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Item No. 12.1.1
Community Planning & Economic Development
April 20, 2017

TO: Chair and Members of Community Planning and Economic
Development Standing Committee

ORIGINAL SIGNED

SUBMITTED BY:

Peter Stickings, Acting Director, Operations Support

DATE: March 23, 2016

SUBJECT: **Universal Access to Municipal Washroom Facilities**

ORIGIN

On September 15, 2016, Community Planning & Economic Development passed the following motion:

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Adams that the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee request a staff report on how HRM can ensure universal access to municipal washroom facilities. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Community Terms of Reference - Section 5, Oversight - Community Building Initiatives.

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, section 59(3): In addition to matters specified in this Act or another Act of the Legislature, the Council may adopt policies on any matter that the Council considers conducive to the effective management of the Municipality.

Administrative Order 54, the Procedures for the Development of Administrative Orders, section 8(b): Administrative Orders may be initiated by a resolution of a Community Council or a Standing Committee of the Council by means of a recommendation from the Community Council or Standing Committee to the Council and by a further resolution of the Council directing staff to draft an Administrative Order for consideration by the Council.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee recommend to Regional Council that staff be directed to draft an Administrative Order on universal access to all municipal facilities.

BACKGROUND

The term 'universal' access is generally used to describe the accommodation of all members of society within the built environment.

In 2012, Corporate Facility Design & Construction (CFD&C), in consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, adopted the Canadian Standards Association's (CSA) Standard B651-12 Accessible Design for the Built Environment, as a benchmark to guide all new construction.

Through application of the standard, many barriers have been removed which has improved accessibility at HRM facilities, increasing the independence and inclusion of a wider segment of society. Examples of removing barriers include the provision of door operators, ramps, lever door handles, grab bars, and braille signage. Additional items include lowering of counter tops and controls to meet the requirements of CSA B-651.

DISCUSSION

While design to minimize barriers associated with physical, auditory, visual and cognitive challenges was a starting point, a broader consideration of access to public facilities proposes that washrooms be equitably available to all. Examples include public washrooms designed to accommodate gender neutral access, access for a child with a care-giver, or a person with an attendant.

Some Canadian municipalities have developed policies to ensure a proactive approach to universal access to their municipal facilities. Currently, HRM does not have a written policy to define and ensure universal access to municipal facilities. CFD&C staff work with each client business unit to determine, on a project-by-project basis, their program needs and rely on consultants to design project specific solutions compliant with current codes and standards.

A universal access administrative order, aligned with Regional Council's Priority Areas, would clarify expectations and ensure application in a consistent manner. The administrative order could address constraints and opportunities associated with both existing and new facilities, and include provisions to ensure universal access to municipal washroom facilities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications associated with this report will be identified should the recommended action be actioned by Regional Council.

RISK CONSIDERATION

N/A

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Standing Committee meetings are open to the public.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1: The Standing Committee could refuse to recommend to Regional Council that staff be directed to draft an Administrative Order. This is not recommended by staff.

Alternative 2: The Standing Committee may choose to recommend to Regional Council that staff be directed to draft an Administrative Order on universal access to all municipal facilities and municipal infrastructures such as parks, playgrounds and sidewalks.

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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