by the benefit of improved connectivity.

***Following the direction given by Regional Council, HRM staff has undertaken the following tasks to gauge project feasibility:***

***Developed Functional Plan*** - Staff has prepared a functional alignment plan for a 2.2 km roadway connection between Sussex Drive and Eider Drive (Attachment One). This attachment shows the subject crown lands controlled by NSDNR that must be crossed to make the desired connection.

***Included in RP+5 Draft 4*** - The Sussex Drive Extension was added to Draft 4 of the Regional Plan (RP+5) as a future subdivision connection. The purpose of this is to allow the road to be built for a public purpose and exempt from controls on building new roads. It is not a commitment that HRM will build it.

Met with N.S. Transportation & Infrastructure Renewal (NSTIR) - NSTIR owns Eider Drive and also owns lands across which the Sussex Drive extension would be located. They have confirmed that the roadway can cross their lands and connect to Eider Drive. It is proposed that there will be no cost to NSTIR for construction of the roadway and no cost to HRM for use of the land.

Consulted with N.S. Dept. of Natural Resources (NSDNR) - NSDNR controls a strip of crown land across which the roadway must travel. There is a formal process to be followed for these lands to be acquired by HRM, but preliminary discussion with NSDNR staff indicate that the municipal need for a roadway connection is likely to be sufficient grounds for them to sell or accept a land transfer. They have also recommended that the HRM request for acquisition should include lands that would be severed by the roadway corridor (shown by shading in Attachment One).

Met with Piercey Investors Ltd. - This company owns several land parcels in the area, some of which would be crossed by the roadway extension. They have received approval of concept plans for some of these parcels. These concept plans, however, were designed without considering a full extension of Sussex Drive, since that would have presumed to cross Crown Lands. Should a portion of those Crown Lands be made available to HRM, they might be consolidated with lands owned by Piercey Investors Ltd. so that a more robust subdivision plan can be created which accommodates the proposed Sussex Drive extension alignment. The extension of Sussex Drive would be a subdivision street and, as such, would be constructed at the cost of the developer. Staff has had ongoing contact with representatives of this company and recent conversation confirms their continued interest in creating this connection as part of their development planning.

Held a Community Open House Session - A public open house meeting was held on December 4, 2013, at the Tantallon Library. Display maps showing the proposed project were available for viewing and HRM staff was present to answer questions. Approximately 100 residents attended and 44 comment sheets were filled out and submitted (see Attachment Two). Residents were nearly unanimous in their support for the project, citing these advantages:

- Second access to the subdivision completely separate from Hammonds Plains Road in case of fire evacuation or other emergency;
- Substantially shortens travel distance for some within the subdivision heading inbound on Highway 103. One resident reported that he calculated a travel distance saving of over 2200 km per year if the road extension were completed. [That calculation has been verified by Staff as accurate]; and
- Reduction of traffic on the Hammonds Plains Road intersections and at Exit 5.

**At the direction of Regional Council, the next steps would be:**

Negotiate with Piercey Investors Ltd. a plan to extend Sussex Drive to Eider Drive – An agreement of this nature would assume that Piercey would build the connecting roadway to HRM collector road standard at the cost of the developer. Once completed, the roadway would become a public street and maintained by HRM. A large portion of the Sussex Drive extension would be built by Piercey regardless of any agreement as a normal course of the development of their lands. The segment of road Piercey would build across NSDNR lands would require a corridor to be purchased by HRM and resold to Piercey for construction of the roadway, along with residential development. The road segment across NSTIR would have limited development potential along it. The agreement would recognize that the loss in potential revenue to Piercey would be offset by improved marketability of the remaining lands due to improved connectivity. If an agreement that results in no net capital cost to HRM cannot be negotiated with Piercey, staff will report the results of those discussions to Regional Council.

Apply to NSDNR for acquisition of a road corridor – If a tentative agreement to extend Sussex Drive is reached, staff will return to Regional Council with a recommendation to make application to NSDNR for acquisition of crown lands needed for the road corridor.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Internal staff resources are available through existing approved budget for negotiation of a tentative agreement.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Community engagement has been undertaken and is described in the Discussion section of this report. In addition, an information report on the project was provided to Northwest Community Council at its meeting of February 17, 2014. A presentation was made to the Committee by the Haliburton Homeowners Association at the meeting.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Construction of any road has environmental implications and these are minimized through good engineering design. Better management of traffic and a reduction in overall travel would result from creation of this new connection, with a resulting decrease in greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles.

