

HALIFAX

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Item No. 15.1.2
Halifax Regional Council
February 11, 2020

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed
Denise Schofield, Director, Parks and Recreation
Original Signed by 
Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: January 23, 2020

SUBJECT: District 4 Aquatic Report

ORIGIN

March 26, 2019 Motion of Regional Council:

MOVED by Councillor Nicoll, seconded by Councillor Austin
That Halifax Regional Council request a staff report to identify a location for a public lifeguarded beach and/or outdoor aquatic feature for District 4. **MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter

7A the purposes of the Municipality are to

...

(b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; ...

...

79A (1) Subject to subsections (2) and (4) ... the Municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if

(a) the expenditure is included in the Municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality; ...

RECOMMENDATIONS on PAGE 2

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to proceed with the following options for outdoor aquatic features or facilities in District 4:

1. Evaluate the following two options for public access to natural water bodies to determine their suitability for recreational opportunities:
 - (a) Morris Lake – owned by the Kiwanis Club of Cole Harbour
 - (b) Bissett Lake – owned by HRM
2. Establish a new supervised beach if one of the sites is deemed suitable;
3. Investigate the feasibility of repurposing the small wading pool at the Cole Harbour Outdoor Pool Complex, located at 609 Colby Drive to a splash pad; and
4. Defer evaluation of potential locations for a stand-alone splash pad in District 4, until prioritized in the Long-Term Aquatic Strategy.

BACKGROUND

On May 14, 2019 Halifax Regional Council approved the Municipality's Long-Term Aquatic Strategy. The purpose of the Long-Term Aquatic Strategy is to provide a broad-based overview of the entire aquatic service delivery system and identify gaps, opportunities and priorities, while providing strategic approaches and actions to inform facility planning over a 15-year timeframe. It provides the following information:

Beaches

The municipality has many natural assets within both urban and rural communities which are used for outdoor aquatics. There are 19 municipally supervised beaches throughout the municipality (Attachment 1). These beaches also offer learn to swim programs at no cost, along with supervised public access from July through August. Currently there are no supervised beaches in District 4.

Outdoor Pools

There are three outdoor pool facilities owned and operated by HRM in the municipality; Bedford Outdoor Pool, Cole Harbour Outdoor Pool, and the Commons Outdoor Pool (Attachment 1).

The Cole Harbour Outdoor Pool Complex has two separate pool areas (a competition pool and a wading pool), which are well used for open swims, learn to swim, and aquatic sport usage.

The tank for the wading pool was constructed in 1981 and is coming to the end of its lifespan and will require extensive renovations to operate safely and effectively.

Splash Pads

HRM currently has six splash pads which are located at: the Halifax Central Common; George Dixon Recreation Centre; Isleville Street Playground; Westmount Playground; Bayer's Westwood Playground; and Sackville Kinsmen Park (Attachment 1). The concentration of splash pads on the peninsula of Halifax is due to the fact that there are no supervised beach provision in that area. There are no splash pads currently located in District 4.

The approved Long-term Aquatic Strategy prioritizes Beechville/Lakeside/Timberlea, Eastern Passage, and Dartmouth as short-term priorities and Cole Harbour, Bedford, Halifax Mainland, and Spryfield as medium-term priorities for new aquatic features. The Strategy also includes splashpads in its comprehensive range of aquatic facilities.

DISCUSSION

When investigating the potential for a public lifeguarded beach and/or outdoor aquatic feature for District 4, the following was found:

Beaches

To evaluate new locations that provide public access to natural water bodies which are suitable for recreational activities, the Municipal Beach Evaluation Tool (Attachment 2), outlined in the Long-Term Aquatic Strategy is used. Through consultation with the Councillor, four lakes in District 4 were considered and using this tool were assessed for a supervised beach location. MacDonald Lake and Cranberry Lake were eliminated from further consideration due to poor site suitability. Morris Lake and Bissett Lake (Attachment 3) were identified as the best locations due to site suitability, service gap, compatibility with other uses within the site, access to public and active transportation, parking, potential users (the two sites are currently used by the residents as non-supervised beaches). Further consideration is to be given to both lakes. HRM owns Bissett Lake and HRM would be required to enter into an agreement with the Kiwanis Club of Cole Harbour for the use of Morris Lake.

