



P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No.
Community Planning and Economic Development
June 16, 2016

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

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by:

Brad Anguish, Director, Parks and Recreation

DATE: June 8, 2016

SUBJECT: Funding Request - Neptune Theatre Foundation

ORIGIN

February 18, 2016 Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee motion:

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Nicoll that Community Planning & Economic Development Standing committee Request a staff report on the one-time request for a capital contribution of \$100,000 for Neptune Theatre.

Motion Put and Passed Unanimously

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter Section 79 (1) (av) (v) Halifax Regional Council may expend money required by the Municipality for...(av) a grant or contribution to ...(v) any charitable, nursing, medical, athletic, educational, environmental, cultural, community, fraternal, recreational, religious, sporting or social organization within the Province.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council direct staff to consider a \$50,000 one-time capital grant contribution to Neptune Theatre as part of the 2017/18 operating budget .

BACKGROUND

The Neptune Theatre Foundation is a registered not-for-profit organization with charitable status. Founded in 1963, the professional theatre company is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors and administered by a professional staff. Neptune Theatre Foundation has owned and operated the theatre located at 1593 Argyle Street since 1997. Since that time, the 56,000 square foot theatre has hosted more than 300 productions in the 479-seat Fountain Hall Main Stage and the 200-seat Scotiabank Studio. In addition to its role as a presenter, the theatre serves as a developmental partner with a range of smaller-scale, local theatre organizations each year and offers less-than cost access to space for rehearsals and productions to community groups. In 2013-2014, the operating budget of Neptune Theatre was \$5.3 million. Neptune Theatre Foundation receives funding from a variety of sources to support its operations, including: Canada Council of the Arts, provincial government, federal government and private sponsors.

HRM has also provided funding and support to Neptune Theatre including:

- 100% property tax exemption since 2001;
- \$20,000 awarded annually from 2007-2013 from the Community Grants Program;
- \$10,000 toward roof maintenance in 2014 from the Community Grants Program; and
- \$40,000 for operating assistance in 2014/2015 & 2015/2016 Interim Professional Arts Grant Program.

On January 16, 2016 Neptune Theatre submitted a request for \$100,000 of support from HRM to undertake major capital improvements for the continued sustainability of their operation (Attachment A). Subsequently, at the February 18, 2016 meeting, CPED requested a staff report on the one-time capital request.

DISCUSSION

Through Neptune Theatre's 2010-2013 strategic planning process, the need for major capital improvements was identified. Neptune identifies technical upgrades and renovations to "increase our capacity to serve the needs of our audience and the cultural community." The \$3.6 million project proposed to begin in June 2016 includes the following elements:

- Technical upgrades: lighting, sound and new stage surface and theatre lift below the stage;
- Improvements to lobbies (new carpet, paint);
- Creation of a new 100-person reception and hospitality area;
- New seating; and
- New signage and monitors.

To finance the project, nearly \$1.1 million of the renovation budget has been secured through public sector contributions. On March 16, 2016, the Federal government announced a \$945,138 contribution over two years from the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund. The fund supports the improvement of physical conditions for artistic creativity and innovation. The Province of Nova Scotia has also committed \$100,000 to the renovation project on top of the \$240,000 annual operational funding they commit to the organization.

Neptune Theatre has also leveraged other revenue sources. The Neptune Endowment Fund launched in 2012 through support of individual donors and Canadian Heritage has now grown to more than \$2.2 million. Neptune has also confirmed a \$500,000 donation from a major patron contribution, and indicated they have been working with major corporate sponsor to secure multi-year contributions. In the spring of 2016 Neptune will launch a community-based seat sale campaign and solicit individual donations through a multi-media campaign.

HRM Contributions

Currently, HRM does not have a grant funding program that could accommodate the level and type of funding requested by Neptune Theatre. As part of the work on the Auditor General’s report on Grants and Donations, staff is currently reviewing the overall granting policy. In the interim, Regional Council is still able to consider requests on a case by case basis as the *HRM Charter* permits Regional Council to provide a grant or contribution to a variety of charitable organizations including community and recreational organizations.

There are two HRM Grants Programs through which Neptune Theatre can currently access funding. HRM’s *Community Grants Program* provides program grants in the amount of \$5,000 and capital grants in the amount of \$25,000. In 2014, the *Interim Professional Arts Program* was created in relation to increasing levels of municipal arts funding to national averages. The grant supports general and ongoing operational capacity of professional arts organizations in the Municipality. Within the operational assistance stream, Neptune Theatre is currently defined as an anchor organization (with annual operating budget over \$3 million) and is eligible for up to a maximum of \$50,000.

