

HALIFAX

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Item No. 4

Halifax Regional Council
August 9, 2022

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

Original Signed by 

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: June 24, 2022

SUBJECT: Boat Etiquette and Safety Signage at Public Boat Launches

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

June 29, 2021 Regional Council motion (Item 14.2):

MOVED by Councillor Blackburn, seconded by Councillor Hendsbee
THAT Halifax Regional Council request a staff report on installing boating etiquette / safety signage at all HRM owned and maintained public boat launches similar to the one at the Africville Park Boat Launch. The signage is to include contact information for reporting unsafe boating behaviour, reminders of speed limits near shoreline, requirements for Personal Floatation Devices, reminder that no drinking is permitted vessel is in motion, reminder to be attentive, respectful of swimmers and any other etiquette and safety reminders staff deem should be included to ensure safe enjoyment of our waterways for all.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Vessel Operation Restriction Regulations, SOR/2008-120

By-law P-600, Respecting Municipal Parks

BACKGROUND

Signage for boat etiquette and safety rules is part of the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Parks signage renewal program; a program which creates a consistent approach to parks signage throughout HRM. Traditionally, public boat launch signage has included rules for safely launching boats from HRM Parks assets. Signage is coupled with enforcement and is consistent with safe boating regulations as described below.

DISCUSSION

Information reports to the North West Community Council in May 2018 and the Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council in June 2018 addressed changes to signs for boat launch rules to include speed limitations. These changes occurred under the Parks Signage Renewal Program.

The 10 current boat launch signs include:

- Friendly reminders about being respectful and sharing the site with others
- Tips on refueling
- Speed limits for vessels near the shore, floating docks, beaches and near mooring areas (if in the Halifax Harbour)
- Direction to call 311 to report maintenance or other issues, as well as violations to regulations

This year, Parks will be adding a boat launch sign at Sir Sandford Fleming Park as well as Shad Bay Park and Terrence Bay River Park. If resources allow, Bissett Lake and The Birches Park will also have signs added. The new signs installed this year will also include reminders for:

- Use of personal floatation devices
- Prohibition of alcohol



Figure 1 – Example of a current boat launch sign

As well, Parks is currently in the process of assessing park assets for condition renewal and to determine what new assets may be required, including Park ID signs and Boat Launch rules signs. In addition, all new park boat launch locations will receive a rules and regulations sign as part of the construction project.

Safe Boating Regulations

Safe boating regulations are governed by the *Vessel Operation Restriction Regulations* (the regulations) under the *Canada Shipping Act, 2001* which allows Halifax Regional Police (HRP) and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers to act as enforcement officers. Offences under these regulations have also been designated contraventions under the federal *Contraventions Act and Regulations*, meaning that a ticket can be issued by HRP or RCMP.

Reporting Process

In the event unsafe boating behaviour is witnessed, it can be reported through 311 as with any park inquiry or request for park maintenance. The 311 agents will then dispatch to Halifax Regional Police (HRP) who will either triage for response or contact other authorities to determine the best course of action if the area is outside of their jurisdiction. In cases of emergency residents should always call 911.

Enforcement

HRP operates a patrol vessel in the Halifax Harbour supported through a contract with the Halifax Port Authority. The primary function of the contracted unit is to provide waterside and landside policing to Halifax Port Authority property. These assets are not redeployed to other areas of the Region.

In addition, HRP has a contract with MFR Rescue Limited to provide waterside patrol services. Although the contract provides for use of this resource to be deployed as directed by the Chief of Police, it is understood the primary role of the service is for patrol on the waters of Lake Micmac and Lake Banook. Although the contractor takes an approach centered around investigation, education and reporting, they are generally responsible for ensuring that federal regulations are followed. This includes, but is not limited to, controlling the speed of vessels, maintenance of safety for all users of the waters, and aid to persons and vessels in distress.

The location of the patrol shall be specified from time to time by the Chief of Police or delegate to the patrol contractor. Hours of patrol operation are from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. daily from June 29th to the Tuesday following Labour Day. The contractor is also available outside of these hours if the need arises.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No financial implications identified with this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement was required.

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.

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