



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

Item No. 9.1.2
Heritage Advisory Committee
July 22, 2020

TO: Chair and Members of the Heritage Advisory Committee

SUBMITTED BY: *-Original Signed-*

Kelly Denty, Director of Planning and Development
-Original Signed-

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: March 6, 2020

SUBJECT: **Case H00493: Request to Include 53 Queen Street, Dartmouth in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality**

ORIGIN

On January 14, 2020 the following motion of Regional Council was put and passed:

“THAT Halifax Regional Council request a staff report examining the potential for including the Dartmouth Post Office, PID 00108043, in the Registry of Heritage Properties for the Halifax Regional Municipality. The report should be referred to the Heritage Advisory Committee for evaluation.”

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Heritage Property Act

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Heritage Advisory Committee recommend that Regional Council:

1. Set a date for a heritage hearing to consider the inclusion of 53 Queen Street, Dartmouth, as shown on Map 1, in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality; and
2. Approve the request to include 53 Queen Street, Dartmouth, as shown on Map 1, in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality as a municipal heritage property.

BACKGROUND

On January 14, 2020, Regional Council directed staff to examine the potential of including the Dartmouth Post Office (53 Queen Street) in the Registry of Heritage Properties for the Halifax Regional Municipality. The subject property is located in downtown Dartmouth and has frontage on Wentworth, Queen, and King Streets (See Map 1) which contains the two-storey Post Office. The original sandstone brick building was designed in the Edwardian Baroque style by John Ewart and constructed between 1914-1917.

This application is being considered in accordance with Sections 14 (Recommendation as a municipal heritage property) and 15 (Registration as a municipal heritage property) of the *Heritage Property Act*.

HRM's Heritage Property Program

The purpose of the HRM Heritage Property Program is to help protect and conserve significant heritage resources including buildings, streetscapes, sites, areas, and conservation districts that reflect the rich heritage found in local communities throughout HRM. One of the principal aims of the Heritage Property Program is to recognize significant heritage resources through the inclusion of properties into the Municipal Registry of Heritage Properties.

Under the Heritage Property Program, all registration applications for heritage buildings are evaluated by the Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) using "The Evaluation Criteria for Registration of Heritage Buildings in Halifax Regional Municipality" (Attachment A).

The Evaluation Criteria for scoring a property and building are broken down into six categories as follows:

Criterion	Highest Possible Score
1. Age	25
2. Historical or Architectural Importance	20
3. Significance of Architect/Builder	10
4. Architectural Merit: Construction type and Style	20
5. Architectural Integrity	15
6. Relationship to Surrounding Area	10
Total	100

Should the HAC score a property with more than 50 points, a positive recommendation will be forwarded to Regional Council. If the property does not score more than 50 points, then the report will not be forwarded to Regional Council.

Nova Scotia Heritage Property Act

HRM's Heritage Property Program receives its authority from the *Heritage Property Act* which seeks:

"...to provide for the identification, designation, preservation, conservation, protection and rehabilitation of buildings, public-building interiors, structures, streetscapes, cultural landscapes, areas and districts of historic, architectural or cultural value, in both urban and rural areas, and to encourage their continued use".

Sections 14(2) and 15(1) under the *Heritage Property Act* require that notice of recommendation is given to the property owner at least thirty (30) days prior to any Council decision to include the property in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality. The property owner is also given an opportunity to address Council before they make a decision on the registration request. Should a positive recommendation be forwarded to Council, heritage staff will ensure the required notices are sent to the owners and deposited at the Registry of Deeds.

DISCUSSION

Heritage registration applications are evaluated by the HAC relative to six evaluation criteria as outlined previously, and described in greater detail in Attachment A. To assist the HAC in their evaluation and scoring, staff offer the following comments based on a historical research report (Attachment B). The historical research in support of this application has been undertaken by an experienced research consultant.

1. Age:

In 1913, the Federal Department of Public Works expropriated seven parcels of land to accommodate the new Dartmouth Post Office. The Post Office was constructed between 1914 and 1916 at the corner of Wentworth Street and Queen Street. James Renner was the Post Office's first caretaker. An addition was added near Queen Street and King Street in 1941 and was eventually replaced by a larger addition in 1961 (after more land was purchased from Dartmouth Town Council). The building also contains an addition along Wentworth Street constructed at an undetermined date (between 1947 and 1960).

The original Post Office was constructed between 1914 and 1916 and as such, staff recommend a score of 9 points for age.

2. Historical OR Architectural Importance:

Important / Unique Architectural Style or Highly Representative of an Era

The Dartmouth Post Office and its character defining elements are reflective of the Baroque architectural style, which was popular for civic buildings during the Edwardian Era (late 1890s and 1910s). This style relied on balanced designs, symmetry, simple rooflines and un-complicated, yet decorative moldings, which are evident in the Dartmouth Post Office. Further, the building incorporates some Classical and Beaux-Arts elements, which is a common feature of Baroque civic buildings from this era.

The Post Office's uniqueness is elevated by the shortage of early-20th Century civic buildings in downtown Dartmouth. Further, there are few sandstone buildings throughout the municipality and this is the sole example in downtown Dartmouth. With these considerations in mind, staff recommend a score between 16 and 20 points.

3. Significance of Architect or Builder:

The Post Office was designed by John Ewart, who moved to Canada from Scotland in 1871 and worked alongside the Chief Architect of the Federal Department of Public Works, Thomas Fuller, from 1884 to 1896. Ewart was promoted to the position of Chief Architect of the Department of Public Works from 1897 to 1914. As the chief government architect, he designed more than 340 government buildings across Canada, including Ottawa's Dominion Observatory (1902) and Royal Canadian Mint (1908).

