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**Item No. 21.5**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**January 28, 2025**

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

**FROM:** Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** December 30, 2024

**SUBJECT:** **HRM One Membership for Parks and Recreation Facilities**

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### INFORMATION REPORT

#### ORIGIN

August 6, 2024, Meeting of Regional Council (Item 15.5.2):

#### **MOVED by Councillor Austin, seconded by Councillor Mancini**

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to provide a staff report on a single HRM membership for all Parks and Recreation owned and operated facilities and HRM's Multi-District Facilities. The report should sketch out a plan to deliver this project and, ideally, be available in time for 2025 budget deliberations so that the appropriate resources can be allocated

**MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. Not present: Councillors Smith, Stoddard, Outhit**

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2017, Regional Council approved the use of the Community Facility Master Plan 2 (CFMP2) as a framework for municipal decision-making regarding recreation facilities. After approval of the CFMP2, work began on implementing Legend registration software in all Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) operated facilities and partner operated Multi-District Facilities. A common software supports additional CFMP2 recommendations such as exploring the feasibility of implementing a "One Membership" model for HRM facilities.

Not all HRM owned facilities offer memberships to the public and those that do have different amenities, programs, services and membership options. Therefore, One Membership implementation requires in depth consultation and collaboration with the various governing management groups.

This report outlines the initial challenges and scoping associated with creating a "One Membership" model that would allow access to multiple HRM facilities.

A committee of HRM staff and Multi-District Facility (MDF) General Managers has been convened to propose solutions to inform a recommendation for Regional Council's consideration. This report outlines the committee's scope of work, timeline and additional risks for implementation in 2026/27.

#### BACKGROUND

Regional Council approved the use of the CFMP2 in 2017 as a framework for municipal decision-making regarding recreation facilities. One of the key objectives of the plan is to ensure fair and equitable access to facilities across the municipality.

The CFMP2 proposed a Universal Access card that could be used by a resident or family to have access to all municipal facilities and recreation needs. A cardholder could have membership access to a facility, register into programs, or book a recreation space.

After approval of the CFMP2, work began on implementing a software platform that would be used by all HRM Recreation service delivery to support that goal. The Legend software came into effect linking all HRM operated facilities, bookings and programs. This software was also installed in HRM's partner operated Multi-District Facilities (MDFs). This brought about the ability for a client to have their programs, bookings, and membership in one system and singular universal access to HRM recreation services and programs. In September 2022, Legend Recreation provided HRM notice that they would no longer be supporting services within the North American marketplace. The notification from Legend provided an option for HRM to transition to another application within the parent company's portfolio and, as such, HRM is currently working with Xplor Recreation to transition to a new recreation software.

A common software supports additional CFMP2 recommendations such as exploring the feasibility of implementing a "One Membership" model for HRM facilities. The concept mirrors that of other private fitness facilities that offer the option of paying an extra membership fee to receive access to any location of their brand.

Not all HRM owned facilities offer memberships to the public and those that do, have different amenities, programs, services and membership options. Therefore, One Membership implementation requires in-depth consultation and collaboration with the various stakeholders and governing management groups.

HRM has two primary service delivery models for facilities that offer memberships in municipally owned facilities. The first is Municipally Operated and the other is Volunteer Operated. HRM staff provide programs and services in Municipally Operated facilities and the Volunteer Operated facilities are operated by a volunteer board of directors under an agreement with HRM. The Volunteer Operated facilities include the Multi-District Facilities operating under Management Agreements which include clauses for HRM and the volunteer board of directors to work together to implement HRM initiatives and Regional Council priorities.

The Volunteer Operated MDFs that offer memberships to the public are:

- Cole Harbour Place
- Zatzman Sportsplex
- Canada Games Centre
- St. Margaret's Centre

The MDFs offer Adult, Youth/Seniors and Household memberships to the public. Memberships can be paid monthly, or in a lump sum. The pricing of these memberships is decided by the individual facilities in accordance with their Management Agreement and approved annual budget submission to HRM.

Municipally Operated facilities offer Adult, Youth/Seniors and Household memberships to the public. Below you will find the four categories of facilities along with an example of each category which membership fees are based on:

- Small Facility (Findlay Community Centre)
- Medium Facility (Gordon R Snow, Chocolate Lake, Musquodoboit Harbour Rec Centre, Sheet Harbour Rec Centre)
- Large Facility (Captain William Spry Community Centre)
- Major Facility (MDF) (Sackville Sports Stadium)

Most memberships in these facilities offer access to a fitness gym and fitness classes. Depending on the facility and the amenities, it can include access to pools, rinks and discounts on other programs.

