



P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
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Item No. 15.3.1
Halifax Regional Council
February 24, 2026

TO: Mayor Fillmore and Members of Halifax Regional Council

FROM: Councillor Janet Steele, Chair, Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee

DATE: February 17, 2026

SUBJECT: Terms of Reference for a new Parks Advisory Committee

ORIGIN

February 17, 2026 meeting of Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee, Item 13.1.2.

RECOMMENDATION

The Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee recommends to Halifax Regional Council that the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee continue to serve as the municipality's advisory body on parks and recreation matters.

BACKGROUND

Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee received a staff recommendation report dated February 12, 2025 and presentation to consider that the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee continue to serve as the municipality's advisory body on parks and recreation matters.

For further information refer to the attached staff report dated February 12, 2025.

DISCUSSION

Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee considered the staff report dated February 12, 2025 and approved the recommendation to Halifax Regional Council as outlined in this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial implications are outlined in the attached staff report dated February 12, 2025.

RISK CONSIDERATION

Risk consideration is outlined in the attached staff report dated February 12, 2025.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Meetings of the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee are open to public attendance and members of the public are invited to address the Standing Committee for up to five (5) minutes during the Public Participation portion of the meeting. Meetings are live webcast on Halifax.ca. The agenda, reports, video, and minutes of the Standing Committee are posted on Halifax.ca.

For further information on Community Engagement refer to the attached staff report dated February 12, 2025.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Environmental implications are outlined in the staff report dated February 12, 2025.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Legislative Authority is outlined in the attached staff report dated February 12, 2025.

Administrative Order One, *Respecting the Procedures of the Council*, Schedule 3 Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee Terms of Reference, Section 6(a) Other Duties and Responsibilities:

6. The Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee shall have an active interest in the Agencies and Initiatives that support Community and Economic development throughout the municipality by:

(a) promoting and encouraging the development of programs, policies in initiatives in the municipality that support Community and Economic development throughout the municipality;

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Staff recommendation report dated February 12, 2025.

Report Prepared by: Krista Vining, Team Lead, Legislative Assistants, Municipal Clerk's Office 902.223.1046

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Item No. 13.1.2
Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee
February 17, 2026

TO: Chair and Members of Community Planning and Economic Development
Standing Committee

FROM: Jacqueline Hamilton, Commissioner of Operations

DATE: February 12, 2025

SUBJECT: **Terms of Reference for a new Parks Advisory Committee**

ORIGIN

June 17, 2021 Motion of the Regional Council (13.1)

MOVED by Councillor Austin, seconded by Councillor Smith
THAT Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee request a staff report
regarding possible options and opportunities to create an HRM-wide Parks Advisory Committee.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

July 9, 2024 Motion of Regional Council (15.5.1)

MOVED by Councillor Mancini, seconded by Councillor Mason
THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to:

- ...
4. Prepare a staff report that includes terms of reference for a new Parks Advisory Committee and return to Council for consideration.

MOTION AS AMENDED PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Regional Council previously directed staff to explore the creation of a municipal-wide Parks Advisory Committee to enhance public engagement on matters related to parks and outdoor recreation. This direction emerged from a recognition that, while significant consultation occurs during the development of park plans, there are fewer opportunities for community input on other park-related changes and initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION ON PAGE 2

In July 2024, Regional Council reviewed the municipality's system of Agencies, Boards, and Committees (ABCs) and adopted a strategic direction to substantially reduce their number. The review concluded that many advisory committees, particularly those formed to represent community views or subject matter expertise, had become less essential due to improved staff expertise and modern engagement tools such as online consultations and direct outreach. Standing committees, including the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee (CPED), were affirmed as effective and efficient vehicles for public engagement and policy consideration.

Within this governance framework, CPED already fulfills the core functions of a parks advisory body. Its mandate includes community-building initiatives in recreation and culture, and it regularly receives presentations from community organizations and residents on parks and recreation topics. CPED can also initiate park-related discussions and make recommendations to Regional Council, supported by both formal and informal public engagement processes undertaken by municipal staff.