In addition, since 2001, Neptune Theatre has received 100% tax exemption through the *Tax Relief for Non-Profit Organizations Program*. Annual property tax can be expected to further increase if the \$3.6 million renovations are realized. Should Regional Council continue to provide full tax exemption to Neptune Theatre, HRM would shoulder property tax increases.

A summary of the HRM contributions to Neptune Theatre are outlined in the following table:

| HRM Funding Contribution Summary | 2013/2014 | 2014/2015 | 2015/2016 |
|---|------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Tax Relief for Non-Profit Organization Program | \$452,840 | \$431,858 | \$454,000 |
| Community Grants Program | \$20,000 | \$10,000 | \$0 (did not apply) |
| Interim Professional Arts Grant Program | n/a* | \$40,000 | \$40,000 |
| Yearly Totals | \$472,840 | \$481,858 | \$494,000 |
| Total HRM Funding 2013-2015 | | | \$1,448.698 |
| * Interim Professional Arts Grant Program began in 2014 | | | |

Neptune Theatre and HRM Alignment

Neptune Theatre has an established track record that enhances the region’s cultural and artistic reputation. Now in its 55th season, the Theatre employs 400 people and is estimated to contribute \$7 million to the local economy every year. Neptune Theatre 2015 Economic Impact Study highlights that: based on an average ticket price of \$41, for every dollar of ticket revenue Neptune takes in, another dollar is spent in the local area on a variety of goods and services that patrons consume relating to Neptune attendance. These spin offs include spending in restaurants, transportation, accommodation, retail and other. With a total of 72,958 attendees in the 2013-2014 season, there was an estimated \$5.9 million of Neptune-related purchases of goods and services. Neptune Theatre’s ability to stimulate spending aids in business recruitment and retention and, in turn, helps achieve a vibrant regional centre.

Neptune Theatre’s impact on the downtown core and surrounding area is aligned with HRMs 2011-2016 Economic Strategy goal of building a vibrant and attractive regional centre. The Strategy outlines a means to increase the public perception of downtown vibrancy is to “celebrate and enable a rich variety of cultural and creative opportunities in the regional centre.” One of the corresponding actions is the increase of public investment and funding for cultural institutions programs and public gathering spaces. The Strategy does not address recommended levels of increased investment.

Assessment of Request

The *Interim Professional Arts Program* introduced in 2014 does represent an additional \$50,000 in available funding resources for Neptune. Despite this increase in public funding, staff recognizes the significant financial challenges for a non-profit to finance a \$3.6 million capital project, and acknowledges the potential municipal benefit in maintained or increased economic spin off.

With 60 per cent of Neptune Theatre's revenues directly linked to ticket sales, they maintain "keeping our visitor experience at the best level possible is essential to Neptune's sustainability." Given the ongoing revitalization of the downtown core, Neptune Theatre identifies now as a compelling time to improve the facility to increase capacity and encourage further investment from the community.

Funding was allocated in HRM's 2016/17 operating budget for both the *Community Grants Program* and the *Interim Professional Arts Program*, both of which Neptune Theatre would be eligible to apply for. In addition, it is expected that Neptune Theatre would apply for tax exemption for 2016/17. At the May 10, 2016 meeting, Regional Council approved Community Grant awards but did not allocate funding to Neptune Theatre. Regional Council decisions on applications for Interim Professional Arts grants and tax exemption are expected in the coming months.

In order to appropriately assess the request for a one-time capital grant, staff recommends that Regional Council considers HRM's investment in Neptune Theatre to date and their current access to available grants as well as their potential to drive significant economic impact for the municipality. With this balance in mind, it is recommended that HRM consider providing Neptune Theatre with a one-time \$50,000 capital grant contribution in the 2017/18 fiscal year. This amount, combined with a potential \$50,000 Interim Professional Arts Program grant would provide an approximate \$100,000 total grant in 2017/18. The recommended amount of a capital grant contribution would be reasonable and relative considering funding provided by other levels of government and HRM's current investment in Neptune Theatre.

No funding was allocated that would be available for consideration of a separate one-time capital grant. As a result, should Regional Council want to consider the request during the 2016/17 fiscal year, it would require a subsequent report to the Audit & Finance Standing Committee for consideration of a funding source as an unbudgeted, in-year request. Therefore, it is recommended that Regional Council consider the funding request for inclusion in the 2017/18 budget.

