

10.2.5




PO Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Halifax Regional Council
August 19, 2003

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:



Dan English, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: August 12, 2003

SUBJECT: Proposed Public Round Table Discussions - 2004/05 Budget

ORIGIN

During the 2003/04 Council budget deliberations, staff made a commitment to HRM Council that the public input process would be enhanced for the 2004/05 budget process. This was a result of citizens requesting a more active roll in the service delivery decisions of HRM as captured in comments made during the Commitment to Community 2003 (Proposed Tax Structure) public consultation piece.

The information that will be gained during focussed round table discussions will be one of many mechanisms used by HRM staff to make service delivery recommendations to HRM Council for 04/05 and future Budgets.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that :

1. Council approve the proposed round table discussions and schedule.

BACKGROUND

In past budget years, the citizens of HRM have been provided with opportunities to participate in the budget deliberations:

- submit written submissions voicing their thoughts, concerns and opinions
- access information at the Customer Service Centres, Internet and Libraries
- attend Community Council meetings
- answering budget survey

Although these avenues have been available; HRM staff and citizens have recognized a need to enhance the options in order to have a two way dialogue in an informal setting.

DISCUSSION

The decision to recommend round table discussions throughout HRM is being made to allow staff to listen informally to the people active in the community in regard to HRM services and the delivery of those services.

It is also an opportunity for HRM to inform the participants of the numerous challenges facing HRM as it constructs its' annual budget. For example, the need to maintain existing infrastructure and critical services as well as meet the needs of a growing and diverse community. Meeting these challenges will be made easier with input and suggestions from the communities.

In addition to seeking insight from invited participants, we propose to give the public at large an opportunity to share their thoughts and concerns. The Council members will be asked to provide assistance in the selection of invited participants. Newspaper advertisements will be used to invite interested individuals to submit their names. Should the response be greater than expected staff will book additional meetings. Also, as in previous years the public will be able to provide written submissions.

There are 8 proposed meetings booked throughout the HRM (schedule attached) and up to 15 participants will be in attendance as well as representatives from various HRM business units. The members of Council will be invited to attend the discussions. Each meeting is designed to discuss the local and surrounding communities' issues, not just the community where the meeting is held.

The following topics would be discussed:

- Are there services that you think should be expanded or reduced and if so which services are they?
- If services should be expanded, how should their costs be covered?

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Funds are available in Financial Services to cover advertising and other expenditures.

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.

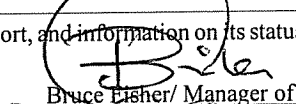
ALTERNATIVES

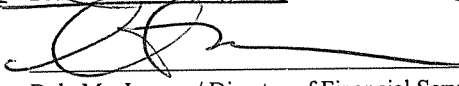
1. Not to approve the round table discussions but to continue with previous public input options.
2. To eliminate the public consultation piece with respect to the HRM budget process.


ATTACHMENTS

Proposed schedule of round table discussions.

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by:  Bruce Fisher/ Manager of Financial Planning

Report Approved by:  Dale MacLennan/ Director of Financial Services

 C. SANDERSON
MANAGER REVENUE

**Round Table Discussions Proposed Schedule
September / October 2003**

Date:	Location:
September 11 th	Hammonds Plains Community Centre
September 15 th	Black Point Fire Department
September 17 th	Middle Musquodoboit -Bicentennial Theatre
September 18 th	Sheet Harbour - Sheet Harbour Recreation Centre
September 22 nd	Waverley Legion
September 24 th	Dartmouth - Cole Harbour Place - Westphal Room
September 25 th	Sackville Library - both upper rooms
October 1 st	Halifax - Captain William Spry Centre