Given this structure, the creation of a separate Parks Advisory Committee would largely duplicate CPED's existing role and add administrative complexity without delivering substantial new public insight. Public engagement on parks is already robust, occurring through park planning processes, staff and councillor-led consultations, project-specific notifications, responses to 311 calls / inquiries, and emerging projects such as the new Parks Stewardship Program.

While a proposed Terms of Reference has been developed should Regional Council wish to proceed with a parks advisory committee, it is recommended that CPED continue to serve as the municipality's advisory body on parks and recreation matters. This approach aligns with Regional Council's recent direction to streamline advisory structures while maintaining meaningful opportunities for public input.

More broadly, the discussion surrounding a parks advisory body underscores Regional Council's identification of the community's strong interest in parks. The municipality would be well-served in encouraging the formation of civic stewardship and philanthropic groups with interests in parks. This may have greater merit than an advisory committee.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee (CPED) recommend to Halifax Regional Council that the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee continue to serve as the municipality's advisory body on parks and recreation matters.

BACKGROUND

On June 17, 2021, Regional Council requested a staff report on possible options and opportunities to create a municipal-wide parks advisory committee. This originated from a discussion and motion from the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee (CPED), which identified the merit of a municipal-wide parks advisory committee. It was identified that the committee could consider and advise on community initiatives and proposals, and other matters related to parks.

In 2023, Regional Council commenced a review of its system of agencies, boards, and committees (ABCs). This resulted in a staff report (May 24, 2024) that was considered by Regional Council on July 9, 2024. The staff report incorporated Regional Council's request to consider a parks advisory committee. The direction that was recommended within the May 24, 2024 staff report was to substantially reduce ABCs within the municipality.

Based on the direction outlined in the May 24, 2024 staff report, a parks advisory committee was not recommended.

Regional Council adopted most of the recommendations in the May 24, 2024 staff report, but not the

suggestion that a prospective parks advisory committee was not needed. During its discussion, Regional Council identified that there was gap in the ability for the public and organizations to engage with the municipality about parks and outdoor recreation facilities. It was also identified that while there is considerable community consultation in the preparation of park plans, there is more limited consultation over other changes impacting parks, to which a parks advisory committee could serve a role. Consequently, Regional Council directed that a staff report be prepared on the creation of a parks advisory committee, including a terms of reference. In its discussion, Regional Council identified that alternatives to a committee might be identified.

DISCUSSION

In evaluating the merits of a potential parks advisory committee, it is relevant to consider the evolving framework of ABC's within the municipality, the role and functions of standing committees in engaging with the public and organizations, and less formal ways the municipality is engaged with the public and organizations municipality on park matters.

Role of Agencies, Boards, and Committees / Commissions

The May 24, 2024 staff report before Regional Council on July 9, 2024 identified that in recent past years there had been steady growth in the number of ABCs within the municipality. It cited that ABCs have varied functions with focus and familiarity of a particular subject matter to represent communities, a committee of experts, or a committee with specialized knowledge or lived experience. It was identified that committees formed to represent communities were increasingly not as relevant as they might have been in the past due to advances in the ability to engage directly with the public and organizations through means such as on-line surveys or direct engagement. In addition, committees of experts were not as relevant due to the increased expertise of municipal staff in various subjects. Specialized committees of members with distinct knowledge or lived experiences, such as the Women and Gender Equity Advisory Committee, providing advice from distinct perspectives, were viewed as having ongoing value.

It was also identified that the significant number of ABCs and their reporting structure presented challenges in effective and timely decision-making. Subject to their terms-of-reference, certain matters would be referred to various ABCs, need to be deliberated upon before advice and recommendations would flow through to community councils or standing committees, and finally Regional Council, which was time consuming and required considerable supporting staff resources.

Based on these circumstances, decisions from Regional Council on July 9, 2024, started the process of dissolving many of the municipality's ABCs, particularly those that might have been formed to represent communities or present expertise in subject matters. Examples include planning advisory committees (which had already been suspended by province) and the Regional Watershed Advisory Board.

