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**Item No. 3**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**August 1, 2017**

**TO:** Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed by Director  

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Jane Fraser, Director, Corporate & Customer Services

**DATE:** July 24, 2017

**SUBJECT:** Update on Regulatory Reform, Performance Excellence and Customer Service Initiatives

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**INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

This is a staff-generated report providing an update on HRM's regulatory reform project with the Province of Nova Scotia and related regulatory, performance excellence and customer service initiatives.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

The Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Charter provides Council with the power to make policies and by-laws for a variety of purposes, including the regulation of certain activities.

**BACKGROUND**

In December 2016, Regional Council confirmed its new Priority Areas: Economic Development; Service Delivery; Healthy, Liveable Communities; Social Development; Governance & Engagement; and Transportation. These priority areas have 25 outcomes in total, three of which are directly related to regulatory reform, performance excellence and customer service initiatives. They are:

- Under the Economic Development priority area:
  - **Promote & Maximize Growth** – HRM promotes a business climate that drives and sustains growth by improving competitiveness, minimizing barriers and leveraging our strengths;
- Under the Service Delivery priority area:
  - **Service to Our Business** – HRM simplifies processes and delivers service to promote and encourage a vibrant business environment; and,
  - **Service to Our People** – HRM understands the needs and perspectives of the people they serve, and provides quality service through a person focused approach.

## **DISCUSSION**

HRM has undertaken several activities in recent months in a concerted effort to reduce red tape, improve customer service and make government more efficient. Examples are outlined below.

### **Regulatory Reform Project with the Province of Nova Scotia**

In October 2016, HRM and the Nova Scotia Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness (the Office) launched a joint effort to reduce undue regulatory burdens facing businesses operating in HRM.

At Regional Council's direction, HRM has committed resources to dedicate a staff resource to the project to: draft principles of regulation for potential adoption by Regional Council; identify and address needed municipal regulatory reforms in specific areas; develop methods to assess the economic impacts of existing and proposed regulations on businesses; and, align, where possible, provincial and municipal government customer service practices. Project objectives are outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding that was signed by the Chief Administrative Order and the Province's Chief Regulatory Officer in October.

A change in project approach that will see the dedicated staff resource hired by HRM rather than the province, and associated processes, has delayed the project from its initial timelines. This said, progress has been made in several areas including:

- **Governance.** The Advisory Committee tasked with providing strategic guidance on the project is chaired by Jordi Morgan, Vice President (Atlantic Canada) of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and it includes representatives from HRM, the Office, the Halifax Partnership, Halifax Chamber of Commerce, Canadian Restaurants Association, Spring Garden Area and Business Association, and Urban Development Institute. It met in December 2016 and in March 2017 to discuss project deliverables, the drafting of an HRM charter on regulation, and regulatory issues to address in the near-term. In April 2017, HRM responsibility for the project was transferred from the CAO's Office to the newly established Corporate and Customer Services Business Unit.
- **Staffing.** In December 2016, interviews were conducted to fill the project lead position that would report to the Province. However, project partners later agreed that the project would be better served if the resource were to reside within HRM. As such, HRM human resource policies and practices had to be adhered to. A new round of interviews took place in July 2017 and the position is expected to be filled by late summer.
- **Charter of Principles.** HRM staff are drafting HRM principles on regulation in the form of an administrative order to guide the development of new general application by-laws. It is scheduled to be presented to Regional Council in 2017.

It is anticipated that the next meeting of the Advisory Committee will take place in September 2017, at which time the new staff resource will be introduced, the draft administrative order on regulation will be discussed, specific regulatory issues to be addressed in the near-term will be finalized, and ways to better communicate HRM's existing regulatory and customer service work with broad stakeholders will be probed.

### **Performance Excellence**

- **Performance Excellence Training.** A training program has commenced for approximately 150 senior level employees of the organization to create an understanding of performance excellence and associated continuous improvement methodologies and tools, such as Lean Six Sigma. This is to make HRM more client-centric, collaborative, efficient, and effective. Specific LSS training will be part of the

next phases of training over the next 12 months or so, which will include middle managers and front line staff.

- **KPI development.** As part of its sustainable fiscal strategy, the municipality initiated a project to advance the use of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and data driven-decision making. HRM has joined the Municipal Benchmarking Network Canada (MBNCanada), a partnership between 16 Canadian cities. This is a multi-year project with reporting scheduled to commence in 2018-19.

### Regulatory Improvements

- **Centre Plan.** The Centre Plan will bring greater clarity to development in the Regional Centre (the area defined as Dartmouth within the Circumferential Highway and Peninsular Halifax) by creating a new Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy for the area that will replace four community plans and four land use by-laws that were drafted mostly in the late 1970s. On Tuesday, June 13 2017, Regional Council unanimously approved the direction of the Centre Plan. Now, staff are using the Centre Plan document to craft detailed Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law regulations for adoption. Consultation on these regulations will take place in the Fall of 2017 to support the adoption process through the Community Design Advisory Committee, the Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee, and Regional Council. The project's status can be tracked at [centreplan.ca](http://centreplan.ca).
- **Bylaw Simplification.** There are 21 Secondary Planning Strategies and 22 Land Use Bylaws which direct development in HRM. Many of the bylaws are in their original forms and pre-date amalgamation, although they have been amended over time. Due to the diverse origins of each land use bylaw and the piecemeal approach to amendments, there is a lack of consistency in the application of general definitions, land use designations, building and site requirements and approval processes. The Land Use Bylaw Simplification Project is expected to address these issues and result in reduced staff resourcing requirements, faster application processing times, fewer planning applications requiring Council approval, and increased clarity amongst stakeholders. The LUB Simplification team is supporting the adoption of regulations in the Centre Plan area and will reduce the number of plans and by-laws starting with those in the Regional Centre.
- **Permitting and Licensing System.** To revitalize customer service and service delivery, an RFP for a new permitting and licensing system was issued and closed in March. HRM will consider online application submission and permit generation, electronic documentation and circulation, use of field technology, and improved customer experience through online services. The focus will be on creating easy access to services, modernizing our processes, and reflecting best practices.

The delivery of the Centre Plan, By-law simplification, and permitting and licensing system are key deliverables in Planning and Development's five-year strategic framework (2015-19).

- **Temporary Signage.** Staff have been consulting with internal and external stakeholders to consider possible by-law amendments to the Temporary Sign by-law and payment options for temporary sign licenses. Staff are considering several ways of reducing the regulatory burden, including the provision of municipal licenses to allow sign rental businesses to operate within HRM which would remove the administrative burden of applications for individual signs.

### Customer Service Improvements

- **Customer Service Strategy.** In April 2017, HRM completed a draft Corporate Customer Service Strategy for internal and external clients that includes a draft five-year action plan. The new Corporate and Customer Services Business Unit will oversee its implementation.
- **Web transformation.** On June 28, 2017, HRM launched its new website, supported by a new content management system. It can incorporate new digital services, including ePayment solutions, as they are developed.

These are examples of the ways in which HRM is reducing red tape, making the delivery of its programs and services more efficient, and improving customer service.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Work outlined in this report is being undertaken within current budgets.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

There was no community engagement in the preparation of this report.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

None.

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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