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Item No. 12.1.2
Executive Standing Committee
October 23, 2017

TO: Chair and Members of the Executive Standing Committee

SUBMITTED BY: ORIGINAL SIGNED

Catherine Mullally, Director of Human Resources/Diversity and Inclusion

DATE: July 20, 2017

SUBJECT: **Support for Halifax Access4All Accessibility Policy and Action Plan**

ORIGIN

At the January 16, 2017 meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, a motion was put and passed: “That the Transportation Standing Committee request a staff report on potential funding and partnership opportunities between HRM and Walk ‘n’ Roll Halifax in relation to the HalifaxAccess4All Accessibility Policy & Action Plan proposal outlined in the January 16, 2017 Accessibility Advisory Committee presentation.”

At the January 26, 2017 meeting of the Transportation Standing Committee, a motion was put and passed: “That Transportation Standing Committee request a staff report investigating potential support, funding and partnership opportunities between HRM and Walk ‘n’ Roll Halifax’s Halifax Access4All Policy and Action Plan as outlined in the January 16th, 2017 Accessibility Advisory Committee presentation.”

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Advisory Committee on Accessibility in HRM (formerly called the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities) was established pursuant to s.11(4) of the Halifax Regional Municipality Act S.N.S.1995, c.3. Its mandate is to advise and assist Halifax Regional Council, through the Executive Standing Committee, to facilitate and promote the access and accessibility of all citizens to their community including municipal government, programs and services. Accessibility for this purpose meaning the removal of all barriers confronting citizens with disabilities, including attitudinal barriers.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Executive Standing Committee recommend to Halifax Regional Council that:

- (1) the Walk ‘n’ Roll proposal for funding, as submitted, be refused on the grounds that that \$90,000 has already been allocated in the 2017/2018 budget to support the delivery of accessibility related initiatives across the municipality;
- (2) the CAO, through the Diversity and Inclusion office, continue work on HRM’s framework and reporting model for Halifax’s Inclusive and Accessible initiatives with consultation and input from Walk ‘n’ Roll

Halifax, the Accessibility Advisory Committee, and other community organizations and individuals, with the framework to be in alignment with the Council Priority Areas of Healthy, Liveable Communities (Recreation & Leisure), Social Development (Accessible Community), and Transportation (Interconnected & Strategic Growth; A Safe & Accessible Transportation Network); and

(3) that the CAO prepare a report outlining progress to date on the accessibility framework.

BACKGROUND

On January 16th, 2017, a presentation was made to the Accessibility Advisory Committee by committee member and Vice-Chairperson Gerry Post regarding a concept called Halifax.Access4All which would develop a community-led approach towards an accessibility strategy. Mr. Post indicated he had met with Mayor Savage and Rick Hansen regarding the Rick Hansen LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) accessibility standards. Mr. Post suggested that the community be empowered to design its own accessibility strategy for the municipality. He presented the idea that Halifax form a partnership with Walk 'n Roll Halifax, of which he is a board member, to design this strategy. He sought \$90,000 to support this initiative. The result of his presentation was the first motion in the Origin section of this report.

At the January 26th, 2017 meeting of the Transportation Standing Committee, the motion from the Accessibility Advisory Committee and a slide presentation prepared by Gerry Post were reviewed. No formal presentation was made. The result was the second motion in the Origin section of this report.

DISCUSSION

The Priority Area of Social Development, from Regional Council's Strategic Plan 2017-21, includes the following Outcome: *Accessible Community – HRM is a leader in building an accessible community where everyone can participate fully in life, including persons with disabilities and seniors.* To support this outcome, the 2015/16 Operational Plan for Government Relations and External Affairs stated: "Establish a framework and reporting model for Halifax's Inclusive and Accessible initiatives." The Diversity and Inclusion Office is currently working on this accessibility framework and reporting model for HRM. In June 2017 an Accessibility intern was hired to work with the office on the creation of a workplan and framework.

The motion from the January 26, 2017 Executive Standing Committee asks that three areas be investigated between HRM and Walk 'n' Roll Halifax in relation to the HalifaxAccess4All Accessibility Policy & Action Plan proposal: support, funding, and partnership opportunities.

Support

In 2015, when the Office of Diversity and Inclusion was tasked with developing an accessibility framework and reporting model, the focus was to develop a framework that would guide business units in the development of business unit specific accessibility plans. Business units would then be responsible to consult with community and the Accessibility Advisory Committee to develop their plans. The framework also identified the Accessibility Advisory Committee as a key partner in supporting the proposed framework.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion continues to work on the development of the accessibility framework, and will consult with community organizations, including Walk 'n Roll Halifax as it moves forward. However, for the reasons outlined in the report, it does not recommend that Walk 'n Roll Halifax be engaged to design an accessibility strategy for the municipality.

