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Item No. 06
Halifax Regional Council
February 7, 2017

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by Director

Bruce Zvaniga, P.Eng., Director, Transportation and Public Works

DATE: January 24, 2017

SUBJECT: Funding for Tree Stump Removal - Replanting

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

At its meeting on September 20, 2016, Halifax Regional Council requested a staff report to investigate the establishment of dedicated funding for tree stump removal and replanting the former street trees.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

As per section 77(1)(a) of the Charter "The Municipality may remove dead, dying or diseased trees on public and private property".

BACKGROUND

On September 25, 2012 the Halifax Regional Council adopted the Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP) which lays out guiding principles to help ensure the ongoing sustainability of the municipality's urban forest. The first priority of the UFMP is to plant more trees on HRM land and improve urban forest maintenance. Since the UFMP was initiated in 2013, about 5,000 street and park trees have been planted and approximately 50 kilometres of tree-lined streets have been pruned.

In order to establish new trees in areas where dead, diseased or hazardous street trees have been cut down the tree stumps must be removed prior to any re-planting. Mechanical stump grinding requires no excavation and is used to avoid damage to adjacent infrastructure such as sidewalks, curbs and roadways. There are currently 800 tree stumps slated for removal. Many of these are remnants of the devastation caused by Hurricane Juan in September 2003. Approximately 3,000 street trees came down or were taken down for safety reasons leaving approximately 800 stumps. Stumps were not covered under federal or provincial disaster relief. This backlog is further exacerbated by an average of 350 additional street tree removals that take place annually.

DISCUSSION

To achieve HRM's goal of a healthy and vibrant tree canopy, stump removal as well as replacement tree planting is needed. It is expected the trend for mature tree loss will grow in the upcoming years. This is tied to the age class of trees like the Norway Maple. In the latter half of the past century the Norway Maple was favored for street tree planting throughout North America. Although it displays vigorous growth in early years, the tree has also been found to be prone to the sudden structural failures of main branches. It is also a relatively short-lived (60 years) species. Planting of Norway Maples discontinued by HRM in the 1990s; however, they still account for about 30 percent of all the street trees in HRM. Most of the 350 dead, diseased and hazardous trees that are removed annually are Norway Maple and this number is expected to rise as these trees age further.

For the 2016/17 fiscal year, funding in the amount of \$150,000 was allocated from the State of Good Repair Capital Project CR990002 for the removal of approximately 300 tree stumps through service contracts for mechanical stump grinding. Work is currently underway and is expected to be completed in early 2017, reducing the 2016/17 stump backlog to 440 and creating up to 300 opportunities for planting replacement trees in May, 2017.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs for reducing the tree stump backlog by 500 trees in the 2017/18 fiscal year are estimated to be \$250,000 (net HST included). The contracted supply and installation costs associated with the replacement of 500 trees are estimated to be \$187,500 (net HST included) for the 2017/18 fiscal year. The total estimate for dedicated funding for stump removal and tree replacement costs for the 2017/18 fiscal year is \$437,500 (net HST included). The proposed 2017/18 Capital Program Budget and 10 Year Capital Program includes this funding to eliminate the backlog over three years and address the annual need.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A multiyear community engagement process (2010-2012) resulted in an integrated social, ecological, and economic urban forest plan master that strives to incorporate the values of HRM citizens.

ATTACHMENTS

None

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.php> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

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