**ALTERNATIVES**

Regional Council may choose not to pursue a connection of Sussex Drive to Eider Drive.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment One: Alignment of Proposed Sussex Drive Extension

Attachment Two: Summary of Public Open House Session Comment Sheets

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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.

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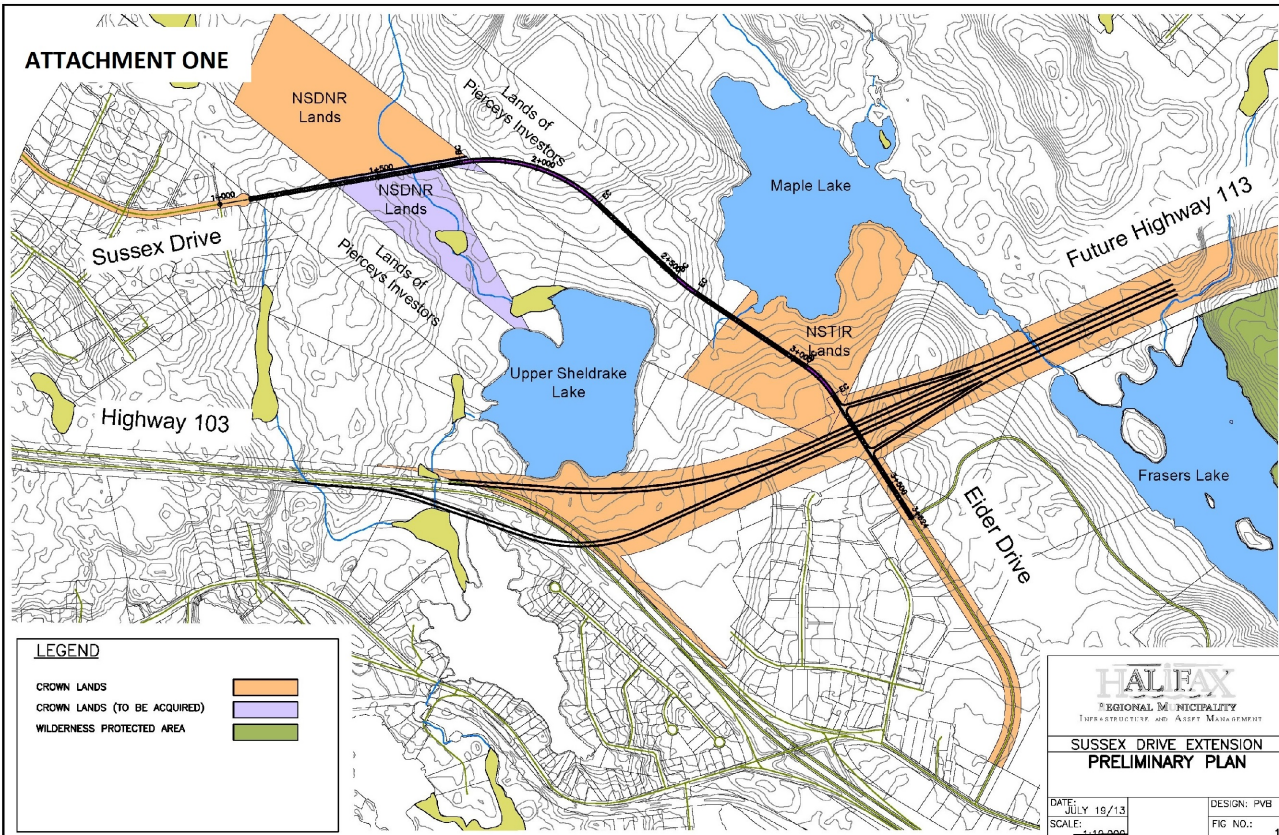
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# ATTACHMENT ONE



**IN FAVOUR**

Extension is long overdue!! For safety reasons, another exit to the Haliburton sub/div is a must and I agree with the proposed extension

Great idea, let's get started. I am all about growth.

I agree with having another exit off Sussex to gain another exit. But I would want a road from Highland Park to hook on through Haliburton Hills to give Highland another emergency way out if something ever blocked the Hammonds Plains Rd.