Morris Lake – This property is owned by the Kiwanis Club of Cole Harbour and is a very busy aquatic destination with over 500 people using this beach on hot, sunny days. This beach is not currently lifeguarded and is a high-risk site with a beach area and wharf. Arrangements with the Kiwanis Club would be required if this were to be an HRM supervised beach. Currently this beach area is advertised as “swim at your own risk”.

Bissett Lake – Bissett Lake Beach is in Cole Harbour and is a gradual beach entry location with parking. There are many ducks at this site, therefore, water testing will be imperative to ensure the water quality is safe for the residents.

If Council provides direction to establish a supervised beach in District 4, the following process is required once a site is approved:

- Site analysis by HRM staff.
- Consultation with the Department of Environment to determine if the location is a protected and approved water site for various types of water fowl or aquatic wildlife habitation and to confirm that it does not interfere with such wildlife habitation.
- After consultation with the Department of Environment and approval has been received, water testing of the site must take place for one season prior to opening to determine if the water is safe for water activity.
- Testing would begin mid-June with five samples drawn at various points in the water each week. The water testing would continue until the end of August. The results of this regular testing would determine if the site is suitable for swimming for the public.

Splash Pad at Cole Harbour Outdoor Pool

While Cole Harbour has been identified in the Long-Term Aquatic Strategy as a medium-term priority for new aquatic features such as splash pad, the opportunity to re-purpose the wading pool is one that should not be overlooked. The approved strategic action from the Long-Term Aquatic Strategy directs staff to: “continue to recapitalize outdoor aquatic facilities with a focus on user experience, accessibility and necessary upgrades as required and to conduct site planning exercises to identify small scale improvements that can be undertaken”. As a result, staff recommend that direction be given to explore this site for a small splash pad.

The Cole Harbour Outdoor wading pool is at the end of its life and needs approximately \$50,000 in major repairs to open in 2020. Given the need to recapitalize this asset, it is recommended that the opportunity be taken to create a splash pad in the current wading pool area. When assessing all outdoor aquatic assets, the Cole Harbour Outdoor wading pool is one of only two outdoor aquatic assets currently requiring recapitalization; the other being the Common Outdoor Pool. The recommendation to recapitalize the Cole Harbour Outdoor Pool does not change the splash pad priorities in the Long-Term Aquatic Strategy.

The wading pool has been losing an average of 7-8 cubic metres in a 24-hour period during the 2019 season. The liner continues to stretch causing small holes, which creates water loss. Although the liner was installed in the summer of 2017, a new liner would need to be installed if the wading pool is to re-open in 2020. The cost to replace the liner is over \$10,000. The problems with the liner are due to the poor condition of the base of the tank. To fix the wading pool tank, the bottom would need to be removed, all concrete around the pool dug up, all new piping installed, and either a new concrete pool poured and/or another new liner, which is essentially a new tank. The cost for the state of good repair maintenance requirements as stated above is estimated at \$50,000.

The concept of repurposing the Cole Harbour Outdoor wading pool to a splash pad is recommended due to the poor condition of the wading pool. The creation of a splash pad on this site would also provide more aquatic-based opportunities for the residents of District 4.

