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FOIPOP Review: [REDACTED]

Approved to Release: [REDACTED]

Date: March 5, 2024

Item No. 17.5

Halifax Regional Council

March 5, 2024

In Camera (In Private)

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: February 1, 2024

SUBJECT: **IN CAMERA – PROPERTY MATTER – Downtown Dartmouth Waterfront Revitalization Project**

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL RECOMMENDATION REPORT

ORIGIN

January 19, 2023 the Community Planning and Economic Development Committee motion (Item No. 10.3.1)

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Austin, seconded by Councillor Blackburn

THAT the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee request a staff report on the Halifax Regional Municipality developing an open spaces plan for the Dartmouth waterfront in partnership with the Port of Halifax, Alderney Landing, King's Wharf, Downtown Dartmouth and other stakeholders to create a public space that is connected, pedestrian focused, and incorporate growth and development opportunities.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (HRM Charter), Part VIII, Planning & Development

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to:

1. Release this report to the public, subject to a review by the Access and Privacy Office and application of any recommended redactions.
2. Suspend the rules of procedure under Schedule 3, the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee Terms of Reference, of Administrative Order One, the Procedures of the Council Administrative Order, requiring the Standing Committee to review and

RECOMMENDATION CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

make recommendations on overseeing the priority setting relative to the Community Visioning Program, Functional Plan Implementation and major planning projects; and

3. Advance the Downtown Dartmouth Waterfront Revitalization Project in support of improving access, connectivity, cultural activity, and future development opportunities along the Dartmouth Waterfront, as outlined in the Discussion Section of this Report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2023, the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee (CPED) requested a staff report on the Municipality developing an Open Space Plan for the Dartmouth Waterfront in partnership with rightsholders and interest groups. Staff recommend hiring a consultant to develop an Open Space Plan that presents conceptual waterfront improvements aimed at fostering a unique sense of place and identity, enhancing active transportation connectivity, and creating enjoyable pedestrian-focused gathering spaces for the public. The Open Space Plan process will involve engaging with interest groups and the community to align desires and create a collaborative vision for the waterfront.

The Open Space Plan also presents an opportunity to address a long-standing issue along the Dartmouth Waterfront. Downtown Dartmouth and its relationship to the waterfront have long had a disconnect created by the railway that runs along the eastern side of the Harbour. This has limited and fragmented open space connectivity and the use of lands on the waterside of the railway and has created an emergency access issue for development. Acknowledging this issue in the context of an Open Space Plan, staff undertook a detailed scoping process and advise that a continuous multi-functional emergency access route anchored by grade separated access points warrants consideration while developing an Open Space Plan.

The proposed Downtown Dartmouth Revitalization Project combines the development of an Open Space Plan for the Downtown Dartmouth Waterfront and the exploration and development of a continuous multi-functional emergency access route. Staff recommend evaluating a multi-functional emergency access route from Ochterloney Street to Atlantic Street (see Map 1) as the foundation for open space development. A continuous, linear route will better connect Downtown Dartmouth to the waterfront, expand the Dartmouth active transportation network, and improve open space connectivity (currently impeded by dead-ends and by public and private buildings).

BACKGROUND

At the January 2023 meeting of the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee (CPED), the Alderney Landing Board, Halifax Port Authority, and Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission requested that the Municipality work with external partners to develop an Open Space Plan for the Dartmouth Waterfront. CPED approved their request and requested a staff report on the development of an Open Space Plan for the Dartmouth Waterfront in partnership with rightsholders.

Interest to develop an open space plan and enhance connectivity along the Dartmouth Waterfront has heightened recently, particularly in response to the growing demand for housing, potential for cruise facilities, and efforts to revitalize the Dartmouth Waterfront as an active cultural destination. Past development efforts have also highlighted the benefits and needs for building an access route along the Dartmouth Waterfront that can be used for alternative emergency access. Access across the railway occurs in several at-grade locations, but if occupied by a long train, emergency services can be jeopardized.

