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Item No. 13.2.3
Audit and Finance Standing Committee
September 20, 2023

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

-ORIGINAL SIGNED-

SUBMITTED BY:

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: August 23, 2023

SUBJECT: **Former Herring Cove Treatment Plant Community Integration Fund –
Proposed Upgrade to William King Elementary School Park Playground**

ORIGIN

August 22, 2023, moved by Councillor Cuttell, seconded by Councillor Lovelace [Item 15.8.5]

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Office (CAO) to provide a staff report with respect to the allocation of a minimum of \$55,000 from the balance of uncommitted funds remaining in the former Herring Cove Treatment Plant Community Integration Fund held in the Options Reserve Q421 towards refurbishment and accessibility upgrades to the William King Elementary School playground in Herring Cove.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

- ***Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, SNS 2008, c 39***

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.

Section 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;

- ***Administrative Order 2019-007-ADM Respecting Public Disclosure of Municipal Grants***
- ***Administrative Order One, Respecting the Procedures of Council Schedule 2***

Section 8 The Audit and Finance Standing Committee shall review and make recommendations on proposals coming to the Council outside of the annual budget or tender process including:

(g) the creation or modification of reserves and withdrawals not approved in the approved budget.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Audit and Finance Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council approve the transfer of \$55,000 from Options Reserve Q421 to Capital Account CP200001 – Park Recapitalization for the purpose of capital upgrades to the William King Elementary School Park playground.

BACKGROUND

On September 9, 2014, Council deferred a decision on the disposal of the decommissioned Herring Cove Fire Station pending a staff report on the availability of the (‘‘the Community Integration Fund’’) for community purposes. These funds were established under the former Harbour Solutions Project to recognize communities hosting a sewage treatment plant. Although most of the Herring Cove allocation was used for the expansion of water and sewer infrastructure an amount of \$300,000 was proposed for municipal park and trail projects in the area. Due to constraints with land access, funds for municipal recreational facilities were not fully expended resulting in a balance of \$347,165¹.

In 2017, HRM issued a Call for Submissions to acquire the former Herring Cove Fire Station which elicited one proposal, from the Herring Cove Community Association (‘‘the Association’’), who requested the transfer of: (1) municipal funds set aside for demolition of the fire station and a fire suppression upgrade to the community hall annex to enable subdivision of the land, and (2) the entire balance of \$347,165 remaining in the Fund to recapitalize the community hall and add a parking lot.

In 2018, Council approved the reallocation of \$71,155 from Capital Account CBX01162 – Environmental Remediation/Building Demolition and issued a grant to the Association for demolition of the former fire station garage/fire suppression but it is important to note that these funds were from the general tax rate and not the Community Integration Fund. These funds for demolition, and amount of \$225,800 from the Community Integration Fund, were issued under a Contribution Agreement. Specifically, the \$225,800 comprised \$143,000 for immediate repairs and fit-up of the former community hall annex and \$82,800 towards construction of a parking lot. To date, \$143,000 has been issued towards the community hall repairs. The \$82,800 for parking amenities has been held in the Options Reserve Q421 pending receipt of permit approval from HRM Planning & Development and the submission of design/construction quotes. The uncommitted balance of the Community Integration Fund has been held in the Options Reserve Q421 pending the identification of other capital improvements to benefit residents and eligible for consideration.

Former Herring Cove Treatment Plant Community Integration Fund – Summary

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|---|------------------|
| Balance as of 2018 | \$347,165 |
| Less Payment to Herring Cove Community Association | (\$143,000) |
| Less Commitment to Herring Cove Community Association | (\$ 82,800) |
| Uncommitted Balance of Fund held in Options Reserve Q421 | \$121,365 |

This report addresses a request to direct \$55,000 from the uncommitted balance of \$121,365 held in the Options Reserve Q421 towards replacement of the William King Elementary School Park playground located at 91 St. Paul’s Avenue, Herring Cove. If approved, a transfer of \$55,000 would leave a balance of \$66,365 in uncommitted funds remaining in the Community Integration Fund that will be held in the Options

¹ Supplementary Information Report to the February 3, 2015, meeting of Regional Council, Administrative Order 50, Disposal of Surplus Property – Latter Pond Lane, dated January 12, 2015 [Item11.6.1].

Reserve Q421.

DISCUSSION

HRM is responsible for maintaining over 400 playgrounds throughout the Municipality. Playground equipment is assessed annually, following Canadian Safety Association standards, to ensure equipment is safe and functional. The proposed 2024/25 Capital Budget will recommend funds to replace the play structure at William King Elementary School Park.

The William King Elementary School opened in 1990 and has an enrollment of approximately 240 students. New residential development in the area and the addition of the Provincial Pre-Primary Program at this location has exerted pressure on school resources. The existing playground is nearing the end of its functional lifecycle. A new location has been identified to accommodate an accessible structure for 18 months-5 year olds and 5-12 year olds.

Staff of HRM Parks & Recreation have made a site assessment and received input from the School Advisory Committee with respect to priorities which are to replace the playground, increase its size, and enhance accessibility. If the playground recapitalization project is approved in the 2024/25 Capital Budget construction would commence in fiscal year 2024/25. The playground will be constructed and maintained by HRM Parks & Recreation.

