



P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 15.2.1
Halifax Regional Council
March 26, 2024

TO: Mayor Savage Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: -ORIGINAL SIGNED-

Councillor Paul Russell, Chair, Audit and Finance Standing Committee

DATE: March 20, 2024

SUBJECT: **Council Chamber Hybrid Meeting Technology Funding Request**

ORIGIN

March 20, 2024 meeting of Audit and Finance Standing Committee, Item 13.2.1.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Legislative Authority is outlined in the attached staff report dated March 7, 2024.

Audit and Finance Standing Committee Terms of Reference:

Other Duties and Responsibilities

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

The Audit and Finance Standing Committee recommends that Halifax Regional Council approve the transfer of \$155,000 from capital project CI000021 - Public WiFi to capital project CI240006 - Council Chamber Technology Refresh.

BACKGROUND

Audit and Finance Standing Committee received a staff recommendation report dated March 7, 2024 to consider the approval of the transfer of \$155,000 from capital project CI000021 - Public WiFi to capital project CI240006 - Council Chamber Technology Refresh.

For further information refer to the attached staff report dated March 7, 2024.

DISCUSSION

Audit and Finance Standing Committee considered the staff report dated March 7, 2024 and approved the recommendation to Halifax Regional Council as outlined in this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial implications are outlined in the attached staff report dated March 7, 2024.

RISK CONSIDERATION

Risk consideration is outlined in the attached staff report dated March 7, 2024.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Meetings of the Audit and Finance Standing Committee are open to public attendance and members of the public are invited to address the Standing Committee for up to five (5) minutes during the Public Participation portion of the meeting. Meetings are live webcast on Halifax.ca. The agenda, reports, video, and minutes of the Standing Committee are posted on Halifax.ca.

For further information on Community Engagement refer to the attached staff report dated March 7, 2024.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Environmental implications are outlined in the staff report dated March 7, 2024.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives are outlined in the attached staff report dated March 7, 2024.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Staff recommendation report dated March 7, 2024.

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: Dorothy Maponga, Legislative Assistant, Municipal Clerk's Office 902.478.2408

REVISED
March 15, 2024
Revised Recommendation



P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
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Item 13.2.1
Audit & Finance Standing Committee
March 20, 2024

TO: Chair and Members of Audit & Finance Standing Committee

-ORIGINAL SIGNED-

SUBMITTED BY: _____

Cathie O’Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: March 07, 2024

SUBJECT: Council Chamber Hybrid Meeting Technology Funding Request

ORIGIN

This report originates from a need to increase the funding available for the purchase of Council Chamber Hybrid Meeting Technology.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Council approved, Dec 11, 2012, that all budget increases are to be presented to the Audit and Finance Standing Committee, prior to submission to Council.

Halifax Charter, section 93(1) - The Council shall make estimates of the sums that are required by the Municipality for the fiscal year; Halifax Charter, section 79 – The Municipality may spend money for municipal purposes in accordance with this section; Halifax Charter, section 35(2)(d)(i) - The CAO can only authorize budgeted expenditures or within the amount determined by Council by policy; Halifax Charter, section 120(6) - The Municipality may maintain other reserve funds for such purposes as the Council may determine; Halifax Regional Municipality policy on Changes to Cost Sharing for Capital Projects - Changes requiring Council approval; and the Halifax Regional Municipality Reserve Policy - No reserve funds will be expended without the CAO’s recommendation and Council approval.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Audit and Finance Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council approve the transfer of \$155,000 from capital project CI000021 - Public WiFi to capital project CI240006 - Council Chamber Technology Refresh.

BACKGROUND

The existing technology solution in the Council Chamber was installed in early 2019 as the previous technology was at end of life and to introduce improvements such as: graphics, speaker list for amendments, and automation. Audio/Video (AV) technology typically has a lifespan of 5 years so therefore

a full refresh is planned to be completed in 2024 to upgrade and to keep the existing maintenance agreement with our support vendor.

The current system was designed to enable Councillors and the public to participate in meetings exclusively in-person. To enable a Council Chamber *Hybrid* solution, some changes in technology are required.

During the March 7, 2023 Regional Council meeting, staff were directed to assess technology options to enable hybrid participation by Council members, and ensure there is no degradation in the current functionalities and capabilities for those participating in meetings from within the Chamber or remotely.

DISCUSSION

On February 6, 2024, Regional Council voted in favour of migrating the current system to a hybrid system for a cost of \$654,540. To proceed with hybrid participation for members of Regional Council in Council Chambers an additional capital investment is required.

To perform the planned refresh in current Council Chambers technology, \$500,000 capital budget has been approved. However, an additional \$155,000 capital budget is required to move to a hybrid design. On February 6, 2024, Regional Council directed staff to obtain this additional funding from an alternate source. The alternate source chosen is from the Public Wi-Fi expansion capital account CI000021. No additional locations to expand Public Wi-Fi have been identified and usage from existing installations has been lower than originally anticipated negating any need for additions or enhancements to the existing service.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Estimated total project capital cost for Council Chamber Hybrid solution, which includes a replacement of the existing Audio/Visual hardware and implementation of new software with Hybrid capabilities is \$654,540.

There is \$500,000 in the Capital Budget under approved Capital Project CI240006, with the remaining \$155,000 funding to be reallocated from capital project CI000021 – Public Wi-Fi Expansion.

Capital Budget Summary:

Project Account No. CI240006

Approved 2024/25 Budget	\$ 500,000
Plus: transfer from CI000021	<u>\$ 154,540</u>
Balance	\$ 654,540

Project Account No. CI000021

Cumulative Uncommitted Budget	\$ 222,060
Less: transfer to CI240006	<u>(\$ 154,540)</u>
Balance	\$ 67,520

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations in this Report.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications associated with the recommendations in this Report have been identified.

ALTERNATIVES

Audit and Finance Standing Committee could choose not to allow the transfer of capital, resulting in insufficient funding to enable hybrid functionality within Council Chambers.

ATTACHMENTS

None