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**Halifax Regional Council
Committee of the Whole
January 10, 2006**

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Carol Macomber
Carol Macomber, Acting Director, Recreation, Tourism & Culture

DATE: January 3, 2006

SUBJECT: Council Focus Area: Community Recreation

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN:

On October 11, Council approved a list of Council Focus Areas. Staff committed to return to Council with status report on each item and a suggested approach to further action on the item. Discussion was to include an analysis of current initiatives, issues, options for resolution, capacity and implications.

BACKGROUND

Council has recently indicated focus areas it wishes to address. These include (in no particular order):

- Regional plan
- Transit
- Infrastructure
- Traffic
- Public safety
- Tax Reform
- By-law enforcement

- Community relations
- Youth
- Community recreation
- Community development
- Economic development

Staff committed to preparing a document on each of these focus areas for Council discussion and direction at a Committee of the Whole meeting. Specifically, staff committed to describing its understanding of Council's concerns, what is currently being done in each of these areas, the issues impacting these areas, options for addressing these issues, and the implications of pursuing these options.

DISCUSSION

Issues related to community recreation in HRM are significant and varied, and there is not enough funding available to address all the concerns raised by Councillors, the public and staff. The discussion paper attached highlights the issues and options Council may wish to consider in addressing the issues. It is recognized that these issues will not be resolved quickly. Staff will work under Council's direction to address the issues as appropriate.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct budget implications as a result of the material discussed herein.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ALTERNATIVES

There are no recommended alternatives

ATTACHMENTS

Council Focus Area: Community Recreation Background and Discussion Paper

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/agenda.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 :


Paul Johnston, Business Services Coordinator, 490-5623

Financial Review :

Barb Palmeter, Financial Consultant, 490-7221



COUNCIL FOCUS AREA

COMMUNITY RECREATION

Background and Discussion Paper

January 10, 2006

1. INTRODUCTION

The benefits of recreation are broad and varied but include improved physical and mental health, development of strong families and communities, prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour, protection of the environment and ecological stewardship, and improved quality of life. The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association has developed a Benefits Catalogue which groups a variety of quantifiable benefits of recreation into four categories: personal, social, economic, and environmental.

HRM directly offers 21 recreation centres, 5 work out facilities, 4 arenas, 3 pools and over 8,000 programs annually. 26,580 residents participated in an HRM recreation program this year. In addition, attendance at HRM operated pools last year topped 200,000.

There are over 300 diamonds and sports fields, 825 park properties, and 325 playgrounds owned and maintained by HRM. Over 30,000 organized sports participants use HRM fields each year.

RTC staff assess service agencies to determine if a similar program or service is being provided by another agency. In addition, staff determine the level of service by assessing whether or not HRM is (or needs to be) the sole service provider within any given area. If there is not an agency or partner available in a specific community to meet an identified need and HRM has the resources and the mandate to provide a program or service, then the program or service will be considered for delivery by HRM.

HRM acts as a “gap filler”. If there is an identified lack of a certain type of recreation (i.e. cultural or sport programs) within any given community, staff will attempt to fill the void, if the resources are available and the identified gap fits HRM’s mandate. Staff strive to ensure that communities are serviced with a basic level of programming, especially in high need areas with a high density of children and youth.

Recreation is a community-based service. Geographic variations dictate a decentralized approach through differing levels and types of programs and services across HRM. Access to facilities is one factor that can influence level of service differently in different areas. For example, staff often rely on renting schools, church halls, community halls, etc. This issue can influence decision-making on the development and delivery of programs and services.

As part of a community development approach, HRM will assess the viability of offering programs, services, or facilities through partnership. For example, the St. Margaret’s Bay Arena has a facility to house a fitness class. Instead of HRM offering a program directly, staff assist the arena group with marketing and training. The program “belongs” to the St.

Margaret's Bay Arena Association, thereby enhancing community ownership, and HRM does not accrue the revenue but neither does it incur the expenditures associated with the program.

