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Item No. 7
Halifax Regional Council
April 4, 2023

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: March 28, 2023

SUBJECT: **HRM Ground Search and Rescue Teams - Governance**

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

June 29, 2021 Regional Council Motion Item 11.8.1:

MOVED by Councillor Mancini, seconded by Councillor Mason

THAT Halifax Regional Council request a staff report examining the feasibility of bringing Halifax Search and Rescue and RESAR (Regional Search and Rescue) under the municipality as a part of the Halifax Fire business unit. This report would be written in consultation with stakeholders such as Halifax Search and Rescue and RESAR.

MOTION AS AMENDED PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, SNS 2008 c 39:

3(ab) "emergency services" means services related to the provision of emergency services, including fire services, emergency medical services, *search and rescue*, water rescue and assistance and protection for people and property in the event of disasters including, but not limited to, floods, hurricanes, motor vehicle accidents and chemical spills;

PART X FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

304 The Municipality may maintain and provide fire and emergency services by providing the service, assisting others to provide the service, working with others to provide the service or a combination of means.

DISCUSSION

Nova Scotia Ground Search and Rescue Association is made up of volunteers and has 23 Teams spread throughout the province. The province is divided into 5 GSAR Regions: Central Zone North, Central Zone South, Western Zone, Eastern Zone, and Southern Zone. The Halifax Regional Municipality falls within the Central Zone South, within the NS GSAR response locations.

The four GSAR Teams within the Municipality include: Halifax Search and Rescue, Sheet Harbour Ground Search and Rescue, Musquodoboit Valley Search and Rescue and Eastern Shore Ground Search and Rescue.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs has the authority to create regulations respecting the establishment, operation, liability and responsibilities of ground search and rescue organizations under section 25(1)(f) of the *Emergency Management Act*. While there are currently no regulations governing search and rescue organizations, the Municipality is limited in its ability to bring search and rescue organizations under one of its business units. The Municipality may create and maintain their own search and rescue team and could potentially bring an existing organization into its business unit as part of that search and rescue team. This would involve an organization dismantling and joining HRFE's business unit. However, this would require the agreement of each team.

After consulting with each of the four teams located in the Municipality, each team provided a written response to the question on whether they would want to become part of HRFE. Musquodoboit Valley Ground Search & Rescue, Sheet Harbour & Area GSAR, Eastern Shore Ground Search and Rescue and Halifax Search and Rescue all replied in an email or via written correspondence that they are not interested in becoming part of HRFE. Each team prefers to retain their autonomy and continue to manage their own individual team. The teams also indicated they would like to maintain and strengthen the close working relationship with HRFE.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no risk considerations for this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As part of this report, each of the four GSAR Teams located in the HRM were consulted.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified.

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.

Report Prepared by: Roy Hollett, Deputy Fire Chief, Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency 902.430-3772
