

# COUNCILLOR SAM AUSTIN

## DARTMOUTH CENTRE DISTRICT 5 NEWSLETTER



HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

SPRING 2020



### DEAR RESIDENTS

Happy spring Dartmouth! It's always great to see the snow melting away, the flowers reappearing, and the trees leafing out. It's the season of renewal and that's also true for the

municipality. HRM's 2020 budget is almost final and will likely be approved by Council in just a few weeks. The draft includes major projects on Wyse Road, Prince Albert Road, and Bedford Street, renovations at Alderney, and the Woodside Ferry Terminal, a new playground at Bicentennial School, a new washroom at Penhorn Lake, and investments in park spaces including the Cancer Survivors Garden on the waterfront and the ongoing of Northbrook Park. I'm pleased with the improvements coming to District 5 and that Council has been able invest in key projects while also keeping the tax bill low and while avoiding burdening future generations with new debt.

This edition of my newsletter focuses on the Penhorn Lake washroom project, Little Albro Lake's Floating Yellow Heart infestation, Centre Plan Package B, the E-Pass Transit program, and the Woodland/Lancaster Roundabout.

For regular updates on municipal projects, Council news, and Dartmouth event listings, sign up for my monthly e-newsletter at [www.samaustin.ca](http://www.samaustin.ca). Please feel free to reach out to me or my office with any questions or concerns.

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For assistance with municipal issues, you can also contact my Constituency Coordinator, Jenn Weagle, by email at [weaglej@halifax.ca](mailto:weaglej@halifax.ca) or by calling 902.490.6982

HALIFAX



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### **PENHORN LAKE UPGRADES**

Never has demolition looked so sweet. The old cinder block washroom at Penhorn Lake is no more. The building served us well for decades, but it was well past its best before date. Penhorn Lake is one of HRM's supervised beaches and it's well-used in the summer months. I'm very pleased to share that a new washroom will replace the old one this year.

Construction on the new building will begin shortly, but it's likely that the new facility won't be ready in time for the start of the swim season. To ensure that the 2020 swim season isn't lost, HRM will have portable facilities on hand to maintain service. This is a short-term pain for long-term gain scenario and the new building will be worth it.



Still with Penhorn Lake, HRM will begin Phase 1 of the long-awaited trail project this year. The planned multi-use trail will run from Somerset Street along Penhorn Lake to the transit terminal. Phase 1 will go from Somerset to just past the lake. The plan is to complete Phase 2 next year. Many thanks to the Penhorn Lake Area Trails Association (PLATA) for all the volunteer work they've put into championing trails at Penhorn Lake over the years!

### **LITTLE ALBRO LAKE FLOATING YELLOW HEART**

There is a pretty yellow menace loose in Little Albro Lake: Floating Yellow Heart. Floating Yellow Heart is a lily species native to Asia and Europe that is sold as an ornamental plant in North America. When it escapes into the wild, it forms a dense mass that crowds out native species, reduces oxygen levels, creates mosquito habitat, and severely impacts the ability of people to boat and swim. Basically its only positive feature is the pretty flowers.

Floating Yellow Heart was identified in Little Albro back in 2007 and since then it has taken over the entire shoreline of the lake. We're lucky that Little Albro drains

directly to the harbour since that has, so far, prevented it from spreading to other Dartmouth lakes! Unfortunately, Floating Yellow Heart is difficult to deal with: it's hard to manually remove, there are no clear herbicides that work well on it, and it has no natural predators. Last year staff took a fresh look at the problem and the result is a pilot project using benthic mats. Benthic mats are basically a landscape fabric for the lake bed. They block out the sun and kill any plants underneath.



The benthic matt pilot still needs approval of the Provincial Department of Environment. If the Province signs off, HRM hopes to have matts in the water in a test area of Little Albro Lake this summer. I'm hopeful that the pilot will be a success and that benthic mats might be a low-cost and simple way to control, or possibly even eradicate, Little Albro Lake's Floating Yellow Heart.

## EPASS PROGRAM

Attention all employers, did you know that Halifax will help buy your staff a transit pass for the year? If not, checkout HRM's Smart Trip program! The Smart Trip Program discounts the cost of transit to employees by 25% to encourage regular transit use. The way it works is HRM and the employer share in the cost of the discount (\$10.31 each per month) for any employee that opts in. Employees pay their share through a payroll deduction and get a personalized transit pass that's good for a whole year. No more hunting for change or buying passes and tickets each month. Make life easier for your staff, ease office parking problems, and help create a greener and more sustainable city. For more information, contact the EPass Program Coordinator at [SmartTrip@halifax.ca](mailto:SmartTrip@halifax.ca) or 902-490-4160.