In 2022, the School Advisory Committee started fundraising and could seek additional non-municipal funding. For example, nonprofit organizations, charities, or foundations with an interest in accessibility. To date, the Committee has raised approximately \$15,000 and has engaged children and parents in developing a playground theme and identifying features they would like to see incorporated. The committee anticipate making application to the Nova Scotia Department of Culture, Recreation, Tourism and Heritage under the Recreation Facility Development Grant Program. This program provides up to one-third of the total capital cost of a project up to a maximum of \$150,000. A commitment of \$30,000 will also be made from the District 11 Capital Fund. Staff of Parks & Recreation have developed a preliminary cost estimate of \$300,000 which will be refined once design specifications/scope of work have been confirmed.

Funding is recommended to enhance the play features and accessibility of the children's playground. Regardless of other funding sources, Parks & Recreation will allocate sufficient funds to replace the playground in the proposed 2024/25 Capital Budget. Additional funding will enable enhancements to the playground or reduce funding required through the regular capital budgeting process. This asset will be available at no cost to residents.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Budget Summary - Options Reserve Q421

Projected Net Available Balance as of June 30, 2023 \$5,277,166

This balance includes commitments:

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|--|------------|
| Commitment for construction of a parking lot | \$ 82,800 |
| Commitment for capital project CP20001 | \$121,165* |
| Total commitments in Q421 Options Reserve | \$204,165 |

*Subject to Regional Council approval.

Transfer to Capital Account CP200001 – Park Recapitalization from Options Reserve Q421

Budget Summary: Capital Account No. CP200001 – Park Recapitalization

Cumulative Uncommitted Budget \$3,161,651

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Add: Transfer from Q421 Options Reserve | \$ 55,000 |
| Projected balance | \$3,106,651 |

Note to Financial Implications

The wording of the motion passed by Regional Council refers to “a minimum of \$55,000” to allow for Inflation-related impacts on cost projections. However, a balance of \$66,365 remaining in uncommitted funds, held in the Options Reserve Q421, provides flexibility should there be a minor variance in actual project costs. For clarification, the amount directed towards the playground project cannot exceed the balance remaining in uncommitted funds.

RISK CONSIDERATION

Legal and reputational risk to the Municipality is considered low based on HRM’s tendering, project design and construction management policies and practices. Financial risk is considered low because the funds would be transferred from reserve to a capital account managed by Parks & Recreation staff. Cost fluctuations can also be managed by phasing elements of the project as funds permit.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The district Councillor and staff from HRM Parks & Recreation have met with representatives from the William King Elementary School Advisory Committee. The committee includes school staff and parents and has initiated fundraising in support of the playground replacement project.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications have been identified.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Audit and Finance Standing Committee could recommend that Regional Council deny the request for funding towards replacement of the William King Elementary School Park playground.

This option is not recommended: Replacement of the William King Elementary School Park playground represents a timely opportunity to invest \$55,000 from the uncommitted balance of the former Herring Cove Treatment Plant Community Integration Fund in an asset that is open to the public at no cost. Further, the playground serves young children which complements use of the Community Integration Fund towards a community hall which tends to deliver programs primarily for adults and youth, in addition to community family-oriented events.

2. Audit and Finance Standing Committee could recommend that Regional Council approve an alternate amount towards replacement of the William King Elementary School Park playground.
3. Audit and Finance Standing Committee could recommend that the playground project be funded through the 2024/25 Parks & Recreation capital plan and funds not be withdrawn from the balance remaining in the Former Herring Cove Treatment Plant Community Integration held in Q421 Options Reserve.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Correspondence from Ms. Catherine Bouliane, Principal, William King Elementary School.

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: Peta-Jane Temple, Team Lead Grants & Contributions, Finance & Asset Management
902.490.5469



ATTACHMENT 1

91 St. Paul's Avenue

Principal: Catherine Bouliane

Herring Cove Road, B3V 1H6

Vice Principal: Chris Longaphy

Admin Assistant: Candace Jessome

To Whom it May Concern

William King Elementary School, and all the communities it serves, desperately need a new playground. The present playground is beyond repairable:

- The playground is almost 30 years old, well past playground lifespan, according to sources;
- The footings around the playground are torn up, cracked or missing and constitutes an unsafe area for play;
- It is not CSA approve for children under 5 and therefore the pre-primary students cannot play safely on it;
- Parts of the structure are broken e.g. holes in the actual plastic tunnel;
- The playground does not support inclusivity or accessibility: our school is an accessible school (one level for those with mobility challenges) yet there is no sidewalk to take these students with from the school to the playground.

I am the principal of William King Elementary and the last two principals also advocated for a new playground. Our school community has grown significantly, and will continue to grow rapidly with new developments in our school catchment area. Our students come from Ferguson's Cove along the Purcell's Cove Road and Spryfield to the Portavista Community, including Herring Cove and Portuguese Cove; and this playground should be a hub.

To-date our new PTA has raised \$15,000.00 to go towards a new playground, and we are actively searching out grants to support development of the playground. We have created a playground committee made up of parents, community members, and staff; and our School Advisory Council wholeheartedly supports this endeavor. Our plan is to involve all stakeholders in the process of developing a new playground.

A new playground is necessary for our school and our school communities to have a safe environment to play, and to thrive. There is not an age-appropriate, accessible, or inclusive playground of size for our school communities. Our proposed playground would be accessible to children pre-primary and up, and to our students with mobility challenges. And it is not only going to be used by all our students, but will be used by Herring Cove, Spryfield, Ferguson's Cove and Portuguese Cove communities. The playground would be situated where a bus stop already exists, opening it up to our parents and community members that take public transit.

We request support from City Council in developing a safe, new inclusive and accessible playground for the William King Elementary School Communities.

Sincerely

[Redacted Signature]

Catherine Bouliane and William King Elementary School Playground Committee