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Item No. 3
Community Planning and Economic
Development Committee
October 17, 2019

TO: Chair and Members of Community Planning and Economic Development

Original Singed

SUBMITTED BY:

Caroline Blair-Smith, Director, Human Resources/Office of Diversity & Inclusion

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Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: May 13, 2019

SUBJECT: African Nova Scotian Economic Action Plan

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Staff-initiated report based on recent developments around *Halifax Economic Growth Plan 2016-21*

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter 2008, c. 39, permits the municipality to undertake a variety of economic development activities. Section 71 sets out the authority specific to Business and Industrial Development.

Subsection 79A(5) states: "*In the event of ambiguity in whether or not the Municipality has the authority under this or any other Act to spend money or to take any other action, the ambiguity may be resolved so as to include, rather than exclude, powers the Municipality had on the day before this Section came into force.*"

BACKGROUND

In May 2018, Regional Council approved an action plan for years three-to-five (2018-21) of Halifax's economic strategy known as the *Halifax Economic Growth Plan 2016-21*. Action #12 of the action plan states, "Develop and implement an African Nova Scotian (ANS) Action Plan to advance economic development and community priorities."

DISCUSSION

The African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO) and the Halifax Partnership (the Partnership) have enabled the municipality to better engage the African Nova Scotia community. Since its creation in 2012, ANSAIO has focused on working with HRM business units and ANS communities to improve municipal service delivery and increase employment equity within HRM. Recently, working with lead business units, it has focused on:

- Resolving land title issues in East Preston, North Preston, Cherry Brook in partnership with the Province;
- Establishing a community-endorsed Beechville ANS Liaison Group to strengthen relations between the Beechville community and Planning and Development;
- Engaging the East Preston Rate Payers' Association to explore the feasibility of extending municipal water service into the East Preston community;
- Supporting Transportation and Public Works' efforts to explore Active Transportation opportunities in Africville;
- Working with Parks and Recreation Cultural Assets Team on an Africville Interpretive project;
- Hiring an African Nova Scotian for an M2 level supervisory position within TPW; and
- Designing an African Nova Scotian stream of HRM's Foundation of Aspiring Leader's program that teaches HRM employees the essentials of effective leadership.

For its part, the Partnership has focused on ANS business development and workforce attachment which have been achieved, in part, through its Memorandum of Understanding with the Black Business Initiative (BBI). ANSAIO and the Partnership are leveraging broader initiatives to advance their work, including the United Nation's proclaimed International Decade for People of African Descent and the facilitation of community development plans in East Preston, North Preston and Cherrybrook by the Nova Scotia Office of African Nova Scotia Affairs.

HRM and the Partnership are aligned on their ANS-specific work, and this has been facilitated by the joint development of the *Halifax Economic Growth Plan 2016-21*. The economic strategy actions endorsed by Regional Council, and being reported on from 2018 to 2021, contain the following actions that relate directly to the ANS community:

- **Action #10** -- In partnership with the Province, develop an approach to resolving ownership, taxation and planning issues on residential and community-owned properties without clear title (co-led by HRM and the Partnership).
- **Action #12** -- Develop and implement an ANS Action Plan to advance ANS economic development and community priorities (HRM and the Partnership).
- **Action #31** -- Leverage Halifax's immigrant communities to attract talent and investment to Halifax (led by the Partnership).
- **Action #33** -- Establish ANS and Mi'kmaq/Indigenous Peoples streams under the Halifax Connector Program (Partnership).
- **Action #34** -- Identify and share existing programs, services and outcomes related to the workforce attachment of Mi'kmaq/Indigenous Peoples, African Nova Scotians and other groups at risk of exclusion (Partnership).
- **Action #37** -- Review/improve HRM HR policies from a diversity and inclusion perspective (HRM).
- **Action #38** -- Connect newcomers, African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaq/Indigenous Peoples, youth and persons with disabilities to employment opportunities at HRM (HRM).
- **Action #59** -- Consider and, where possible, incorporate community benefits as part of the development approval process in HRM communities (HRM).

The development of the ANS Action Plan (Action #12) is being led by the Halifax Partnership and ANSAIO and is planned for completion in 2019-20. It is intended to build upon the Partnership and HRM's existing work and facilitate greater dialogue with the ANS community. The plan's development will stress open dialogue between all parties, provide an opportunity to share the *Halifax Economic Growth Plan*, and communicate HRM's work with the ANS community, all while focusing on issues that fall within HRM's mandate or that HRM can influence. Consequently, the plan may be solely focused on achieving the ANS-related Economic Growth Plan actions outlined above, or it could include additional actions.

The following describes the actions to-date:

- **A two-day gathering of ANS organizations and communities was held.** In June 2018, ANSAIO and the Partnership organized a "Road to Economic Prosperity: A Gathering of African Nova Scotian Communities and Neighbourhoods" Meeting. The two-day event was well attended and featured presentations by representatives from ANS community-based organizations and individuals from historic ANS communities across HRM. Participants also had the opportunity to collaboratively discuss the current state of Halifax's historic ANS communities, developments at all three levels of government, and community priorities to be addressed in the action plan. Key messages that emerged from the event were:
 - An external advisory committee should be formed to guide the project;
 - An annual gathering of ANS communities and organizations should occur to discuss priorities and communicate progress on the action plan's implementation;
 - Community-level statistics should be gathered and interpreted; and,
 - Capacity-building is taking place within ANS communities, as is HRM's ability to better engage them; this must continue.

Other issues of interest to the ANS community have also emerged through ongoing HRM's public consultations and ANSAIO's work. These include a call for:

- Tangible ANS economic benefits related to the redevelopment of the Cogswell Lands since an African Nova Scotian community was relocated to build the interchange¹;
- Concrete ways to address the displacement of ANS residents and businesses in gentrifying neighbourhoods; and,
- Better means for HRM to understand and address the strained historic ANS and municipal relationship – in particular, where there have been socio-economic implications.

The following describes upcoming actions:

- **Advisory Committee.** An advisory committee consisting of the Partnership, HRM, BBI, the Nova Scotia Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs and community members will be initiated to continue to guide the plan throughout its implementation phases.
- **Presentation of initial draft plan.** The draft plan and funding requirements will be presented to Regional Council before being presented at a community event in the fall of 2019. The intention of the presentation is to gather feedback from community. HRM business units will be engaged to ensure alignment with their plans. The implementation of the strategic priorities and accompanying actions will be led by Halifax Partnership, HRM, under the guidance of the Advisory Committee and in collaboration with the ANS Communities.

¹ <http://halifaxmag.com/cover/paved-with-good-intentions/>

- **Final Draft Plan.** The final draft will be presented to Regional Council for approval. The plan will be finalized by March 2020 and will be released at a public event thereafter. Progress on the action plan's implementation will be reported back to Regional Council periodically.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The plan's development is being cost-shared between the Partnership and HRM using existing budgets. The cost to implement the two-year plan has not been fully scoped. The cost to HRM could be in the range of \$25K-\$80K over 2020-21 and 2021-22, with potential additional funding from other partners. Financial implications will be outlined when the final draft is submitted to Regional Council for approval.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The "Road to Economic Prosperity" event in June 2018 and ongoing community engagement work of ANSAIO and the Partnership contributed to the report.

ATTACHMENTS

N/A

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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