Summary

Neptune Theatre is a community owned and operated facility and has demonstrated a longstanding benefit and commitment to HRM. As a result, HRM has made a significant investment to Neptune Theatre to date through available grants and property tax relief. HRM also acknowledges that Neptune Theatre, in addition to being a main player in the arts, is also a driver of community engagement. These community and economic spinoffs of Neptune's thriving presence help HRM achieve its goal of a vibrant and attractive regional centre.

Assessing a one-time capital grant, staff recommends that Regional Council considers HRM's investment in Neptune Theatre to date and their current access to available grants as well as their potential to drive significant economic impact for the municipality. With this balance in mind, and the recognition that Neptune Theatre is eligible for the Interim Professional Arts Program up to a maximum of \$50,000, it is recommended that HRM provide Neptune Theatre with a one-time \$50,000 capital grant in the 2017/18 fiscal year.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report for 2016-2017. Approval of this recommendation will result in the consideration of a one time increase of \$50,000 to the 2017/18 Operating budget for Parks & Recreation.

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

The overall risk is low from the funding request perspective. Until a comprehensive granting policy is implemented to evaluate funding requests of this scale, there is a risk to HRM that one-time funding decisions for community owned facilities, including but not exclusive to the arts would be inconsistent and inequitable.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Neptune Theatre Foundation Board of Directors includes members of the community.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None

ALTERNATIVES

- Alternative 1: CPED could recommend that Regional Council amend the recommended amount and direct staff to include a one-time capital grant to Neptune Theatre for the revised amount in the 2017/18 budget.
- Alternative 2: CPED could recommend that Regional Council decline Neptune Theatre's request for a one-time capital grant contribution of \$100,000.
- Alternative 3: CPED could recommend that Regional Council approve a capital grant contribution to Neptune Theatre and direct staff to identify a funding source in 2016/17. This would require a supplementary report to Audit & Finance for consideration of a funding source as it would be an unbudgeted, in-year funding request.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Letter from Neptune Theatre Foundation

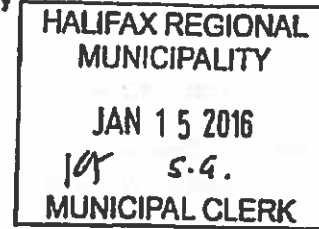
A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/index.php> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

Report Prepared by: Jenny White, Partnership Coordinator, Program Support Services 902.490.1214

**A Proposal for Halifax Regional Municipality
Neptune Renovation 2016**

January 15th, 2016

Mayor Mike Savage and Halifax Council
Halifax City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3H5



Dear Mayor Savage and Council Members;

On behalf of the Neptune Theatre Foundation, I am writing to formally request the Halifax Regional Municipality's financial support for a renovation project at Neptune Theatre that is slated to begin in June 2016. Our proposal for financial support was presented to the *Community Planning and Economic Development Committee of Council* on November 19th, 2015.

This renovation project, which has been in the planning stages since 2011, will allow Neptune Theatre to sustain its facilities and its commitment to providing cultural infrastructure to the region over the next decade. The attached proposal outlines the overall goals of the project with respect to infrastructure improvements, technical upgrades, and our ability to serve the cultural community within the Halifax region.

Halifax Regional Municipality is a valuable partner in the continued sustainability of Neptune Theatre we hope that Council Members will recognize the value to the region in supporting this \$3.8 million renovation project. At this juncture, we have already secured \$100,000 in support for the project from Nova Scotia Communities, Culture and Heritage and we are awaiting confirmation of nearly \$1 million in support from our federal partners at Canadian Heritage.

In conjunction with the Neptune Renovation, we are requesting a \$100,000 contribution toward the campaign from the Halifax Regional Municipality. This municipal contribution will assist us in securing support from the federal government and our corporate partners.

Neptune intends to publicly announce the renovation campaign in mid-April 2016, and we sincerely hope that we will be able to acknowledge the municipality's participation in the project at this time.

Thank you in advance for your generous consideration of our proposal. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature of Amy Melmock.

Amy Melmock
General Manager
Neptune Theatre Foundation

Cc: Acting CAO John Traves, Elizabeth Taylor, HRM Manager, Culture and Events

**A Proposal for Halifax Regional Municipality
Neptune Renovation 2016**

Neptune Theatre's Role within the Halifax Region

Neptune Theatre plays a defining role within the Halifax region as a driver of the creative economy and as a provider of vital cultural infrastructure. An Economic Impact Study commissioned by the Neptune in 2015 showed that for every dollar spent at Neptune, another dollar is spent on local goods and services, resulting in a direct input of \$7.3 million annually on the regional economy.

