



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

Item No. 13.2.2
Audit & Finance Standing Committee
June 19, 2024

TO: Chair and Members of Audit & Finance Standing Committee

-ORIGINAL SIGNED-

SUBMITTED BY: _____
Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: April 5, 2024

SUBJECT: Microphone Technology & Hearing Hotspot Upgrades - Funding Request

ORIGIN

This report originates from a need to identify an available funding source for the purchase and upgrade of Microphone Technology for Halifax Hall and to upgrade the Hearing Hotspot solution currently implemented in Council Chambers.

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 \$54,500 including net HST from capital project C1000021 - Public WiFi, to capital project C1200001 – IT Service Management.

BACKGROUND

The existing microphone technology solution currently implemented in Halifax Hall is becoming deprecated. The Halifax Hall room in City Hall is used by various Boards and Committees multiple times a week. Critical

to their operation is a tabletop wireless microphone system. The system includes components such as: microphones, access point receivers, wireless desktop base, and controller switch. The existing wireless microphones are estimated at over 8 years old, exceeding the typical lifespan for audio equipment. As a result, the equipment is failing and is no longer supported by the vendor.

Also included in this report is the requirement to replace the Council Chamber Hearing Hotspot technology. This technology is integrated into the audio feed within the Chambers. Users with a hearing disability are able to, either by downloading a free mobile app or using an onsite provided mobile phone, connect directly into the Chamber technology audio feed. The user may use headphones, Bluetooth earbuds or a Bluetooth connection to their hearing aid to listen to the content.

DISCUSSION

On March 21, 2024, the IT Investment Committee provide direction to Information Technology to further investigate and identify a funding alternative to allow for the upgrade of the microphone system in Halifax Hall at an estimated cost of \$48,000 including net HST. To proceed with this upgrade to Halifax Hall, a capital investment is required. 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.

Additionally, the Hearing Hotspot technology currently implemented within Council Chamber is becoming incompatible with newer versions of Apple and Android mobile devices and cannot be upgraded as-is. Therefore, the technology needs to be replaced. Funding in the amount of \$6,500 including net HST is required to complete these necessary upgrades.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The required technology upgrades identified above are estimated to cost \$54,500 including net HST. Funding to be reallocated to capital project CI200001 – IT Service Management.

Capital Budget Summary:

Project Account No. CI200001

Cumulative Unspent Budget	\$ 389,662
Plus: Approved Increase	<u>\$ 54,500</u>
Balance	\$ 444,162

Project Account No. CI000021

Cumulative Unspent Budget	\$ 67,520
Less: Unbudgeted withdrawals	<u>(\$ 54,500)</u>
Balance	\$ 13,020

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 the upgrades to Halifax Hall and Council Chambers audio technology capabilities.

ATTACHMENTS

None