

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

Original Signed by 

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: May 3, 2021

SUBJECT: Supplemental Report | Special Grant Request – Greater
Burnside Business Association (GBBA)

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

ORIGIN

August 18, 2020 – Regional Council Motion¹ THAT Regional Council request a staff report regarding providing a \$25,000 special grant to invest in the Greater Burnside Business Association's Open Burnside plan including possible funding sources.

December 1, 2020 – Regional Council Motion THAT Halifax Regional Council defer item 11.1.4 pending the completion of a supplementary Administrative report regarding the BID-Formation Grant Policy, including the identification of a funding source.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

With respect to the adoption of Administrative Orders:

HRM Charter, Section 59(3): "In addition to matters specified in this Act or another Act of the Legislature, the Council may adopt policies on any matter that the Council considers conducive to the effective management of the Municipality."

With respect to the provision of grants to non-profits:

HRM Charter, Section 79A(1)(a): "79A (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (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; "

RECOMMENDATION ON PAGE 2

¹ See [Item 14.1 Halifax Regional Council August 18, 2020](#).

HRM Charter, Section 7A: “The purposes of the Municipality are to (a) provide good government; (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; and (c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.”

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council defer consideration of a BID-Formation Grant Policy pending Council providing direction regarding the corporate grants review project’s recommendations.

BACKGROUND

Regional Council received a staff report on December 1, 2020 recommending that the Greater Burnside Business Association funding request be declined.² After discussion of the report, Council moved to request a supplemental report addressing the institution of a formal policy to govern grants to entities attempting to form Business Improvement Districts. While not part of the formal motion, Council members discussed the possibility of providing funding to Business Improvement Associations to expand the boundaries of already constituted/formed Business Improvement Districts.

DISCUSSION

In January of 2011, the municipal Auditor General (AG) completed a review of corporate grants, donations, and contributions.³ Since that Auditor’s report was issued, there have been some updates to grants-related processes. However, not all AG recommendations have been implemented. To address this situation, a Grants Project Charter was developed in September of 2020. The grants-review process is intended to facilitate the development of a policy framework for all forms of grants including funding, support in kind, tax relief for non-profit organizations (in the form of tax concessions or exemptions), and sales of property for less than market value.⁴

Expected benefits to the organization (HRM) include: (a) an approved framework that underpins all processes – and all decisions; (b) documented, repeatable, efficient processes; (c) fair, unbiased processes; ability to report quickly and reliably regarding grant recipients and amounts; (d) capacity to report quickly and reliably as to whether grant spending served mission and values; (e) efficiency in evaluating grant spending; and (f) ability to re-coup grant spending, if/when applicants fail to meet evaluation criteria.

Expected benefits to the applicants include: (a) accessibility and efficiency in applying for grants; (b) ease and efficiency in learning about potentially applicable grants; (c) ease and efficiency in engaging the application process; (d) reliable, understandable information; (e) adequate communication of funding decision; and (f) ease of engaging and fulfilling the evaluation process.

The grants-review-process is ongoing. As of the writing of this report, interviews have been conducted with internal subject-matter-experts involved in the administration of municipal grants and contributions. Recommendations are currently being drafted by the project consultant and are expected to be delivered to senior management by Summer of 2021. Staff recommend that any decision regarding a municipal BID-formation grant process be deferred until after the ongoing grants-review process has been concluded. Doing so would ensure that the consultant’s recommendations can be considered.

² See [Item No. 11.1.4 Halifax Regional Council December 1, 2020](#).

³ See [Corporate Grants, Donations and Contributions](#).

⁴ The Project Charter calls for the assessment of all lifecycle processes across all grant offerings, reporting of applicants, recipients, amounts, and post-evaluation status. The project is also intended to provide staff and Council with high-level recommendations for systems, tools – such as a data collection, reporting tools and/or application tools.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with the content of this report.

RISK CONSIDERATION

HRM staff deemed that there are no significant risks associated with the recommendations in this Report. The risks considered rate Low.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Staff consulted with the Chair and Board members of the Greater Burnside Business Association (GBBA) in the preparation of this report. Staff also consulted with the Executive Directors for HRM's nine (9) existing Business Improvement Districts.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Regional Council could direct staff to draft an Administrative Order Respecting HRM's Business District Formation Grants Program.
2. Regional Council could elect not to create a Business District Formation Grants Program.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

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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