Overall, development of recreation programs and services in HRM are based on specific fundamental service level criteria. These criteria encompass areas such as community scanning, partnership assessment, needs analysis, and target group identification and are listed in detail in RTC's Recreation Blueprint. A significant percentage of recreation service delivery is based on the principles of equity, access and community needs.

2. COUNCIL CONCERNS

During Council's workshop, concerns were raised around

- recreation sports facilities
- multi-use facilities
- major facilities
- operational aid to community facilities
- concerns around playground/park maintenance
- parkland acquisitions / banking
- recreation programs
- affordability of recreation
- more community pride
- active transportation
- infrastructure off highway vehicle trails
- lake/salt water boat launch

3. CURRENT INITIATIVES

Indoor Recreation Facility Master Plan: The IRFMP was commissioned by Halifax Regional Council in 2003 in recognition of the need to develop a strategic approach to the provision of indoor recreation facility services. Approved in 2004, the plan identifies facility needs throughout HRM, prioritizes required facility projects over the next 15 years, and presents a facility implementation model for use in identification and development of new facility requests and opportunities.

Recreation Blueprint: Any potential or existing recreation program or service in HRM is assessed based on its alignment with criteria set out in the Recreation Blueprint. The Blueprint is used upon staff identification of the requirement for a new recreation program or service and/or a request from a community for a new program or service. The policy may also be employed by staff to assess the relevance of any existing recreation.

Youth Engagement Strategy: An HRM-wide initiative led by RTC which used a community youth development framework to elicit feedback from more than 6,000 youth and develop plans for delivering “youth friendly” programs and services.

Cultural Plan: Due for completion in early 2006, the HRM Cultural Plan will help guide the Region’s future cultural development. The plan encompasses rural, suburban, and urban areas and will recognize culture as the foundation of HRM’s social vitality and economic development. The Cultural Plan will cover a broad range of elements including arts, history and heritage, urban design, leisure and education, and cultural economic development. Community diversity will be ingrained in all aspects of the plan to reflect its fundamental importance at all levels of HRM’s community and cultural development.

Regional Plan: In 2002, HRM initiated the development of a Regional Plan. The Regional Plan is a detailed, long-range, region-wide plan that will outline where, when and how future growth and development should take place in HRM. The consultation program for the plan has involved communities in planning, seeking their input on issues and solutions. With the plan now nearing completion and approval, the next step will be an extensive community visioning process to determine how the plan will be implemented at the community level throughout HRM.

COUNCIL FOCUS AREA: COMMUNITY RECREATION

ISSUE	OPTIONS	IMPLICATIONS
<p>Need to prioritize and resource new facility development while adequately maintaining and supporting existing facilities</p> <p><u>INITIATIVES</u></p> <p>A) Indoor Recreation Facility Master B) Outdoor Facility Master Planning C) RTC/RPAM role clarification D) HRM Infrastructure List E) Management agreement review and development of template F) Cultural Plan G) Regional Plan H) Review of Agencies, Boards and Commissions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In conjunction with growth scenarios and community visioning, continue to implement the Indoor Recreation Facility Master Plan model to prioritize and plan new facilities 2. Resource the development of an Outdoor Facility Master Plan using the IRFMP process as a model 3. Conduct a role clarification exercise to improve joint priority setting and decision-making between RTC and RPAM 4. Implement new management agreement structure and dedicate resources to a contingency fund to ensure consistent service to facilities operated via management agreement 5. Review options to turn HRM operated facilities over to community groups and operate via management agreements 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Need to review plan as new major initiatives or issues arise - i.e. resource needs and/or new processes identified in Regional Plan and Cultural Plan. Current capital capacity gap may provide issues in developing the new facility requirements identified in the master plan. 2. Dedicated RTC staff resource required to lead the process and a joint approach is required with RPAM staff 3. Changes in process and staff responsibilities may be required 4. Estimated costs for a contingency fund for management agreement facilities is \$250,000. Insurance and HR support may be required for these groups. 5. Need to review issues related to aspects currently covered by HRM - i.e. finance, insurance and human resources

