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Item No. 8
Halifax Regional Council
May 26, 2015

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed
Brad Anguish, Director of Parks & Recreation

Original Signed
Doug Trussler, Fire Chief

DATE: May 6, 2015

SUBJECT: Black Point Community Fire Hall

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

December 2, 2014, Motion of Halifax Regional Council:

Moved by Councillor Whitman seconded by Councillor Adams, that Halifax Regional Council request a staff report to review and consider options to enable the community to continue to have access to the Black Point Community Fire Hall; in particular, consideration that the HRM retain the hall and that HRM enter into a lease agreement with the St. Margaret's Bay/Boutilier's Point Recreation Association as the hall is widely utilized by the community.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

HRM Charter, Section 79 1 (k), (x) and (av): The Municipality may expend money on recreation programs, land and buildings required for municipal purposes and grants and contributions.

BACKGROUND

The Black Point Community Fire Hall (Station 56) was previously operated by the Black Point Volunteers through an internal association. As the numbers of Volunteer Firefighters decreased, there were less volunteers who were able to commit the additional time required to administer operating the community hall and eventually the hall was no longer being operated by the Volunteers and community functions ceased to take place. As a result, on December 2, 2014, Regional Council passed a motion to direct staff to explore alternatives for community access to the facility.

Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency (HRFE) continues to actively recruit Volunteers for the Rural Fire Stations, including Black Point, however once Volunteers are in place, their primary duty / expectation is the role of a Volunteer Firefighter. Any additional roles, such as running community halls, are strictly voluntary and not a requirement to be a Volunteer Firefighter in any of the HRFE Volunteer Stations.

DISCUSSION

Subsequent to Council's motion of December 2, 2015, HRFE presented the Fire Services Operational Review-2014 Update to the Executive Standing Committee on December 15, 2014. The Operational Review was referred to Halifax Regional Council for consideration at Committee of the Whole. Regional Council's deliberation and final direction on the matter was provided on March 31, 2015.

Within the Black Point Community Fire Hall, one side of the facility houses the fire hall and the other side houses a community hall which is available for use by the community when not required for fire services' use. The fire hall is staffed with career and volunteer firefighters. Since the focus for both the career staff and volunteers is for fire services, neither group is tasked with being responsible for the operation of the community centre. This approach is standard across all fire halls in which there is also a community hall component. In those facilities, the community hall is typically run by a volunteer association. In some cases, the volunteer association is affiliated with the volunteer firefighters, and in other cases, a separate association manages the community hall.

In the case of the Black Point Community Fire Hall, the current volunteer firefighter association has not expressed an interest in operating the community centre. Discussions with the St. Margaret's Bay Boutilier's Point Recreation Association Chair indicated that the group was willing to have an association fall under their agreement to manage the community hall, however, they did not have the capacity to operate the community hall directly.

Community access will be able to be granted once a community group can be identified to take on the responsibility for booking and managing the community space. Fire Services would enter into an agreement with the group which would then coordinate the use by the community. The agreement would outline terms of use, including but not limited to insurance requirements, compliance with applicable provincial regulations and legislation, and facility operating costs. Negotiation of a lease agreement would only be required if a specific group requested exclusive use of the space, otherwise, the agreement would enable event specific rentals. Parks & Recreation staff will work within the community to identify groups and associations who may be unaware of this community opportunity and attempt to recruit a group willing to manage the community hall.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

There was no community engagement associated with this report.

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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