In 1903, Ewart was one of the first recipients of the Imperial Service Order (in recognition of superb public service). He was a founding member of the Ontario Institute of Architects (1889), and the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (1907). He retired in 1914 at the age of 73, and immediately received the unique position as the Dominion Consulting Architect; a position that he held until his death in 1921.

In addition to the Dartmouth Post Office, Ewart also designed the Halifax Customs House, which was constructed in 1902 and demolished around 1960 (due to the deterioration of the building's red sandstone). The only remnants of the Customs House are two sandstone lions which were removed and are now located in Granville Mall.

Due to the significance of John Ewart's architectural career, staff recommend a score of between 7 and 10 points.

4. Architectural Merit:

Construction type or building technology

The exterior of the Dartmouth Post Office was constructed from sandstone brick in an Edwardian Baroque style. Many buildings constructed in this style were made from expensive materials crafted to make a formal statement with a range of Classical elements. Granite stones and sandstone brick, quarried in Cumberland County, Nova Scotia, were used throughout the building. One of the Post Office's interesting features is the use of stone and brick that is cut-back around the edges to make its size and placement very clear and visible.

In the 19th century, architects experimented in the use of reinforced concrete in large institutional buildings, and it began to gain widespread use as ferro-concrete frames were often encased with stone. The Dartmouth Fire Insurance Plan of 1961 shows the building having a concrete foundation, along with being built of steel and brick. The sandstone brick may have been used to cover the use of steel and concrete as a means of hiding the use of modern materials.

As relatively few buildings with this construction type remain in Dartmouth today, staff recommend a score between 4 and 10 points.

Style

The heritage character and primary character-defining elements of the Dartmouth Post Office are derived from its Baroque architecture. This style was made popular for civic buildings during the Edwardian era (late 1890s to 1910s), as it borrowed and overlapped with the Beaux-Arts style. This style provided simple and balanced designs, simple rooflines, relatively un-complicated ornamentation and detailing. Some typical architectural elements include the use of a striking display of symmetry through fenestration, the use of a centralized grand entrance, and decorative moulding and brackets.

The character-defining elements, which are derived from the original Post Office, include:

- Cornice line that wraps around the original building;
- 5-bay symmetrical façade with large voussoirs (tapered stones within an arch);
- Large window sills;
- Brick string course that separates the building's base from the upper storey;
- Sandstone "POST OFFICE" inscription above inflated keystones;
- Moulded lintels and brackets above the entryways; and
- Masonry granite foundation.

This architectural style is relatively rare in the municipality and relatively few examples have been maintained, particularly those which utilized sandstone. Staff recommend a score between 7 and 10 points.

5. Architectural Integrity:

The Dartmouth Post Office has generally high architectural integrity. The original Post Office building sits prominently at the Queen Street / Wentworth Street intersection and has been maintained using largely traditional materials. Numerous character-defining elements – such as the 5-bay symmetrical façade, granite foundation, brick string course, sandstone "POST OFFICE" inscription, etc. – remain intact.

The original clock tower was removed from the building due to structural concerns in 1977. This portion of the building was restructured, and compatible architectural detailing (including the cornice line) was reinstated.



The Dartmouth Post Office addition was added to the southern portion of the building in 1941 on the former site of the Central School. Following the purchase of the Queen Street / King Street corner lot in 1959, this addition was demolished to make way for a larger one-storey addition which opened in 1961. There is also a one-storey addition to the west of the original Dartmouth Post Office, along Wentworth Street. The history of this feature is not well-known, however HRM's records indicate that it was constructed between 1947 and 1960.

While the property has undergone additions during the past century, the essential form and integrity of the original Dartmouth Post Office Building has largely been maintained. With these considerations in mind, staff recommend a score between 1 and 10 points.

6. Relationship to Surrounding Area:

This landmark building is of significant historical and civic value to Downtown Dartmouth. It stands on the former site of the first Quaker meeting-house (1784-1822) and public school (1866-1917). Furthermore, this prominent civic institution has served the community as the main post office for over 100 years. Despite taking up much of a city block in area, the building is setback from the property line. Standing two-storeys tall with one-storey additions, the building is compatible with the surrounding streetscape and existing buildings in terms of height massing, and scale.

The building is an architectural asset that contributes to the heritage character of the surrounding area. It is also downtown Dartmouth's most prominent civic building from the early 20th century. As such, staff recommend a score between 6 and 10 points.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The HRM costs associated with advertising and processing this application can be accommodated within the approved 2020/21 operating budget for C340 – Heritage and Social Policy.

RISK CONSIDERATION

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

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The community engagement process for a heritage registration is consistent with the intent of the HRM Community Engagement Strategy. The level of community engagement was information sharing achieved through public access to the required Heritage Advisory Committee meeting. As a provision of the *Heritage Property Act*, no registration of a municipal heritage property shall take place until Regional Council has given the owner of the property an opportunity to be heard.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

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

ALTERNATIVE

1. The Heritage Advisory Committee may choose to reject the application to include 53 Queen Street, Dartmouth in the Registry of Heritage Property for the Halifax Regional Municipality. In doing so, the application will not proceed to Regional Council for evaluation.

ATTACHMENTS

Map 1: Location Map

Attachment A: Evaluation Criteria

Attachment B: Research Report

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: Jesse Morton, Planner II, 902.490.4844