The benefits of repurposing the wading pool to a splash pad are as follows:

- The season would be extended from mid-June until mid-September, where currently the pool is open from July 1st until August 31st.
- A splash pad is fun for youth of all ages with added benefits of enhancing physical, social, sensory and the cognitive development of the children as it combines flowing, misting, spraying, jetting and splashing water. In addition, since a splash pad is a zero-depth outdoor aquatic asset, it is a much safer facility (when compared to the wading pool).
- Currently lifeguards are required to monitor the wading pool, however, lifeguards are not required for a splash pad.
- This splash pad would be a community hub, which would be inclusive and accessible to everyone, including those with socioeconomic barriers, as the use of the splash pad would be free.
- The Cole Harbour Outdoor Pool location has multiple transit and walking access options. As well, the site has the necessary infrastructure in place, such as; washrooms, change facilities and first aid for the splash pad to be accessible and enjoyed by all.
- It is expected that the existing piping of the wading pool could be used for repurposing the tank to a splash pad. Additional analysis/technical review would be required to determine if the underground infrastructure (sewer, water, electrical etc.) is compatible to the splash pad.
- The existing fencing could be moved to accommodate the safety requirements for a pool enclosure, which would leave the area of the splash pad open to the public.
- The state of good repair maintenance requirements will be necessary before the wading pool opens in 2020, therefore, if the wading pool is re-purposed to a splash pad, this maintenance project could be invested into the repurposing of the asset to a splash pad.
- If additional space is required, there is room in the existing driveway to expand the splash pad.

Stand-alone Splash Pad

The Long-Term Aquatic Strategy has identified Cole Harbour as a medium priority location for a splash pad, therefore, the evaluation of potential locations for a stand-alone splash pad in District 4 would occur as prioritized against other medium priority locations and after the short term gaps have been addressed.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The provision of funding for the repurposing of the wading pool to a splash pad may be accommodated in part or completely by the Councillor's discretionary funds and the reallocation of the maintenance funding which would have been used to repair the wading pool). The estimated cost to repurpose the Cole Harbour Outdoor Wading Pool into a splash pad is \$200,000 plus installation, which is not currently allocated in the capital budget but could be covered by funding noted above.

The estimated cost to service a municipal beach site per season is approximately \$22,000 for staff at Bissett Lake (requiring two lifeguards) and \$33,000 for staff at Morris Lake (requiring three lifeguards), equipment and training annually. The beaches have different staffing requirements (lifeguards) due to the size of the

beach, the number of daily users and the amenities at the beaches. This funding would be absorbed in the Parks and Recreation budget if one of the beaches was determined to be able to be supervised. The fee for water tests per season per beach is approximately \$1,700 and would be funded from D101-6303.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

There was no public consultation completed regarding the recommendations of this report.

RISK CONSIDERATION

Moderate risks related to the recommendations in this Report are:

- That there will not be enough time to undertake a technical review of the site, develop a realistic cost estimate and convert the Cole Harbour Wading Pool to a splash pad in 2020-21.
- If Morris Lake is chosen as the optimum site for an HRM supervised beach, there is a risk of not being able to secure an arrangement with the Kiwanis Club of Cole Harbour to lifeguard on their property.
- When analyzing potential supervised beach locations in consultation with the Department of Environment to determine if the location is a protected and approved water site for various types of water fowl or aquatic wildlife habitation and to confirm that it does not interfere with such wildlife habitation, it may be found to not be a suitable location. The water testing of the sites may determine that the water is not safe for water activity.

Should any of these risks be realized, staff would return to Council for further direction.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are expected to be minimal environmental implications with establishing a supervised beach in District 4, as both Bissett Lake and Morris Lake are currently being used as non-supervised beaches. Consideration would be given to environmental implications when completing the analysis of the beach locations in consultation with the Department of Environment.

There are minimal environmental implications with the Cole Harbour Outdoor Pool wading pool site, as the infrastructure is currently in place. Careful consideration would need to be given to the type of operating system for the splash pad and impacts on water usage.