A continuous multi-functional emergency access route linking railway crossings on the water side of the railway from Ochterloney Street to Atlantic Street would benefit multiple landowners, the Municipality, and the public (Map 1). Developing a multi-functional emergency access route on the water side of the rail line could also serve as a multi-use trail connection and serve as a cohesive spine for open space development.

Creating a better connected waterfront will complement existing uses, support future waterfront development opportunities, and further enhance the long-term success of Downtown Dartmouth.

Policy Context

Relevant planning policy supports a range of development opportunities along the Dartmouth Waterfront including significant residential and mixed-use growth with parks and open spaces, harbour-oriented commercial and industrial uses, and institutional uses to support the growing population. However, access along the waterfront has limited development potential in this area due to the rail line.

Municipal Priorities Plans also support the proposed waterfront access. Applicable priorities include encouraging active transportation, improving open space connectivity, celebrating cultural landscapes, improving emergency management coordination and communication, and maximizing economic impact and social benefits. There are important public views along the Dartmouth Waterfront which are representative of the area's heritage and identity. Planning policy requires protection, emphasis, and enhancement of these views.

DISCUSSION

The proposed Downtown Dartmouth Waterfront Revitalization Project is comprised of two main elements:

1. the development of a concept (30%) Open Space Plan for the Downtown Dartmouth Waterfront; and
2. the examination of emergency access options (grade separated crossings) for supporting the Downtown Dartmouth Waterfront and its key rightsholders. A preliminary route was identified for consideration from Ochterloney Street to Atlantic Street, but the project will determine the appropriate extent and location of the route.

Key objectives for the Project will include:

- Collaborating with external partners and the public to establish a vision for the Dartmouth Waterfront
- Creating enjoyable, pedestrian-focused gathering spaces
- Enhancing active transportation connectivity
- Providing emergency access options along the Waterfront
- Improving waterfront amenities including landscaped areas that offer public access to nature
- Mitigating the impacts of climate change, including sea level rise
- Promoting accessibility and inclusion along the Waterfront
- Identifying, preserving, and celebrating cultural landscapes
- Better connecting Downtown Dartmouth to the Waterfront

Process

The overall process will identify the project's geographical scope, incorporate the goals and objectives of community and external partners, and align the interests with Municipal plans and priorities. Staff will return to CPED with the conceptual (30%) Open Space Plan for recommendation and then to Regional Council for budget approval to undertake more detailed designs, property acquisition, and capital investments.

Partners

The Halifax Port Authority intends to explore an expansion of "Cruise to Dartmouth" in the coming years and wants to work with community and rightsholders to effectively integrate cruise facilities into Dartmouth. Revitalizing the waterfront including establishing options for emergency access across the CN rail line is critical to achieving this goal. Halifax Port Authority's vision for cruise ships in Dartmouth will be considered and incorporated in the Downtown Dartmouth Waterfront Revitalization Project.

Alongside the Halifax Port Authority, the Alderney Landing Board is a major project proponent with interest in both the Open Space Plan and enhancing emergency access. Alderney Landing's Facility Re-Imagining Plan and ideas for the wider Dartmouth Waterfront, along with all other rightsholders, will be incorporated within the Project.

King's Wharf is also identified as a partner. Staff engaged with the developer, Fares & Co. Inc. through the review and scoping process to explore if a waterfront emergency access route could serve as a secondary access to support occupancy. Through this review process, including key advice from Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency (HRFE) and HRM Community Safety, staff determined that, despite the route length and theoretical possibility that a crossing would always be open, the risk is still too great to solely rely on this method to support occupancy for waterside development. Therefore, Fares & Co. Inc. will need to construct the grade-separated emergency access (overpass) over the CN rail line that is stipulated in their existing development agreement. The Downtown Dartmouth Waterfront Revitalization Project will consider grade-separated crossings along the waterfront route to address concerns raised by HRFE and HRM Community Safety.

The Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission and Discover Halifax have also expressed interest in supporting the work on the Downtown Dartmouth Waterfront.