## **DISCUSSION**

The goal of an HRM One Membership model would be to allow for a paying member at one facility to be able to access other HRM owned facilities and amenities.

Some of the variables identified for consideration in developing a One Membership model include:

- Membership pricing
- Facility amenities (similarities and differences)
- Membership options and fee structures
- Xplor Recreation Software compatibility
- Governance

### **Membership Pricing**

Volunteer Operated MDF facilities are each responsible for setting membership prices based on industry best practices and budget planning. The Management Agreement allows for the Board of Directors, through the General Manager, to establish user charges for the services offered at the facility. These charges are approved through the annual budget process which is submitted to Regional Council. A chart outlining the different pricing models for the MDFs, and Sackville Sports Stadium is included as Attachment 1.

Municipally Operated facilities that offer memberships are categorized so that facilities with different amenities, equipment and opportunities have a consistent fee for membership. By-Law U-100 is the governing document for setting the fees for the memberships offered by Municipally Operated facilities and is based on cost recovery, including assessment of operating and full life cycle costs, or a cost per unit. This is further explained in Administrative Order 2019-010 ADM *Respecting Recreation User Charges*. The cost per unit for Memberships shall be the cost per month as calculated by the cost incurred by the Municipality for every month worth of visits allocated to a user, based on the previous year's total annual membership.

### **Facility Amenities**

All HRM Municipally Operated facilities offer some type of fitness centre, while only two offer pools. The MDFs offer large fitness areas and fitness classes except for St. Margaret's Centre which offers a small fitness area. All the MDFs offer a pool and other pool related amenities although the St. Margaret's Centre only has an outdoor pool. All the MDFs, plus the Sackville Sports Stadium, offer a large sport facility area such as ice rinks, gymnasiums or a combination of both. The various combinations of facility amenities require collaboration to find consistencies and similarities to add into a One Membership model.

### **Membership Options and Fee Structures**

HRM facilities are set into tiers based on size, while the MDFs are all a similar size. HRM Municipally Operated facilities offer the same membership options at each tier level. The membership options are Adult, Child/Youth and Household (Family). The payment options are as follows:

- One month paid in full
- Monthly Roll over
- Year Paid in full
- Day Pass
- 10 Visit Pass

MDFs follow a similar structure with membership options, however each facility has some differences. For example, Cole Harbour Place offers an Adult Couple membership option not offered at all facilities. Canada Games Centre offers an Add On membership option to allow for another person living in the same household to be added to an adult, young professional, senior or family membership. Additional time is required to examine these similarities and differences across the facilities and membership structures.

### Xplor Recreation Software

The Xplor Recreation Software system is set to be implemented across Municipally Operated and MDFs in 2025. Once it is determined what the model will be, an analysis of supporting the membership model within the Xplor system will be performed. The Xplor implementation team is working to have Xplor come online as soon as possible to replace the Legend Recreation Software. Development and implementation costs and timing to implement a One Membership model are currently unknown.

As work continues to develop a One Membership model, more variables will be discovered that will need analysis for solutions or implementation.

### Governance

The MDFs are key stakeholders with valuable insights into the development of a One Membership model. The impact of the model on the operations and budgets of the board operated MDFs is a key consideration.

The Management Agreement that governs the MDF relationships require HRM to provide a list of programming focus areas to inform the development of each MDF's proposed Business Plans, on or before October 15<sup>th</sup> in each operating year. HRM has provided notice of a potential future One Membership model but with an unknown impact to operating budgets, more detail will be required by Oct 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025, to inform 2026/27 budgeting.

### Next Steps

Community Partnerships division has formed a committee of internal stakeholders and MDF General Managers to work on the complexities of a One Membership model. Input and collaboration with the MDFs is critical to ensure recommendations are attainable. The committee also includes key internal staff and consultation with other HRM business units will occur as necessary.

The committee will establish a final scope of work to be included in the analysis of a One Membership model. That scope will initially consist of:

- Facility tiers based on amenities
- Options for One Membership
- Cost and fees
- Technology impacts and Requirements
- Client benefits
- Program discounts through membership
- Financial impacts to HRM and MDFs
- Resources required
- Policies, procedures and processes required
- Implementation plans
- Privacy considerations

There have been initial meetings with the MDF General Managers from the Zatzman Sportsplex, Cole Harbour Place and Canada Games Centre to identify key discussion points. The committee has started meeting in the Fall of 2024 and will continue to meet at a minimum of monthly until recommendations and alternatives are proposed.