## CENTRE PLAN UPDATE

Halifax Regional Municipality's new plan for development in the Regional Centre (Dartmouth inside the Circumferential Highway and Peninsula Halifax) is entering the home stretch. The Centre Plan is designed to create certainty for everyone, by clearly directing where HRM wants growth to occur and what form it will take. The first half (Package A) came into effect on November 30th and provides new rules for places that are well-positioned to accommodate more growth. Growth areas in Dartmouth include Downtown, Wyse Road, Pleasant Street by the old Sobeys, Portland Street by Maynard Lake, Grahams Grove, Penhorn, Mic Mac Mall, Windmill Road near Shannon Park, and Shannon Park.

With Package A complete, HRM is now working on Package B. Package B includes new rules for the rest of the Regional Centre including established residential neighbourhoods, institutional, employment, park, and waterfront lands. A review of the Downtown Halifax Plan is also included in Package B.

Public consultation on Package B will take place in March and April. For an interactive zoning map, fact sheets, documents, project updates, and key dates, visit [www.centreplan.ca](http://www.centreplan.ca)

## KEY CENTRE PLAN MEETINGS

General public meeting, 6:00 – 8:00 pm, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, Alderney Theatre

Established residential areas (Dartmouth), 6:00 – 8:00 pm March 30<sup>th</sup>, Mic Mac Aquatic Club

Industrial, Waterfront, and Noise Bylaw, 6:00 – 8:00 pm, April 6<sup>th</sup>, NSCC Waterfront Campus



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### WOODLAND/LANCASTER ROUNDAABOUT

Just before the holidays, my request to have staff look at design changes to the intersection of Woodland, Lancaster, Mic Mac Boulevard and Highway 118 returned to Council. Going door-to-door in the neighbourhood quickly reveals that many people are concerned about excessive speeds and are scared to turn left at this intersection or cross it on foot. The fear isn't without merit. On average, there is a collision at the intersection once a month. Everyone seems to have a story of coming upon a crash here. Luckily, no one has been killed, but there have been 13 serious injuries over the last four years.

After a detailed review by provincial and municipal staff, and an outside consultant, a roundabout has been identified as the best way to make this problematic intersection safer. A roundabout would force everyone to slow down, and it would eliminate dangerous left-turns across traffic. The team is confident that a roundabout is the best option.

I have had a number of questions about the roundabout proposal, so I have prepared a little Q&A.

**Q:** The Mic Mac Rotary was a parking lot! Why are you looking to recreate that failure?

**A:** Roundabouts and rotaries are both round, but they operate in very different ways. In a roundabout, traffic in the circle has the right-of-way and doesn't have to merge to exit. As a result, roundabouts can handle high traffic volumes whereas rotaries get gridlocked. The modelling indicates a roundabout at Woodland Lancaster would actually have more traffic capacity than the current intersection!

**Q:** Couldn't we make the intersection safer with better enforcement?

**A:** Enforcement is always part of the picture, particularly when it's a small number of drivers behaving badly. Studies have shown that most people drive the speed at which they feel safe, which means that when speeding is rampant, it's design, not enforcement that's at play. We can't station a police officer on Woodland Avenue 24/7 and even if we did, it would be far less effective than addressing the root cause: a highway that doesn't clearly transition into municipal streets. Woodland is primarily a design problem.

**Q:** Couldn't we save a bunch of money by restricting left-turns to green arrows?

**A:** This was actually the starting point for the project. Although a protected left sequence would fully address the dangerous left-turn issue, it would create new problems. Restricting left turns would increase the wait time for left-turning vehicles, which would cause waiting cars to overflow the left turn lanes, increasing the risk of rear-end collisions. The Saturday before Christmas experience would be routine! The only way to make restricted lefts safe would be to add additional lanes. Given the cost of widening the road for new lanes and the fact that restricted lefts would still leave the speed issue unaddressed, staff concluded that a roundabout was the better option.

So, what happens next? For the first time, HRM and the Province have agreed that the intersection is a problem and on what the solution should be. There is still a lot to work out in terms of detailed design and then HRM and the Province must agree on when it will be built. It will still likely be a few years before construction gets underway. Staff will return to Council in the future after discussions with the Province are further developed.



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#### Delivery Note:

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