Suspension of Rules of Procedure

This report recommends that Regional Council suspend the rules of procedure and consider CPED's motion at a regular meeting of Regional Council instead of returning to CPED.

Returning to both Regional Council and CPED separately will delay staff's ability to begin the collaborative work needed to develop and then issue an RFP for consulting work and undertake subsequent public engagement. To expedite the project and align with partner interests, this report recommends that Council suspend the rules of procedure requiring the Standing Committee to review and make recommendations on overseeing the priority setting relative to the Community Visioning Program, Functional Plan Implementation and major planning projects.

Sea Level Rise

Through staff's detailed scoping process, sea level rise was identified as an issue affecting the project area. The project will consider ways to protect open space development against sea level rise and climate change taking into consideration historic and projected storm surge, compounding risk (the possibility of a storm surge occurring simultaneously to a harbourside emergency), and the current elevation of CN's rail tracks.

Dartmouth Cove Lands

The Dartmouth Cove Lands are designated as a Future Growth Node (FGN) under existing planning policy. FGNs are capable of transformative change as they have the land base to support significant population growth, employment opportunities, and the development of new mobility links and public parks. The vision for the Dartmouth Cove lands is to create a new and appealing mixed-use neighborhood with strong relationships to the waterfront, open spaces, trails, Downtown Dartmouth, and adjacent neighborhoods. Dartmouth Cove will become an extension of the Downtown and provide a variety of housing, employment, shopping, and recreational opportunities to accommodate and appeal to diverse demographics.

The Downtown Dartmouth Waterfront Revitalization Project could help achieve this vision. Connecting these lands via open space redevelopment and possible emergency access will create and strengthen existing relationships between open spaces, trails, Downtown Dartmouth, and the waterfront. Continued waterside access from Dartmouth Cove to Alderney Landing would help extend and improve connectivity between the Dartmouth Cove Lands and the rest of Downtown Dartmouth.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding for the Downtown Dartmouth Waterfront Revitalization Project, including both the conceptual (30%) Open Space Plan and a continuous multi-functional emergency access route, is estimated at \$350K and is included in the 2024/25 capital budget.

Pending receipt of detailed designs (including corresponding land acquisition requirements, infill requirements, facility work, and budgetary requirements), staff will return to Council for project and budget endorsement, including potential opportunities to shared costs with project partners.

RISK CONSIDERATION

HRFE and other emergency response agencies have expressed their concerns and observed risks in developing an access route along the Dartmouth Waterfront connecting existing at-grade crossings, without exploring additional grade-separated crossings. The concerns included an increase to emergency response times. Concerns were also shared about the limited width of emergency access route when the public is using it as well and the limited amount of space between the buildings at Alderney Landing and the CNR tracks. The Dartmouth Waterfront Revitalization Project will continue to consider these observed risks and propose design solutions to improve access and mitigate response times.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Public engagement will be undertaken by staff and a consultant to seek feedback from residents and rightsholders through various public forums. The feedback received will be used to help define the boundaries of the project, and refine the goals, concept, and desires of the community.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified beyond those identified in the Discussion section of the report.

