

Concerts on the Commons

Notice of Motion

Take notice that, at the next regular Regional Council meeting, to be held on Tuesday, the 30th day of March, 2010, I intend to propose an amendment to the Memorandum of Understanding with Events Halifax regarding major outdoor concerts, the purpose of which is to change the current policy and Memorandum of Understanding on Concerts on the North Common so that:

- a) all major concerts be directed to the Garrison Grounds and that the North Common will no longer be considered as a location for major concerts starting in 2011.
- b) planned upgrades to the North Common in 2010 be undertaken to enhance the existing uses of the North Common as a open space park and active transportation route and not be directed to supporting the infrastructure needs of the North Common as a major concert venue.
- c) undertake a comprehensive assessment of the other proposed or possible permanent concert venues where concerts over 35,000 people could be held, and where there is no disruption to open public recreational and green spaces.

Rationale

Regional Council has developed policy and a Memorandum of Understanding on the use of the North Common for major concerts. HRM has hosted several major concerts on the North Common over the past 4 years. Each of these concerts has provided a valuable learning experience for improving delivery of concerts on the North Common. Even with improvements to major concert delivery, there continues to be significant impacts of these concerts on residents and the North Common itself. A 2007 Regional Council Report recommended an approach that concerts of less than 10,000 people would be directed to the Metro Centre, concerts of 10,000 to 30,000 people would be directed to Citadel Hill (Garrison Grounds), and concerts projected to attract more than 40,000 be considered for the North Common (<http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/070306ca1115.pdf>).

I am putting forward this Notice of Motion in response to the concerns raised by residents that live both in the immediate area of the North Common and also in the surrounding neighbourhoods. I am asking Regional Council to consider the following recommendation given that:

- concerts in both 2009 and again this summer in 2010 happen at peak times when the North Common is being used by many sports teams and residents who use the area for passive recreation. Concerts are disruptive to these groups for extended periods of time;

- there are other community and cultural events that will use the North Common outside of major concerts that will have impact on the regular use of the North Common thereby adding to the disruption of regular users and residents;
- with the increasing density of residential development around the North Common, more people will be directly impacted by the noise and dislocation caused by major concerts;
- there is no public and comprehensive analysis of the economic benefits of the concerts, nor any analysis of the negative impacts of the concerts on local businesses or other cultural arts events occurring at the same time;
- the 2007 report to Regional Council on the North Common concerts recognized the “high value on a large centralized green space with a predominance of open public access” and that open public access to this green space is disrupted and curtailed during major concerts;
- HRM Council has been unable to obtain accurate attendance figures for these concerts due to the confidentiality of tickets sales both during lead-up time to an event and also of final attendance records. Therefore, the size of the paying audience for each concert is unclear and it is difficult to effectively assess whether the North Common site is most appropriate for a major concert as opposed to the Garrison Grounds;
- HRM has a strong cultural and arts community that provides and attracts world class entertainment for residents and visitors alike, with such programs such as the Jazz Festival and Tattoo. Given that the Garrison Grounds is an excellent venue for major concerts for 30,000 to 35,000 people, HRM can confidently seek major entertainers who can draw this size of audience and as a result provide a wide range of cultural/entertainment experiences for residents and visitors alike.