The committee will review the level of demand for a One Membership model as well. Current data shows that memberships are purchased from postal codes that are in a fifteen-minute commute around a facility. It is unknown if those same users would see a benefit to access a facility if there is a longer commute time to and from those facilities. This will be included in a member survey that will be created to get feedback from current members on a proposed One Membership model option.

The survey will be shared by facilities offering memberships in both HRM operated and MDFs. The survey will be directed at current members in both Volunteer Operated and Municipally Operated facilities as they have already purchased memberships at those facilities. The survey will be available on site through a QR

code that can be accessed in person at any facility offering a membership. A fillable form will also be left at each facility for those who wish to complete a paper copy. An email link will be sent out to members with registered contact information. The survey will be open for a 2-month period to ensure as many users as possible have an opportunity to provide feedback.

The committee will also complete a jurisdictional scan of similar municipalities with similar models for comparison. The scan will include membership providers in the marketplace (where possible) and any other service providers that are deemed to provide relevant data.

The jurisdictional scan and member survey will be planned for early 2025 with the intention to present a recommendation report to Regional Council in late 2025/early 2026.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

No financial implications at this time.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

A survey of all current membership holders at all the MDFs and HRM facilities will be conducted to determine demand for this membership option. The survey will be available on site through a QR code, and an email link will be sent out to members with registered contact information.

The established committee of General Managers of the Multi-District Facilities will provide community feedback as well.

### **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

#### ***Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S., 2008, c.39***

Section 7A: The purposes of the Municipality are to....

(b) Provide services, facilities, and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality: ...

Section 61 (3): "The property vested in the Municipality, absolutely, or in trust, is under the exclusive management and control of the Council, unless an Act of the Legislature provides otherwise."

Section 75

(1): "The Municipality may agree with any person for the provision of a service or a capital facility that the Municipality is authorized to provide."

(2): "An agreement made pursuant to subsection (1) may allow for the lease, operation or maintenance of the facility or provision of the service by a person..."

### **ATTACHMENT**

Attachment 1: Chart of Membership Pricing

## Chart of Membership Pricing

Canada Games Centre			
Membership Type	Adult	Youth/Senior	Family
One month paid in full	\$132.83	\$79.69/\$99.59	\$245.70
Monthly roll over (Bi-weekly payment)	\$32.95	\$21.37	\$56.75
Year paid in full	\$856.75	\$555.45/\$772.8	\$1,475.45
Day Pass (tax incl.)	\$15.27	\$9.35/\$9.97	\$28.55
10 visit pass (tax incl.)	\$132.82	\$79.70/\$86.36	\$245.70

Cole Harbour Place			
Membership Type	Adult	Youth/Senior	Family
One month paid in full	\$74	\$48	\$97
Monthly roll over (Monthly payment)	\$69	\$42	\$1,092
Year paid in full	\$742	\$443	\$999
Day Pass (tax incl.)	\$12.50	\$9	\$21
10 visit pass (tax incl.)	\$108	\$67	\$191

Zatzman Sportsplex			
Membership Type	Adult	Youth/Senior	Family
One month paid in full	\$103	\$67	\$170
Monthly roll over (Monthly payment)	\$78	\$52	\$111
Year paid in full	\$780	\$510	\$1,105
Day Pass (tax incl.)	\$12.50	\$7.50	\$20.50
10 visit pass (tax incl.)	\$87.50	\$52.50	\$143.50

St Margaret's Centre			
Membership Type	Adult	Youth/Senior	Family
One month paid in full	\$34.50	\$34.50	N/A
Monthly roll over (Bi-weekly payment)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Year paid in full	\$287.50	\$287.50	\$575
Day Pass (tax incl.)	\$5	\$5	N/A
10 visit pass (tax incl.)	\$25	\$25	N/A

Sackville Sports Stadium			
Membership Types	Adult	Youth/Senior	Household (Family)
One month paid in full	\$47.86	\$35.89	\$71.78
Monthly roll over	\$47.86	\$35.89	\$71.78
Year paid in full	\$526.45	\$394.83	\$789.66
Day Pass (tax incl.)	\$11.96	\$11.96	N/A
10 visit pass (tax incl.)	\$119.65	\$89.73	N/A