

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION MONTH

National Volunteer Week (NVW) pays tribute to the millions of Canadian volunteers who donate their time and energy. This year NVW is April 10th–16th, and the theme is: “Volunteers are the Roots of Strong Communities”. Just like roots are essential for trees to bloom, volunteers are essential for communities to boom. Thanks to volunteers, our communities grow strong and resilient. Even the tiniest volunteer effort leaves a profound and lasting trace in a community, much like tree rings that appear over time. To help give thanks to volunteers Volunteer Canada has developed programs to access resources and products that can be attained through their web-site at www.volunteer.ca/nvw2016, by Twitter at #NVW2016 or on their Facebook page VolunteerCanada. There is plenty of information and ideas on how to foster more volunteerism in our society. In our own area be sure to contact “Volunteer Halifax” at <http://volunteerhalifax.ca/>. This service links people with local non-profit community organizations. There are programs to support persons with disabilities, assist new Canadians, help corporations and professionals connect to organizations in and around the municipality, and develop individuals’ skills to advance their careers. Connect with them through e-mail at: info@volunteerhalifax.ca or via the major social media outlets such as Facebook, Google and Twitter. Here are some other web sites you can explore for more volunteer recognition items and ideas: www.recreationns.ca/volunteer-recognition-items-2/ & www.halifax.ca/volunteerservices/. Each year the Mayor and Regional Council recognize the extraordinary contributions of individuals and groups who volunteer their time and skills to provide services and programs in our HRM communities. The list of this year’s HRM Volunteers will be available April 13th. I will provide a complete list of those honoured from our district in my May 2016 newsletter.

SEEKING INPUT ON YOUTH PLAN

HRM Parks & Recreation Department is reaching out to youth aged 13 to 24 years old to help create a Youth Plan for the municipality. The overall objective of the Youth Plan is to ensure that municipal programs and services are meeting the needs of our youth, and will provide the basis for service offerings over the next three to five years. Young residents within the targeted age group are encouraged to participate in this process by completing a survey, which focuses on recreation & sport, art programming, and leadership and job readiness. The survey is live now at www.halifax.ca/youth and will close on Saturday, May 7th. Survey participants will have the opportunity to win some great prizes, including the Grand Prize of one of two iPad Minis! The draw is open to HRM residents, 13 to 24 years old, who have completed the survey. Some restrictions apply. Feedback from the survey will be reviewed and considered by HRM Parks & Recreation’s Youth Team and staff over the coming months during the formulation of the Youth Plan. For more details about youth programs, please refer to the website above.

2016-17 HRM BUDGETS APPROVED

Halifax Regional Council approved its 2016–17 Operating and Capital Project budgets. The \$873 million gross Operating and \$198 million gross Capital Project budgets were structured to enable strategic investments and municipal service enhancements with no increase to the average residential and commercial tax bills for this year.

The general rates of taxation on residential property (per \$100 of assessed value) will be set at:

- \$ 0.662 for the Urban area
- \$ 0.629 for the Suburban & Rural areas

The general rates of taxation on commercial property (per \$100 of assessed value) will be set at:

- \$ 2.832 for the Urban & Suburban areas
- \$ 2.510 for the Rural areas

Tax rates associated with Transit Services (per \$100 of assessed value) will be set at:

- \$ 0.049 for the Regional Transportation tax rate and
- \$0.102 for the Local Transit tax rate.

Building on positive forecasts for the 2016–17 fiscal year the HRM economy will continue to perform strongly with steady growth in GDP, incomes, employment and population; all of which will have a positive impact on the financial position of the municipality. The combination of sound financial policies and cost savings found through service efficiencies will enable the following enhancements to municipal programs, services and infrastructure this year:

- construction of the Dartmouth four-pad arena complex in Burnside;
- investment in rural fire and emergency services;
- increased resources and modernization of Planning & Development services to support anticipated growth and reduce red tape, and establishment of a Rural Planning Team;
- initial implementation of system network changes designed to make transit better through the Moving Forward Together Plan;
- continued implementation of a five-year, \$43 million investment in transit technology upgrades, specifically the roll out of the new GPS-based Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) system and associated passenger communication improvements. For more detailed information on the 2016–17 operating and project budgets visit www.halifax.ca/budget.

GREEN NETWORK PLAN

The Halifax Green Network Plan (HGPN) is hosting local input sessions on Monday, April 4th, 630–9 PM at Auburn Drive High School in Westphal; Tuesday, April 5th, 6–830 PM at Musquodoboit Valley Bicentennial Theatre; Wednesday, April 6th, 6–730 PM at Sheet Harbour Lions Centre; and Thursday, April 7th, 630–9 PM at the Eastern Shore District High School in Musquodoboit Harbour. For more details about the HGPN go to: www.halifax.ca/HalifaxGreenNetwork/index.php or contact Holly Richardson at 902-490-6889 or richarh@halifax.ca with any enquiries.

LET’S CELEBRATE 46TH EARTH DAY

Why don’t we plant a tree on April 22nd! Trees for Earth (#Trees4Earth) is this year’s theme. Go to www.earthday.org for more events and ideas. This spring the NS Clean Foundation is kicking off the 2016 cleanup season with the Great Nova Scotia Pick-Me-Up—the province’s largest litter reduction initiative. Registration is now open at www.nspickmeup.ca or by calling 902-420-3474. The Clean Foundation will provide groups with everything needed to run a successful litter clean-up event including supplies, information on how to coordinate your event and a data card to track results. Be sure to post before & after photos of your pick-me-up locations and post to social media using the hashtag #GladToCleanUp.

HRM TAX BILL DUE DATE APRIL 30TH

HRM sends out its tax bills to all property owners twice a year. The Interim bill was mailed mid-March and is due on April 30th. The final bill will be due October 31st. If you have questions about your tax bill please call the Halifax Contact Centre at 311 or go to: <http://www.halifax.ca/taxes/index.php>.

RESCHEDULED C&D PIM – MAY 7TH

Due to the snowstorm on March 5th, the Public Information Meeting (PIM) about Case #19800—for a proposed Construction & Demolition Debris (C&D) processing facility on Highway #7 in Porters Lake has been rescheduled to Saturday, May 7th with morning and afternoon sessions at the Lake Echo Community Centre. For more details about this planning application please go to: www.halifax.ca/planning/applications/Case19800Details.php or attend the PIM.

IS OPEN-AIR BURNING ALLOWED?

The Open-Air Burning Season restrictions began on March 15th. There is an online fire index map at: www.novascotia.ca/burnsafe. It will ensure everyone knows the risks of wildfire in all areas of the province each day. The map will show green, red, or yellow in each county to let us know if it is safe to burn, unsafe to burn, or safe with restrictions. The map and recorded phone message will be updated daily. Call Burn Safe toll-free at 1-855-564-2876. These changes affect brush burning on domestic properties such as rural residential lots, woodlots, fishing camps and cottage lots. Commercial and industrial brush burning still requires a permit from a DNR office. For more information visit: www.halifax.ca/fireprevention/Burning.php. Be sure to follow all instructions and rules of conduct, and be respectful of your neighbours when you want to burn. Be cognizant of those with any sensitivity to smoke. Please be very careful and burn safely.