The formation of a prospective parks advisory committee, in being largely to represent and engage with community members and organizations, would be divergent to the direction taken by Regional Council on ABCs.

Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee (CPED)

While many ABCs have been eliminated, the municipality has an existing structure to consider community issues, opportunities, ideas, and proposals through its standing committees. The Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee (CPED)'s mandate from its Terms of Reference includes "Community building initiatives in the areas of arts, culture, recreation and heritage and related facility strategies." On this basis, CPED regularly considers park related matters including park plans and strategies and proposals from community members and organizations through formal presentations.

Over the past several years, CPED has regularly received presentations related to parks and outdoor (and indoor) recreation facilities from a diversity of organizations (Attachment A). CPED has discussed and

considered proposals, and where warranted, recommended to Regional Council that they be addressed through staff reports. There are few limitations over organizations wishing to make presentations to the committee. In addition, there are standing agenda opportunities for general public participation in which organizations or individuals may informally raise matters of interest.

Given its terms of reference and current practice, CPED essentially fills the role of the parks advisory committee that has been suggested at Regional Council. CPED also has the ability in itself raising park related matters of interest for reference to municipal staff or to Regional Council.

Other Public Engagement

Regional Council made note of the substantial formal public engagement that occurs in the development of park plans and strategies. These typically include multiple occasions for public input, on-line surveys, and in person meetings, along with stakeholder engagement. Park plans and strategies are regularly developed for parks or situations where a completely new park is being developed in an established community, or situations where there may be issues, tradeoffs, or other complexities. Park plans and strategies also help guide business and capital plans.

Other changes within parks may include replacements of outdoor recreation facilities or other projects that, while not being as involved as park plans or strategies, may have public interest. Depending on the circumstances, individual forms of public engagement may occur, such as the following:

- replacements, upgrades, or other changes to outdoor park facilities are discussed with each councillor on a regular basis each year, and as identified and warranted, may include public engagement;
- when such changes are occurring within parks they are identified on the municipality's website and with signs that include contact information within parks;
- municipal staff regularly meet with individuals and organizations such as resident groups, sport groups and leagues, and staff and school advisory committees of the Halifax Regional Centre for Education, to discuss park matters and projects;
- the municipality's website has portals for the public to identify both issues and ideas related to parks; and
- increasingly there are opportunities for public involvement within parks such as through the municipality's recent Parks Stewardship Program.

Other significant corporate initiatives, such as the Corporate Engagement Strategy provide additional means by which the municipality obtains public input that informs service delivery in areas including parks. Additionally, strategic documents such as the Corporate Strategic Plan have also been shaped by public input.

Potential Parks Advisory Committee

Regional Council's observations of the needs and possible functions for a potential Parks Advisory Committee is divergent from the direction Regional Council has taken with ABCs. The committee would be a duplication of the roles and responsibilities of CPED and it is unlikely to add considerable public insight over parks and outdoor recreation facilities, given the other forms of formal and informal public engagement are regularly undertaken by the municipality. On this basis, a Parks Advisory Committee is not recommended.

Should Regional Council continue to see merit in the Parks Advisory Committee, a prospective Terms of Reference for the committee has been prepared (Attachment B). It establishes that the committee would have duties to advise CPED or staff on the planning, development, and management of the Municipality's parks and outdoor recreation facility matters that are

- referred to the committee by Regional Council, CPED, or by municipal staff; or
- originate from presentations of proposals and matters of interest from the public and organizations.

Other proposed key aspects include:

- Administrative Order One, the *Procedures of Council Administrative Order*, which is the established the operating framework for Regional Council, Community Council, and other municipal committees would apply to the committee;
- CPED would nominate members for the committee to Regional Council for approval;
- the committee would be comprised of up to eight members including one member of Council and seven public members with varied backgrounds and interests to ensure that the committee as a whole has familiarity with different types of parks and outdoor recreation facilities;
- a minimum of six meetings per year are to be held;
- the committee is to be supported by municipal staff; and
- the committee is to submit and may be asked to present an annual report to Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee.