ALTERNATIVES

Halifax Regional Council could choose to:

1. Decline to direct the CAO to evaluate the potential beach sites.
2. Direct CAO to investigate alternative locations for a supervised beach in District 4.
3. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to repair the wading pool and not repurpose it to a splash pad.
4. Direct the CAO to evaluate potential locations for a stand-alone splash pad in District 4 at this time, and prioritize it against the short-term priorities outlined in the Aquatic Strategy.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - District 4 Aquatic Locations Map

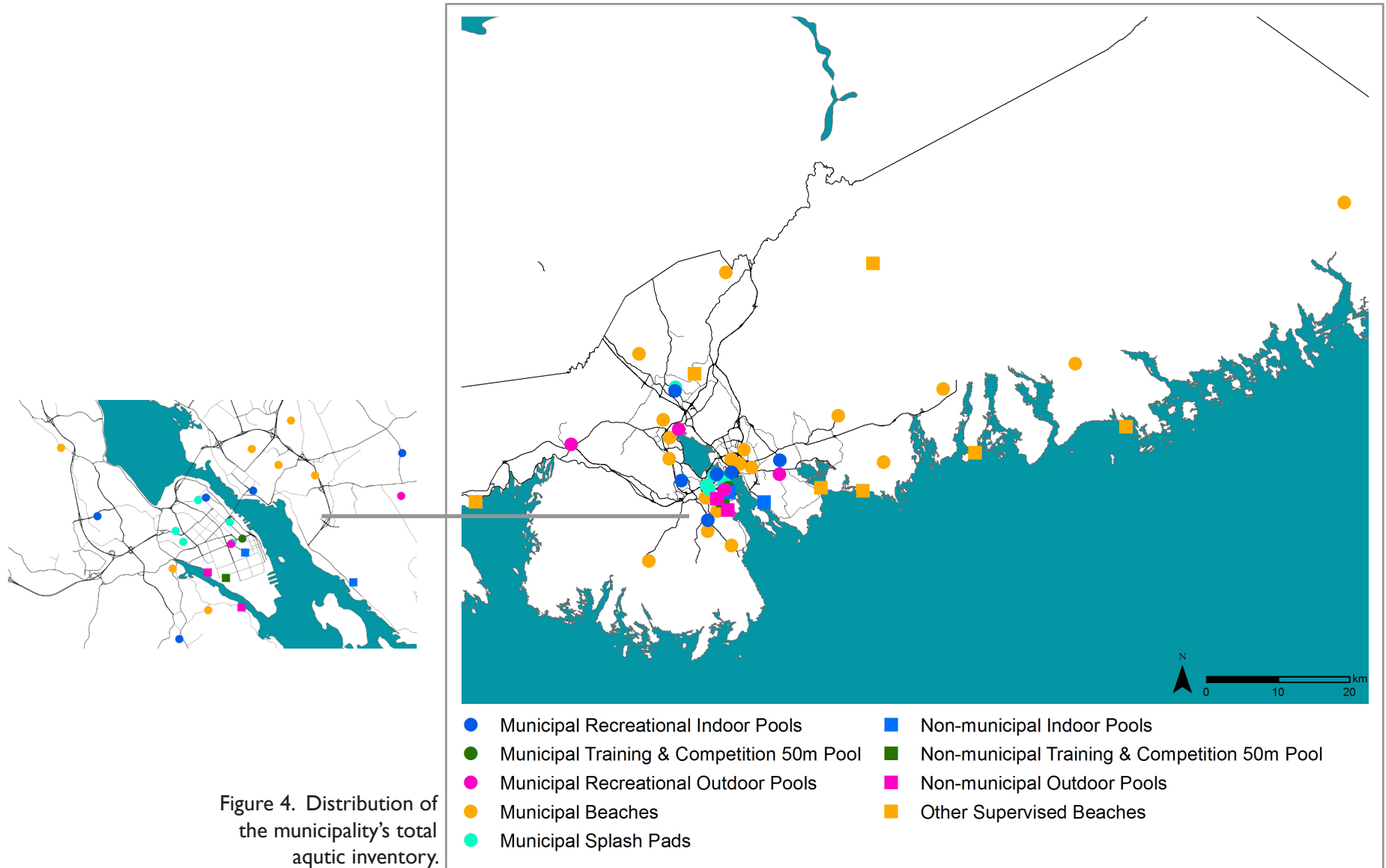
Attachment 2 – Evaluation Criteria – Splash Pad & Supervised Beaches

Attachment 3 - Map of Bissett Lake and Morris Lake

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.