ALTERNATIVES

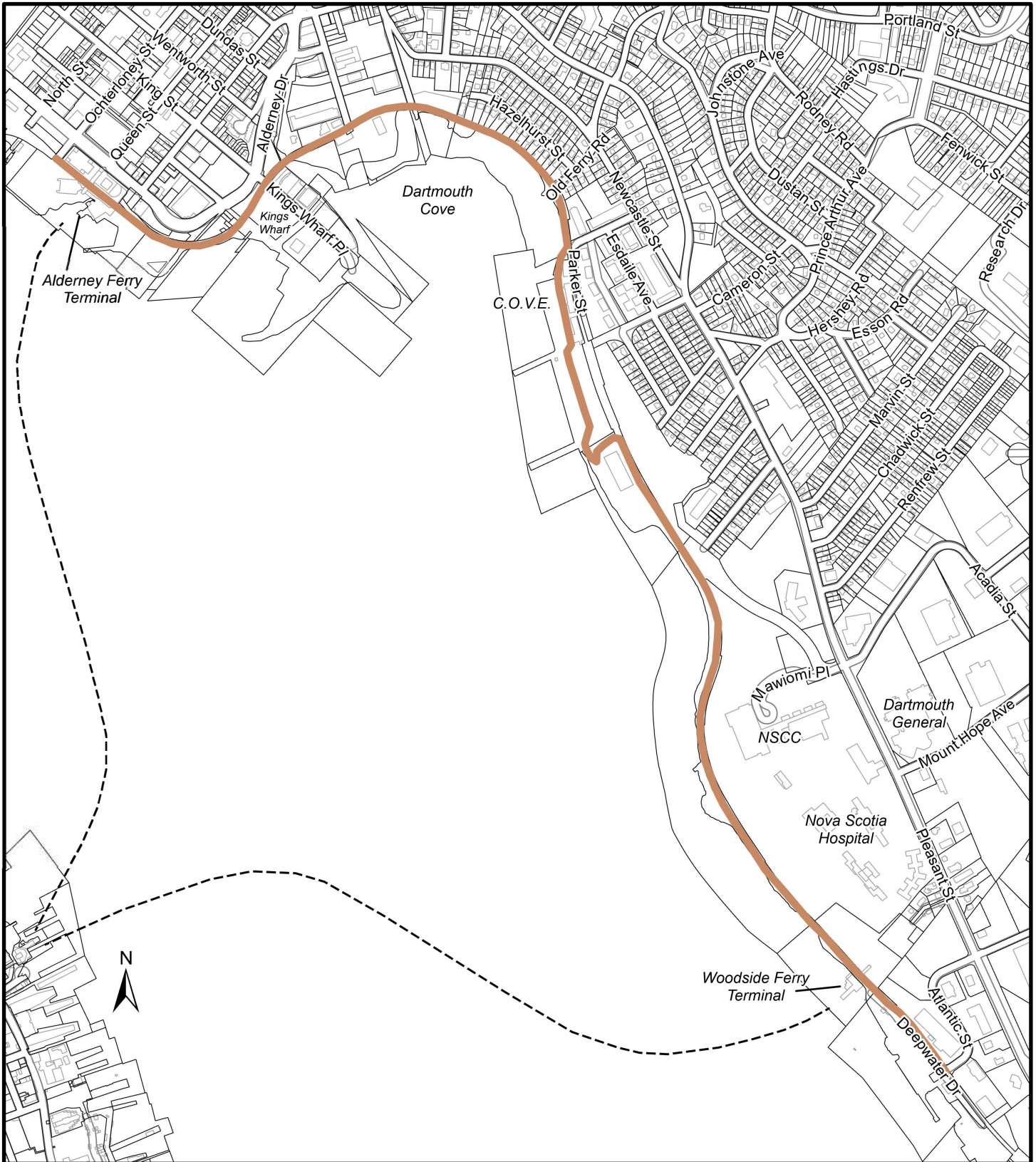
1. Regional Council may choose not to suspend the rules of procedure under Schedule 3, the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee Terms of Reference, of Administrative Order One, the Procedures of the Council Administrative Order, requiring the Standing Committee to review and make recommendations on overseeing the priority setting relative to the Community Visioning Program, Functional Plan Implementation and major planning projects;
2. Regional Council may choose not to direct the CAO to advance the Downtown Dartmouth Waterfront Revitalization Project.
3. Regional Council may choose to direct the CAO to progress the project differently than outlined in this report. This may require a supplementary report from staff.

ATTACHMENTS

Map 1 – Preliminary Multi-functional Emergency Access Route (Ochterloney Street to Atlantic Street)

If the report is released to the public, a copy can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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 Stephanie Salloum, Principal Planner, 902.476.2792



Map 1 - Preliminary Multi-Functional Emergency Access Route

Ochterloney Street to Atlantic Street,
Dartmouth

HALIFAX

 Preliminary Multi-Functional Emergency Access Route



Regional Centre Land Use By-Law Area

The accuracy of any representation on
this plan is not guaranteed.