Most of the components for the proposed terms of reference are consistent with those that are found for other similar municipal committees. Once established, there are ongoing opportunities for Regional Council to amend the terms of reference to broaden or reduce its responsibilities.

Subsequent Reviews of ABCs

Outside this report, the municipality's continued review of ABCs, including those related to associated committees such as the Point Pleasant Advisory Committee, will be the subject of a separate staff report.

Conclusions

The proposed terms of reference for a parks advisory committee meets the intent expressed by Regional Council in establishing a distinct and specialized committee for the consideration of parks and outdoor recreation facilities with an emphasis on engagement with the public and organizations. However, such a committee would duplicate the functions of CPED and is not warranted based on the practice of formal and informal community engagement that is regularly undertaken by municipal staff to help inform program and service delivery decisions and advice to Regional Council.

The idea of a parks committee highlights the importance of parks and outdoor recreation facilities to Regional Council on behalf of the public. The municipality benefits from the public's direct involvement in its parks. Recent initiatives such as the Parks Stewardship Program are designed to foster public involvement in parks. Improving municipal parks to meet the public's interests is a growing challenge. The municipality would be well-served in encouraging the formation of civic stewardship and philanthropic groups with interests in parks. This may have greater merit than an advisory committee.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications to the recommendation not to establish a parks advisory committee. Should Regional decide to proceed with the formation of a parks advisory committee, there would be incremental operational costs which could include increased staff time; however, no new FTE would be required. These incremental costs would not be aligned with Regional Council's current municipal budget and financial directions.

RISK CONSIDERATION

No risk considerations are identified.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

ALTERNATIVES

That the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council:

1. adopt Administrative Order 2026-002-GOV, the *Parks Advisory Committee Administrative Order*, as set out in Attachment B to this report.
2. adopt Administrative Order 2026-002-GOV, the *Parks Advisory Committee Administrative Order*, as set out in Attachment B to this report, subject to modifications as identified by the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee. This may require a supplementary staff report.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, 2008 SNS c 39:

Section 20(1) The Council may make policies...(b) regulating its own proceedings and preserving order at meetings of the Council; (c) providing for committees and conferring powers and duties upon them, except the power to expend funds;...

Section 21(1) Council may establish standing, special and advisory committees.

Section 21(2) Each committee shall perform the duties conferred on it by this Act, and any other Act of the Legislature or the by-laws or policies of the Municipality.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A Presentations from Individuals and Groups on Parks and Outdoor Recreation Facilities to CPED, 2020-2025 (present)
- Attachment B Proposed Administrative Order 2026-002-GOV the Parks Advisory Committee Administrative Order

Report Prepared by: Richard Harvey, Manager, Policy and Planning, Parks & Recreation 902.476.5822

ATTACHMENT A**Presentations from Individuals and Groups on Parks and Outdoor Recreation Facilities to CPED, 2020-2025 (present)**

Date	Group / Organization / Topic
April 15 2021	Friends of Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes (BMBCL) overview of BMBCL
July 14 2021	Friends of Halifax Common proposal for Charter Provisions regarding management of the Halifax Common
November 18 2021	Residents of French Village regarding the French Village Seniors exercise Loop
April 21 2022	Permanent Accessible Dignified Safe Housing for All (PADS) regarding concerns with Bylaw P-600
June 16 2022	HRM Northern Suburban Area Community Turf Committee proposal for all-weather field at Lockview High School
November 17 2022	Public Gardens Foundation regarding construction of publicly accessible greenhouses for Halifax Public Gardens
January 19 2023	Alderney Landing, Halifax Port Authority, and Downtown Dartmouth Business Association regarding Dartmouth Waterfront Open Space Plan
January 19 2023	Halifax Rugby Football Club proposal for Gorsebrook Park
February 16 2023	Wanderers Lawn Bowls regarding Wanderers Block of Halifax Commons
April 20 2023	Backlands Coalition regarding parkland development
April 20 2023	Friends of the Halifax Common
September 14 2023	Sir Sanford Flemming Park Society regarding renovations of the Sir Sanford Flemming Cottage
September 14 2023	Halifax Wanderers Football Club proposal for Wanderers Grounds
January 18 2024	Save Centennial Pool Committee regarding continued use of site for aquatics
May 16 2024	Spryfield Lions Club regarding community space at Spryfield Arena
June 20 2024	Halifax Rugby Football Club regarding community engagement
July 18 2024	Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre regarding property acquisition in Sackville
April 17, 2025	Halifax West Mainland Common Park Trailhead Planning and Design Recommendations
August 21, 2025	Proposal for an Air-supported Dome for Tennis Courts at Gorsebrook Field
October 16, 2025	Soccer Nova Scotia Land Lease Expansion Proposal & Needs Assessment