Neptune's rehearsal, performance, office and meeting room spaces are used by more than 60 regional performing arts and community organizations annually. And in the course of staging our own productions, Neptune hires the equivalent of nearly 400 theatre professionals annually -- from performers to production staff. Of these theatre professionals, an estimated 80 per cent are hired from within Nova Scotia.

Neptune also hires talented artists from the local theatre community to instruct at the Neptune Theatre School. Our summer, spring and fall workshops and year-round theatre intensive programs for young adults encourage a life-long interest in the performing arts while developing the next generation of theatre artists and audiences.

Neptune is a community partner in advancing the cultural and community aspirations of the region. We are active members within the Greater Halifax Arts Coalition, Theatre Nova Scotia and the Professional Alliance of Canadian Theatres (PACT). Our senior managers participate in regional forums surrounding theatre, marketing and the creative economy, as well as lending their expertise to local cultural initiatives in HRM.

The Neptune Theatre Complex

In 1997, Neptune opened its doors to a new 46,000 square foot theatre facility in the heart of the regional entertainment district. The completion of the \$13 million "New Neptune" complex was the culmination of years of fundraising and advocacy on behalf of Neptune supporters and community leaders.

In the 19 years since the New Neptune was unveiled, more than 1 million people have visited the theatre. The Halifax municipality plays a major role in supporting Neptune's infrastructure by providing us with full tax exemption for the Neptune site. In recent years, the municipality has also provided capital support for roofing improvements and video projection equipment. This support -- combined with municipal professional arts operating funding -- has been vital to the continued operation of the Neptune.

As we plan for an upcoming renovation of our facilities, Neptune hopes that Halifax Council will recognize the value in continuing to be a partner in Neptune's future.

A Proposal for Halifax Regional Municipality Neptune Renovation 2016

Why a Renovation Project is Being Proposed for 2016

After four years of careful planning, consultation and outreach -- accompanied by a two-year period of preliminary discussions with potential funders -- Neptune hopes to begin moving forward with completing of much-needed renovations to the theatre during the summer of 2016.

Since 1997, Neptune has hosted more than 300 individual productions in the 479-seat Fountain Hall Main Stage and the 200-seat Scotiabank Studio. Our facilities are now in need of technical upgrades and renovations that will increase our capacity to serve the needs of our audiences and the cultural community.

During the stakeholder interview phase of 2015 Economic Impact Study, thousands of Neptune patrons indicated that improvements to our service areas and auditoriums and an expansion of our hospitality areas would cause them to invest more in Neptune during their visits to the theatre.

These indicators, coupled with the pending completion of the Nova Centre and the residential growth that will occur in the Halifax regional core during the next decade, make it a compelling time for Neptune to improve its facilities and increase our capacity for audience development.

The \$3.6 million renovation project proposed for June 2016 includes the following elements:

- **Technical upgrades will be made to our Main Stage Fountain Hall Theatre that will provide improvements in lighting and sound, as well as creating a new stage surface and theatre lift below the stage.**
- **Improvements to our Main Stage and Studio Lobbies will include new paint and carpets and a reworking of our hospitality areas to provide enhanced customer service.**
- **The creation of a new 100-person Reception and Hospitality area adjacent to the Upper Fountain Hall Lobby and above the Neptune Box Office will create a new community gathering space.**
- **New seating for Fountain Hall and the Scotiabank Studio Theatre will improve the theatre experience at Neptune.**
- **New signage and monitors will modernize the marketing of our shows and help provide up to the minute information on cultural activities taking place in the community.**

A Proposal for Halifax Regional Municipality Neptune Renovation 2016

Planning Stages for the Renovation Project

Planning for the renovation activities outlined in this proposal began during Neptune's 2010-2011 Season, when board members and senior management staff finalized the organization's 2010-2013 Strategic Plan. This Strategic Plan identified a series of major capital improvements that were needed to move Neptune forward during the coming decade.

During the summer of 2011, Neptune senior managers and board volunteers formed a *50th Anniversary Renovation Campaign Committee* to begin addressing the major capital projects identified in the strategic plan. Using a series of initial recommendations and from the nationally recognized theatre design firm SBA Architects, the committee compiled a detailed overview of the renovation project specifications and issued a *Request for Proposals* for perspective construction firms in the region. Based on a competitive cost analysis and a well-articulated renovation work schedule for the proposed renovations, Castone Construction was identified as the preferred contractor for the project.