Report Prepared by: Angela Green, Manager of Recreation Programming 902-490-3883

Attachment 1 - Aquatic Locations Map



Attachment 2 - Evaluation Criteria - Splash Pads & Supervised Beaches

Appendix B – Evaluation Criteria – Splash Pads & Supervised Beaches

Splash Pad Evaluation Tool

The purpose of the evaluation tool is to guide decision making as it relates to the potential siting of splash pad facilities. Further technical site evaluation will be required beyond siting potential before confirming final locations.

| Criteria | Description |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Service Gap | Proximity to low cost outdoor aquatic opportunities including beaches, other splash pads, and outdoor pools. |
| Site Suitability | A review of site opportunities and constraints such as land ownership, available open space, riparian or property line setbacks, slopes, water courses, path circulation, operational servicing, wildlife habitat, trees, drainage, existing site infrastructure, and site geology. |
| Infrastructure | The location of water and waste water infrastructure. All infrastructure locations to be reviewed by Halifax Water. |
| Compatibility with Park Uses | Identification of other uses within the site and impacts the facility may have. This includes a review of existing park plans or policies to determine if the use is permitted. |
| Supporting Amenities | Review of nearby amenities that support or complement the facility. |
| Access to Public and Active Transportation | Proximity to transit and active transportation routes. |
| Parking | Availability of bicycle parking on-site and vehicular parking, on or off-site. |
| Potential Users | The number of children ages 0-10 within a 2km catchment of the site within the Regional Centre and 5km catchment outside the Regional Centre. |
| Socio Economics | Median household income within catchment expected to be served. |
| Community Engagement | Description of the community engagement undertaken. |
| Financial Implications | Estimation of project cost and identification of other sources of funding (e.g. grants, donations, HRM capital budget). |
| Suitability of Other Sites | Identification of other sites evaluated. |

Municipal Beach Evaluation Tool

The purpose of the evaluation tool is to guide decision making as it relates to the potential siting of new supervised beaches.

| Criteria | Description |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Service Gap | Proximity to low-cost outdoor aquatic opportunities including other beaches, splash pads, and outdoor pools. |
| Site Suitability | A review of site opportunities and constraints such as slopes, access, operational and emergency servicing access, vegetation and wildlife habitat, shade, drainage, adjacent uses, water quality results, hazards and obstructions, shoreline condition, cell phone service, visibility for supervision, and evaluation of site safety. |
| Infrastructure, Equipment, and Supporting Amenities | A review of the site to determine if it can support the infrastructure and amenities required for a supervised beach, for example, washroom facility, garbage/recycling bins, equipment storage, and lifeguarding chairs. |
| Compatibility | Identification of other uses within the site and potential conflicts. |
| Land Ownership and Zoning | Description of site ownership or access potential. A review of planning policy to determine if the usage is permitted. |
| Access to Public and Active Transportation | Proximity to transit and active transportation routes. |
| Parking | Availability of bicycle parking on-site and vehicular parking, on or off-site. |
| Potential Users | A demographic breakdown of the population catchment expected to be served. |
| Socio Economics | Median household income of the population catchment expected to be served. |
| Community Engagement | Description of the community engagement undertaken. |
| Financial Implications | Estimation of project cost and identification of other sources of funding (e.g. grants, donations, HRM capital budget). |
| Suitability of Other Sites | Identification of other sites evaluated. |
| Environmental Implications¹ | Identification of potential sources of contamination or other hazards (e.g. fecal, chemical, cyanobacteria blooms, large numbers of aquatic plants). Examples may include stormwater drains, adjacent septic systems, dog parks (off leash or otherwise), areas receiving sewage sludge, inflow from streams, common waterfowl (bird) gathering areas, water circulation in proposed swimming area, commercial or industrial discharges and motorized watercraft. |

¹ [Refer to Guidelines for Canadian Recreational Water Quality: Third Edition](#)

Attachment 3 - Map of Bissett Lake and Morris Lake

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Notes