I consider this a safety issue. I live way at the back of Haliburton off Sussex and I worry that I am trapped off the back with no exit in case of fire or another emergency.

This would be a great selling feature for residents of Haliburton. Hope it happens quickly.

Thanks for the information. I live on Sussex Drive and support this project. Increases fire evacuation routes and increases efficiency to get home.

The proposal is a good one and long overdue. The # of cars thru the subdivision & the speed with which they travel is dangerous. Not to mention the need for another exit for safety reasons (fire, ambulance, etc.)

Can't happen soon enough!! Would help with forest fire safety re: extra exit.

I think the proposed extension has many positives that far outweigh a few small negatives. I hope it goes forward!

I hope this project goes through! We live on Fellesmere Lane and feel for safety reasons a quicker access to hospital, etc. it would be great to see a back access route.

The sooner the extension is done the better!

In favour of Sussex Drive Extension. Alternate fire exit out of subdivision. Shorter commuting time to Halifax and future 113 Highway.

This would improve the transportation logistics of the upper end of Haliburton. It would debottleneck flat lake drive at traffic time (improved safety). Obviously is the second emergency access for EMS/Police/Fire into the subdivision and second exit for resident. It would not pose a significant load on traffic through exit 4 if the present development scope is maintained.

Definitely in favor of the extension. Especially as a fire/emergency exit out of the subdivision, as right now there is only one way out of Haliburton.

The idea of extending Sussex to tie into the new proposed new 113 is a very good idea provided access from the extension allows traffic from Sussex to enter and exit in both directions.

This cannot happen soon enough – need exit for emergencies!!

Start now.

My family and I support this project due to limited access out in case of emergency and shorter commute time.

This project needs to be completed in short order. The safety benefits of such a road are enormous for the majority of the residents that would be trapped by fire or disaster in the front of the subdivision.

A rear fire exit to the Haliburton subdivision is a safety necessity, and if this is the quickest method to achieve this, I'm in favor.

Access is desirable for transportation + fire safety issues.

Good idea to have a second way in/out of Haliburton in case of emergencies. Main concern is increased traffic levels on Sussex Drive. Interested in hearing any projections in this regard.

In favour. Required for safety.

Positive improvement to Haliburton Hills for both convenience and market values. Looking forward to seeing the project move forward.

Safer - better access/escape in the event of a forest fire. Convenience – shorter drive to Halifax. Great idea – please go ahead.

Alleviates traffic jams at Sobey’s intersection at Hammonds Plains Rd. Gives us two separate exits from subdivision (fire hazard – emergency entrance)

Definitely agree. I live on Fellesmere in the back of Haliburton. Sooner the better.

The sooner the better. This connector is long overdue!

We are delighted and very happy to see this project go ahead. You have our full support.

Get it done sooner rather than later.

The sooner the better.

Proposed extension has merit by providing a second exit from Haliburton Hills. Requesting that DNR lands are retained especially on south side of Maple Lane.

I would like to see this project proceed ASAP. Would like to build in the development.

This project is necessary to make easy access for emergency vehicles, forest fire evacuation, and to alleviate traffic at Exit 5.

I am a resident of Haliburton Heights (way back in) and am very in favour of this proposed road.

I support the Sussex Drive extension to Eider Drive. Primarily due to safety considerations and existing risk of being trapped. A secondary benefit is to remove traffic volumes at the existing entrance/exit to the subdivision.

Great idea in all aspects. #1 would be a second (emergency) exit from the subdivision.

#### **NEUTRAL/QUESTIONS**

The only benefit seems to be a back exit from Haliburton Heights. Details explained tonight suggest a flip of natural resource land for the developer to build the road and add to residential development. Will not reduce congestion at Exit 5/103.

Would like to see an official traffic study carried out, showing the effect of traffic on Buckingham Drive closer to the exit 5 end.

Will this effect which school the kids go to?

Would be for construction.

What about increased crime? It is well known that subdivisions with more than one exit have increased crime.

My one concern would be to limit the road use to private passenger vehicles in Haliburton. I would not want continuous dump trucks driving over our roads.

Need to have further information identifying the impact on traffic patterns in existing subdivision (increase/decrease predictions). What is the likelihood of increased rates of crime with another entrance/exit to subdivision. If abutting lands are developed, will the developer be responsible for repairs to existing streets due to damage from equipment/trucks driving through subdivision.

#### **OPPOSED**

[none]