A draft framework has been developed and will be part of the overall Diversity and Inclusion Framework. To support the framework the following work has been completed:

- Draft accessibility and inclusion policy
- Q&A backgrounder of accessibility and inclusion
- Profile in diversity – persons with disabilities (this will be part of the diversity and inclusion lens tool)
- Example of best practices for business units in the area of accessibility and inclusion
- Work has begun on an accessibility and inclusion lens

- Review of the accessibility legislation to determine the impact on HRM services

A project plan will be presented to the CAO by December 2017 followed by a significant community consultation process to develop the final framework with a projected completion of March 2018.

Funding

On April 11, Regional Council adopted the 2017/2018 Operating and Capital Budget. This budget included \$90,000 of additional funding to “support organized and effective delivery of accessibility related initiatives across the municipality.” While this funding is not directly earmarked for the external request from Access4All, it is intended to ensure community involvement in the development of the municipality’s accessibility framework. Therefore staff do not recommend funding this proposal since \$90,000 has already been allocated in the 2017/2018 budget to support the delivery of accessibility-related initiatives across the municipality and the work to develop an accessibility framework is already being undertaken by the staff of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

If the proposal for HalifaxAccess4All Accessibility Policy & Action Plan is seeking a grant as a community group (e.g. through Walk ‘n Roll) to develop its own accessibility strategy, there are two types of grants available through the Community Grants Program (which is now closed for the 2017-18 fiscal year):

- a) Project grants of up to \$5,000 – Before project grant funding could be fully considered, additional information including project scope, detailed budget or other supporting documents would be needed.
- b) Capital grants of up to \$25,000. Presently the capital grants provide assistance to specific types of projects in the following categories: environment, recreation & leisure, affordable & supportive housing, emergency assistance, neighborhood safety, community history, community diversity and community arts & crafts. However, it is not clear whether this proposal would meet the requirements for capital funding.

However, neither of the grant options above allows for funds in the amount of the proposed \$90,000.

Partnership Opportunities

The potential for partnership with Walk ‘n Roll Halifax and other community organizations is strong when it comes to contributions and public engagement towards an overall accessibility plan for the Halifax Regional Municipality. The mandate of Walk ‘n Roll Halifax via their web site indicates:

“Walk ‘n Roll Halifax will advocate for the benefits of walking as a key indicator of healthy, efficient, socially inclusive and sustainable communities and, the universal rights of people to be able to walk safely and to enjoy high quality public spaces anywhere and at any time.”

The proposal presented to the Transportation Standing Committee clearly indicates an interest in the area of built environment, as it involves walking as a form of transportation in the urban areas of the municipality. However, a comprehensive and inclusive approach to accessibility should address, at a minimum, the following specific barriers:

- (1) Attitudinal;
- (2) Systemic;
- (3) Physical;
- (4) Information/Communication; and
- (5) Technological.

As such, Walk ‘n Roll Halifax would be a strong partner to provide input on built environment issues. However, other partners would need to be engaged to ensure a holistic focus on other areas of accessibility. These areas would include, but not be limited to: accessible playgrounds; website and technological accessibility; accessible transportation; employment opportunities; and accessible formats and customer service.

Developing a community-based accessibility framework suggests being inclusive of other organizations and individuals who support the municipality's priority outcome of being "a leader in building an accessible community where everyone can fully participate and live, including persons with disabilities and seniors". A few of the other organizations that would be valuable to include in the process are the Canadian Council on the Blind, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the Canadian Paraplegic Association (Nova Scotia), the Abilities Foundation, and the Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunity.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications related to the recommendations in this report.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations in this report. The risks considered rate low.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Original proposal was presented to the Accessibility Advisory Committee which is made up of representatives from the accessibility community.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None

ALTERNATIVES

The Executive Standing Committee could recommend to Regional Council that it direct the CAO to further explore the funding proposal form Walk 'n Roll, including determining how funding could be provided, which may include Procurement or a grant, and that it direct Audit & Finance to identify a funding source.

The Executive Standing Committee could recommend to Regional Council that a consultant be hired to work with the Diversity & Inclusion Office to develop a broad, community-based accessibility framework, and that it direct Audit & Finance to identify a funding source.

ATTACHMENTS

None

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

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