<p>Need to focus recreation program delivery on priorities and needs - i.e. youth, physical activity, community partnerships</p> <p><u>INITIATIVES</u></p> <p>A) Partnership to design a physical activity course for patients referred by physicians</p> <p>B) Physical Activity Team</p> <p>C) Just Live It</p> <p>D) RTC Youth Engagement Strategy</p> <p>E) Active Kids Healthy Kids</p>	<p>1. Refocus recreation service delivery to ensure a focus on Council / corporate priorities and community needs (i.e. youth and community development)</p> <p>2. Assess various methods of alternate service delivery of programs and services using partnerships</p> <p>3. Implement the unit plans and recommendations in the RTC Youth Engagement Strategy, especially related to supporting at-risk youth in HRM (i.e. youth leadership, mentoring, etc.)</p> <p>4. Continue to identify and build partnerships (i.e. Recreation Nova Scotia, Metro Universities, YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc) to develop a concentrated focus to increasing physical activity among HRM citizens</p>	<p>1. Allocation of increased budget and resources to priorities and needs will decrease resources in other areas of recreation. May result in a drop in recreation revenue.</p> <p>2. May be a move away from direct program delivery and toward support to community groups. If so, budget, human resource, and insurance implications need to be explored. May result in a drop in recreation revenue.</p> <p>3. Staff time for the development and implementation of a new approach to service delivery. Some funding for staff and/or reassignment of staff. Full implementation of all priority goals, objectives, and recommendations in the strategy would cost an estimated \$150,000 in 2006/2007.</p> <p>4. Staff time to identify and facilitate partnerships. May free up existing financial resources.</p>
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<p>Ensure equal access to programs, services and facilities across and within communities</p> <p><u>INITIATIVES</u></p> <p>A) Management agreement review and development of template B) RecConnect C) HRM Kids D) Recreation fee policy E) HRM / HRSB service exchange agreement</p>	<p>1. Develop a new access policy and revise the existing fee policy for recreation programming</p> <p>2. Implement new management agreement structure and dedicate resources to ensure consistency</p> <p>3. Develop and improve support systems and operational aid for volunteer groups that operate community programs, services, and facilities</p> <p>4. Work with HRSB to improve access to school facilities.</p>	<p>1. May result in a drop in revenue if fees are reduced in some areas. Possible increase in rental costs to make more facilities accessible (i.e. schools, churches, and other community owned facilities)</p> <p>2. Will result in increase costs to HRM if increased accessibility or costs concessions for access are negotiated in management agreements.</p> <p>3. Addressing issues such as access to facilities, hours of operation, custodial needs, insurance issues, etc will involve staff time and resources.</p> <p>4. Increased rental costs and/or custodial expenditures to increase hours at school facilities and/or make more facilities accessible. Staff time to review the service exchange agreement With HRSB and work with School Board staff to address issues and gaps.</p>
<p>Enhanced playground and park maintenance</p> <p><u>INITIATIVES</u></p> <p>A) Outdoor Facility Master Plan B) Capital District maintenance fund C) Advanced Capital Funding</p>	<p>1. Refocus of capital budget dollars to enhance capability to build and maintain parks and playgrounds</p>	<p>1. Increase in capital funding to parks and playgrounds programs will result in a decrease in other categories of the capital budget.</p>
<p>Implement active transportation network</p> <p><u>INITIATIVES</u></p> <p>A) Regional Plan B) Active Transportation Plan C) Bike Week D) Capital District Urban Design E) MRIF</p>	<p>1. Ensure a recreation role in the development of the active transportation plan</p> <p>2. Provide ongoing resources to the Bike Week initiative</p> <p>3. Dedicate capital resources to active transportation projects.</p>	<p>1. Staff time to participate on work group and help develop the plan</p> <p>2. Events staff resources and approximately \$5,000 annually to support the event</p> <p>3. Increase in capital funding to active transportation projects will result in a decrease in other categories of the capital budget.</p>



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