



P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 1
Halifax Regional Council
March 24, 2015

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed by Director

SUBMITTED BY: _____
Brad Anguish, Director of Parks and Recreation

DATE: February 24, 2015

SUBJECT: Ramsbrook Court – Access to Mainland North Linear Trail

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

April 23, 2013 Motion of Halifax Regional Council

MOVED by Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Dalrymple that Regional Council authorize staff to investigate property ownership in the vicinity of Ramsbrook Court and determine the viability of acquisition of Land to enable a public easement to the Mainland Linear Parkway from the Ramsbrook Court area; report back to Regional Council on the possible scenarios to provide easement. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, s.61, Powers of the Municipality regarding property.

BACKGROUND

The Mainland North Linear Trail is a primary recreation and Active transportation trail stretching 6.5 kms across the western side of Fairview/ Clayton Park to Bedford South. It, along with the Mainland Common, are primary public open space assets in Mainland North with wide sector public appeal and use. It began in 1989 and has been used as one of the organizing elements for open space as the community grew in the past twenty five years.

Ramsbrook Court and surrounding streets were developed as part of the Mount Royale subdivision in 2009. During the Conceptual Subdivision approval phase, the need for a connection to the Municipality's Mainland North Linear Trail was identified as desirable and a property off of nearby Bently Drive was identified as one of three accesses for this purpose. The small Bently Drive property was intended to provide convenient neighbourhood access for approximately 130 of the 199 homes in this section of the subdivision. During the same process the need for a stormwater retention pond was also identified and the same future municipal property was assigned that function. It is not uncommon for retention facilities and open space to be co-located where required. During the detailed design phase/final approval of the development, the stormwater retention pond was engineered and found to require the entire property to accommodate anticipated stormwater flows. Thus, the use of the property as a neighbourhood open space connection to the Linear Trail had to be eliminated (see Attachment 1 – Area Map).

As no Municipal function is currently assigned to the existing property, ownership is slated to be turned over to the Halifax Water who provides stormwater services.

DISCUSSION

Staff has had discussion with Halifax Water who has advised that the existing stormwater pond cannot be altered to allow a municipal access through this property without negatively affecting the stormwater function.

Staff did look at other options for a community access to the Linear Trail. These included several locations to access the trail over private property. Unfortunately these either failed to offer appropriate setbacks from private dwellings or offered little or no advantage for trail users as they were close to existing public accesses at street crossings.

There appears to be one alternative which offers a partial solution, which may be a future consideration. To the south of the Mount Royale subdivision there is an underground stormwater line from the top of Geizers Hill to south end of the Mainland North Linear Trail. It is located on Halifax Water's Chain Lake Watershed lands and also crosses, by way of an easement, through a parcel owned by Nova Scotia Power and the southernmost point of the current Linear Trail (Attachment 1 – Area Map). A roadway exists on the pipeline alignment and some people are currently using it for trail access. Connection would require the acquisition of a public trail easement over both adjacent parcels. Halifax Waters' lands are part of the Chain of Lakes Watershed and are not subject to sale or development at this time. In preliminary discussions, Halifax Water offered that consideration of a trail easement would be contingent upon no negative impact on the Chain Lake Watershed. Nova Scotia Power could not respond to enquiries as to the possibility of a public trail easement over their property at this time.

This link could provide a partial solution to the lack of a connection from the Westmount neighbourhood, however, it is convenient for only the southwestern portion of the subdivision and future development on lands immediately to the west. This connection could become more valuable in the future if conceptual plans, identified in the Active Transportation Plan, to connect the Mainland North Linear Trail to the Chain of Lakes Trail to the south through lands owned by HRM and Halifax Water are realized. Gaining a pedestrian access through the interchange at the Bicentennial Highway and North West Arm Drive is a substantial challenge. A functional plan is currently underway to identify how the Mainland North Linear Trail will connect from the Chain of Lakes Trail to Larry Uteck Drive, including local community accesses such as the connection to Mount Royale subdivision (Ramsbrook Court). This study will take the Mount Royale opportunity through Halifax Water's corridor into consideration.

Staff will continue to be aware of the situation and pursue opportunities to find a useful connection as opportunities arise through current and future trails planning and land development applications. In the meantime, the public is using the official accesses to the Mainland North Linear Trail as well as the unofficial access through the property owned by Halifax Water.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications at this time. Any future easements, acquisitions or Capital Costs would require approval by Regional Council.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Mainland North Trails Association has been involved in the planning for trails in this area in conjunction with Municipal Staff

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Area Map
Attachment 2 – Photos of the Subject Neighbourhood

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.

Report Prepared by: Peter Bigelow, Manager, Parks Planning, Parks and Recreation, 902-490-6047

Attachment 1 – Area Map



Attachment 2 – Photos of the Subject Neighbourhood



1 Retention Pond on Bently Drive



2 Ramsbrook Court



3 Road Reserve Connection off Bently Drive



4 Example of Neighbourhood Typology