**Administrative Order 2026-002-GOV
Respecting the Parks Advisory Committee Administrative Order**

BE IT RESOLVED AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER of the Council of the Halifax Regional Municipality under the authority of the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, 2008 SNS c 39*, as follows:

Short Title

1. This Administrative Order shall be known as the *Parks Advisory Committee Administrative Order*.

Interpretation

2. In this Administrative Order,

(a) “Committee” means the Parks Advisory Committee;

(b) “Council” means the Council of the Halifax Regional Municipality;

(c) “Municipality” means the Halifax Regional Municipality;

(d) “outdoor recreation facility” means any recreation facilities including courts, playgrounds, playing fields, splash pads, pathways, trails, drinking fountains, washrooms, pump tracks, skate parks, and off leash areas that are normally found within parks; and

(e) “park” means any land owned, leased, or controlled by the Municipality, designated or used as parkland or as a trail, including gardens, playgrounds, sports fields and beach areas, or as otherwise defined in *By-law P-600, the Municipal Parks By-law*.

Purpose

3. The purpose of this Administrative Order is to establish the terms of reference under which the Committee shall advise the Municipality on the planning, development, and management of the Municipality’s parks and outdoor recreational facilities.

Parks Advisory Committee

4. The Parks Advisory Committee is hereby established.

Objectives

5. As referred by Council, Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee or Municipal Staff, or in response to presentations of proposals or matters of interest related to parks and outdoor recreation facilities from the public and organizations, the Committee shall advise Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee or Municipal Staff on the planning, development, and management of parks and outdoor recreation facilities to contribute to the recreational health and well-being of the Municipality and its residents.

Duties of the Committee

6. The Committee shall advise the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee or Municipal Staff, on the planning, development, and management of parks and outdoor recreation facility matters that:

(a) are referred to the Committee by Council, Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee or Municipal Staff; or

- (b) originate from presentations of proposals and matters of interest from the public and organizations.

Administrative Order One

7. Except as provided in this Administrative Order, the provisions of Administrative Order One, the *Procedures of the Council Administrative Order*, shall apply to the Committee.

Public Appointment Policy

8. Except as provided in this Administrative Order, the provisions of the Public Appointment Policy shall apply to the Committee.

Membership

9. The nominating body for membership on the Committee shall be the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee, which shall make recommendations to Council.

10. The Committee shall be comprised of up to eight (8) members as follows:

- (a) one (1) member of Council; and
- (b) seven (7) public members with varied backgrounds and interests to ensure that the committee as a whole has familiarity with different types of parks and outdoor recreation facilities.

11. The Committee shall elect annually a Chair and Vice-Chair from among the non-Council members of the Committee.

Terms of Membership

12. Each member shall be appointed for a term of two years.

Reporting

13. The Committee shall submit a written report of activities annually to the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee.

14. The Chair, or their designate, may be requested to present the annual report to a meeting of the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee.

15. The Committee may make reports to the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee on the activities of the Committee as necessary, or as requested, together with such other presentations that the Committee may deem advisable.

Meetings

16. The Committee shall meet no less than six (6) times per year.

17. The Chair, in consultation with Municipal Staff as well as the Office of the Municipal Clerk, shall be responsible for calling all meetings of the Committee and for setting the agenda.

18. In the absence of the Chair or Vice-Chair, the members of the Committee may select a member to chair the meeting.

