

HALIFAX

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Item No. 3
Halifax Regional Council
March 10, 2015

TO: Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Mike Savage, Mayor

DATE: February 11, 2015

SUBJECT: Update on the Mayor's Conversation on a Healthy and Liveable Community

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Healthy Communities has been identified by Regional Council as a Core Priority Area. In October 2013, Mayor Savage hosted the Mayor's Conversation on a Healthy and Liveable Community, attended by more than 80 citizens, active in healthy living initiatives, as a way in which to gather community feedback on a broad range of strategic areas under the Healthy Communities Core Priority Area. All Councillors were invited to this event, and many participated.

On January 28, 2014, Regional Council adopted the following recommendation:

For consideration in the 2015-2016 budget, as a part of the Healthy Communities Core Priority Area, work with the appropriate Standing Committees to determine what further opportunities exist to achieve a higher level of health and liveability in HRM, as outlined in the Backgrounder to this report, and report back no later than September 30th 2014.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter – Section 2 – Purpose of Act:

The purpose of this Act is to:

- (a) give broad authority to the Council, including broad authority to pass by-laws, and respect its right to govern the Municipality in whatever ways the Council considers appropriate within the jurisdiction given to it;
- (b) enhance the ability of the Council to respond to present and future issues in the Municipality; and
- (c) recognize that the functions of the Municipality are to:
 - (i) provide good government,
 - (ii) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality, and
 - (iii) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

Part I Powers of Council

11 (1) The powers of the Municipality are exercised by the Council.

BACKGROUND

On January 28, 2014, Regional Council provided direction to undertake three immediate projects during the 2014-2015 budget year:

- 1) Develop and implement an urban orchard pilot project;
- 2) Work with Business Improvement Districts to provide portable wheelchair ramps to businesses that are not already accessible; and
- 3) Work with Halifax Harbour Bridges to champion the solution to the cycling connectivity challenges at the Halifax end of the Macdonald Bridge.

In October 2014, seven fruit trees and over one hundred berry shrubs were planted by volunteers at Leighton Dillman Park on the Dartmouth Common, establishing the first urban orchard in Halifax. The project was developed in partnership with the Sierra Club Canada Foundation, members of the Dartmouth Common Community Gardens, Dalhousie University, funding from Tree Canada, and the Municipality's staff team of horticulturalists and arborists. Work is underway to expand the pilot project with other groups that are a part of the Municipality's Community Garden program. The Parks and Recreation Department will provide support under the Community Garden program, and in the coming months, an urban orchard training workshop is to be scheduled for community garden groups.

In December 2014, the first portable accessible ramps were delivered to businesses in Halifax. In order to build these ramps, the Mayor's Office has partnered with the Parker Street Skills Development Centre, which provides an introduction to skilled trades for participants to obtain employment in the construction sector. The Mayor's Office continues to work with Business Improvement Districts to identify businesses that wish to provide a ramp to their customers, and with Parker Street to build the ramps.

Consultations have taken place with the key partners involved in the Macdonald bikeway project, including Halifax Harbour Bridges and the Department of National Defence, whose property abuts the area where a potential new ramp may land. Staff will be looking for further direction on this project as a part of the 2015/16 business plan and budget process.

DISCUSSION

The Mayor's Conversation on a Healthy and Liveable Community identified accessibility, active transportation, and food production and promotion as key themes. The Mayor's Office, along with staff, continue to work with stakeholder groups to identify additional projects and initiatives that can achieve measurable progress. The following is a brief summary of proposed and ongoing projects within each of these areas:

Accessibility

Regional Council adopted as a Priority Outcome for the 2015-2016 budget year to make Halifax "a leader in building an inclusive and accessible community where everyone can participate fully in life, including persons with disabilities and seniors." This Priority Outcome is to provide direction and oversight in defining an inclusive and accessible community, and in developing an accessibility policy for Halifax.

In October 2014, the Transportation Standing Committee requested a staff report on the implications of implementing an initiative to identify and evaluate high traffic outdoor pedestrian infrastructure areas (such as bus stops, sidewalks, crosswalks, curb cuts, and paved shoulders) where challenges have been identified for individuals with mobility issues. Mobility challenges in high traffic pedestrian areas has consistently been identified as a top priority by those in the disability community.

Active Transportation

In January 2015, the Standing Committee on Community Planning and Economic Development asked for a staff report on a new support model for Switch Open Streets, which is to promote healthy communities, active transportation, local business and neighbourhood pride in communities throughout Halifax. A jurisdictional scan is to be a part of this analysis, which will come back to Regional Council for consideration in the coming months.

Food Production and Promotion

The Mayor's Office recently supported a successful grant application to form a partnership between Public Health Services, Halifax Regional Municipality, private business, and diverse community stakeholders. This partnership is to develop a "mobile market" pilot project in Halifax. The idea behind this pilot is to sell affordable, high quality fresh vegetables and fruit in communities where access to healthy food is a concern for residents. The grant is to build connections with community partners and to develop a governance and delivery model to pilot a mobile market in Halifax.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None associated with this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Mayor's Conversation on a Healthy and Liveable Community brought together over 80 stakeholders from a wide range of backgrounds and sectors, including active transportation, local food production and promotion, accessibility, transportation, physical fitness, public safety, seniors, youth, students, business and planning. In addition, a range of stakeholder groups, including the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Active Transportation Advisory Committee, were consulted in the development of recommendations.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.php> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

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