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Item No. 9.1(i)
Heritage Advisory Committee
October 23, 2019

TO: Chair and Members of the Heritage Advisory Committee

Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY:

Steve Higgins, Acting Director of Planning and Development

Original Signed

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: September 19, 2019

SUBJECT: **Case H00468: Request to Include 26 Elliot Street, Dartmouth in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality**

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

ORIGIN

- Application by a third party, Maura Donovan, a resident of Dartmouth.
- Request by Regional Council at their August 13, 2019 meeting for a supplementary staff report examining the potential inclusion of interior elements as character defining heritage elements for 26 Elliot Street, Dartmouth.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Heritage Property Act

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Heritage Advisory Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council proceed with the approval of the request to include 26 Elliot Street, Dartmouth in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality as a municipal heritage property without the inclusion of interior character defining elements.

BACKGROUND

Local resident, Maura Donovan, has submitted an application to include the property located at 26 Elliot Street, Dartmouth in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality. The application was reviewed by the Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) at their July 24, 2019 meeting. HAC awarded the property a score of 55 points out of a possible 100 points and recommended that the application be approved.

Through their discussions, the HAC also noted that interior features of the building may have heritage value and Regional Council requested a supplementary staff report examining the potential inclusion of interior features as character defining elements. Section 15 of the *Heritage Property Act* states that municipalities may “register the building, **public-building interior**, streetscape, cultural landscape or area as a municipal heritage property in the municipal registry of heritage property.”

Identifying Character Defining Elements

HRM currently does not have established evaluation criteria for determining the character defining elements of registered heritage properties. Character defining elements are generally identified by Staff, the HAC and Council on a case by case basis. The purpose of creating a list of character defining elements for a property at registration is to identify the features of a building that must be preserved in order to maintain its heritage character. When evaluating proposals for alterations to registered heritage properties, the impact of the project on a building’s character defining elements is used by staff to determine if an alteration is considered to be substantial or non-substantial. If character defining elements are being altered or removed, an application for substantial alteration must be submitted and approved by Regional Council.

DISCUSSION

The Findlay School building was constructed in 1932 as a six classroom bungalow school. The building continued to operate as a school until 1971, when it was closed and converted into the Findlay Community Centre. The conversion of the building into a community centre did not require significant alterations to its original interior floorplan. The building’s main hallway and four of the six classrooms appear to have been maintained in their original locations with many features intact. However, some significant updates have been made to these spaces. Major alterations include accessibility upgrades to the building’s entranceways, the installation of a retractable wall between two of the classrooms, the installation of a modern kitchen and bar area in the former classroom now used by the Dartmouth Senior Citizens Club, and other modifications to accommodate storage and programming requirements. In addition, the remaining two classrooms have been retrofitted for use as office, kitchen and meeting room space for community centre staff. Current photos of the Findlay Community Centre’s interior are included as Attachment A.

The main features of the interior of the Findlay School building that contribute to its unique architectural character are its high ceiling heights and the long windows that are visible throughout the building. The windows are currently included as recommended exterior character defining elements and staff do not anticipate that it would be feasible for changes to the ceiling heights to take place without extensive exterior alterations.

Other features of the interior have also been maintained that are likely original to the building. These include hardwood floors throughout the main floor of the building, wainscoting along most of the main hallway, and mahogany trim that is used in some classrooms around windows, chalkboards, doors and pocket cabinets. While these features are likely original to the building, they have been inconsistently maintained over the years. In particular, flooring has been replaced in some of the former classrooms, wainscoting has been removed in areas and mahogany detailing has been removed or painted over in many places throughout the building. Furthermore, while these features may be original, they are not so significant that the building’s character is greatly impacted in the areas where they have been altered or removed.

Potential features of the Findlay School building that may be considered to be character defining elements include:

- high ceiling heights throughout the building;
- hardwood flooring in the main hallway and classrooms;
- wainscoting in the main hallway; and
- mahogany trim in classrooms.

Staff are of the opinion that these features do not have such a significant impact on the overall character of the building that substantial alteration approval would be warranted to change or remove them. As a result, it is not recommended that they be considered as character defining elements for the building.

Practical Implications

Heritage staff have contacted staff in Parks and Recreation and Corporate Facilities Maintenance to seek comments on the implications of registering interior features, and to determine alternate means of protecting these features. While no significant changes are proposed for the interior of the Findlay Community Centre, the identification of interior elements could affect future adaptive re-use and retrofits of the building by requiring formal Council approval for those changes.

At this time, HRM does not have any registered heritage properties with interior character defining elements that have been formally identified as part of their registrations. However, heritage staff work closely with other municipal departments when alterations are proposed for registered heritage properties owned by the municipality. This has included interior renovations for significant properties like City Hall. The involvement of heritage staff in these issues may eventually become formalized as a result of the forthcoming Culture and Heritage Priorities Plan. This would give heritage staff the ability to encourage the retention of significant interior features on an informal, case-by-case basis, without requiring formal approval by Regional Council.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The HRM costs associated with advertising and processing this application can be accommodated within the approved 2019/20 operating budget for C002 – Urban Design.

As an HRM-owned recreation facility, the registration of interior features of the building may result in higher maintenance costs pertaining to the retention of the building's character defining elements. The current operating costs of the building have averaged approximately \$145K per year over the last 3 years. If interior features of the Findlay Community Centre are included as character defining elements, there may be additional limitations and costs associated with smaller alterations proposed to accommodate the ongoing use of the building. This may ultimately impact the long-term viability of the facility.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations in this Report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The community engagement process for a heritage registration is consistent with the intent of the HRM Community Engagement Strategy. The level of community engagement was information sharing achieved through public accessibility to the required Heritage Advisory Committee meeting. As a provision of the Heritage Property Act, no registration of a municipal heritage property shall take place until Regional Council has given the owner of the property an opportunity to be heard.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no significant environmental implications associated with the recommendations in this Report.

ALTERNATIVES

The Heritage Advisory Committee may choose to recommend that Regional Council proceed with the approval of the request to include 26 Elliot Street, Dartmouth in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality as a municipal heritage property, including interior character defining elements as identified by HAC.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Interior Photos

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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Report Approved by:

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Attachment A – Interior Photos

Entranceway/ Main Hallway



Classrooms



Storage in Classrooms



Retractable Wall between Classrooms



Classroom Office Retrofits