Fundraising for the project began in 2012, when a fundraising prospectus for the renovation project and the Neptune's new endowment campaign was created. This activity identified major donors with an interest in supporting the endowment campaigns and recommended that Neptune's key patrons and corporate supporters be approached to support the renovation project. Public sector support for the renovation project was envisioned through contributions from the federal Cultural Spaces Program, the Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage and the Halifax Regional Municipality.

Anticipated Sources of Funding

In March 2015, Neptune Theatre secured a \$500,000 donation toward the overall renovation campaign from a major patron contribution. In May 2015, Neptune completed an application to the Canadian Heritage Cultural Spaces program for \$900,000. Our proposal has met with a favorable response and we anticipate that federal funding will be announced in the coming weeks. The Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture, and Heritage has confirmed a \$100,000 contribution to the campaign. All told, these federal and provincial requests total nearly \$1.1 million.

Neptune has also been working with major corporate sponsors to secure multi-year contributions towards funding the overall campaign. Scotiabank has confirmed that it will contribute to the project by continuing its naming rights agreement for the Scotiabank Studio Theatre. Other corporate support has been secured for hospitality components of the project.

This April, Neptune will launch a community-based Seat Sale campaign to promote the 200 or more unnamed seats within Fountain Hall and the 200 seats within the Scotiabank Studio Theatre. Smaller individual donations to the campaign will also be welcomed through a multi-media campaign.

In conjunction with the Neptune Renovation, we are requesting a \$100,000 contribution toward the campaign from the Halifax Regional Municipality. This municipal contribution will assist us in securing contributions from the federal government and our corporate partners.

A Proposal for Halifax Regional Municipality Neptune Renovation 2016

Neptune's Audience Base and Community Supporters

On an annual basis, an average of 75,000 people attend the Main Stage and Studio Theatre productions staged at Neptune's downtown Halifax facilities. Our audience consists of a broad cross-section of theatre patrons from throughout the Halifax Regional Municipality and the surrounding region. Through the generous support of our corporate partners, Neptune's *Pay-What-You-Can* program and our new *Sharing the Stage Program* provide subsidized and free theatre access to an estimated 4,000 people each year.

Neptune has a base of approximately 7,000 subscribers – many of whom have been attending the theatre since its inception in 1963. Our subscription base also includes a growing percentage of post-secondary students, thanks to an increased effort in recent seasons to market to this important Halifax demographic. The theatre also has strong ties with the military community in the region, and with educators in the region. We receive support from more than 500 community donors annually, along with the patronage of more than 70 regional and national corporate supporters.

Neptune's Annual School Tour provides outreach to 25,000 students throughout the province during April and May. The tour provides many elementary students with their first exposure to live professional theatre, and gives local actors, playwrights, and directors the chance to explore youth-orientated social issues with high school students using the powerful medium of theatre. In recent years, Neptune has presented contemporary plays written by Atlantic Canadians on subjects ranging from bullying to racism, to the effect of social media on teenage self-esteem. Our 2016 theatre school tour is being co-produced with the Halifax theatre group *Misery Loves Theatre Company* – and it explores Nova Scotia's role in the First World War through the eyes of one Nova Scotia family.

Summary

- With the support of the corporate sector, our government partners and the community, we hope to begin the renovation project in the summer of 2016.
- Once completed, the renovation will add to our technical capacity in Fountain Hall and create new visitor amenities – like larger, more comfortable seating and a new reception and hospitality area. It will also support the ongoing use of Neptune's facilities by the local community.
- The renovation project is linked to the revitalization of the downtown regional core and supports Neptune's efforts to remain a strong contributor to the regional economy.
- Because 60 per cent of our revenue base is linked to ticket sales, keeping our visitor experience at the best level possible is essential to Neptune's sustainability.

**A Proposal for Halifax Regional Municipality
Neptune Renovation 2016**

*Thank you for your support of Neptune Theatre!
We look forward to welcoming you to our newly renovated facilities.*

Contact:

**Amy Melmock, General Manager
Neptune Theatre Foundation
1593 Argyle Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 2B2
(902) 494-8464 amelmock@neptunetheatre.com**

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| MUNICIPAL CLERKS OFFICE | |
| Date Distributed: <u>Jan 18/16</u> | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Councillors | Meeting <u>CPEJ</u> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mayor | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C.O. | Meeting Date: <u>Nov 19/15</u> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DCAO | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Solicitor | Item No. <u>8.3.1</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Affairs | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gov. Relations | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | <u>E. Taylor, B. Anguish</u> <u>S. Edmonds</u> |