

**REQUEST FOR DECISION 028-2017**

Title: Town Utilization of RCMP Space

Date: 2017-05-02

Department: Office of the CAO

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## **SUMMARY**

### **Town Utilization of RCMP Space**

Town staff are recommending that the space located at 363 Main Street, which is currently occupied by the RCMP, be utilized for Town purposes to accommodate the Community Development Department in the Town Hall building.

Staff would like to consult with the public, finalize what, if any immediate renovations or furniture is required, and bring a report back to Council in June for a decision.

#### **DRAFT MOTION:**

That Council authorize staff to proceed with the occupation of the RCMP space located at 363 Main Street.

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### 1) CAO COMMENTS

The CAO recommends that Council authorize staff to proceed with the occupation of the RCMP space located at 363 Main Street. Prior to a final decision being made, it is recommended that public consultation occur and that projected costs/building renovations be finalized.

### 2) LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Council has the authority, as per Section 65 of the Municipal Government Act, to expend money on 65(x) lands and buildings required for a municipal purpose; and 65(y) furnishing and equipping any municipal facility.

### 3) STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That Council authorize staff to proceed with the occupation of the RCMP space located at 363 Main Street.

### 4) REFERENCES AND ATTACHMENTS

- Municipal Facilities Condition Assessment – January 2016
- Statement of Roles and Responsibilities Document – May 2000

### 5) DISCUSSION

#### ***Current Situation – RCMP Space***

Currently, the RCMP space, which is approximately 1700 square feet, houses a detachment assistant, 2 constable positions for the Town of Wolfville and 5 traffic division members. Space for the constables and the detachment assistant has been provided by the Town at no cost to the RCMP since the RCMP began providing policing services to the Town in 2000 as part of the Statement of Roles and Responsibilities Document (it should be noted that this document was later replaced by the signing of the Provincial Policing Services Agreement in 2012. Space to accommodate the traffic division has been provided by the Town at no cost to the RCMP since 2014.

The RCMP are in the process of building a new Detachment in New Minas, which will house all members of the Kings East Detachment, less the two Wolfville constables and the Wolfville detachment assistant. It is planned that the traffic division will also be hosted at this new location. The estimated time frame for the new Detachment to be completed is the end of the 2018 calendar year.

The existing RCMP space in Wolfville was recently modernized by the Town in 2016. The Town renovated the reception area, converted an office to a boardroom, renovated the kitchen, replaced the flooring and painted the interior.

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---



### ***Current Situation – Town Hall and Public Works/Community Development Facility Space***

Currently Town staff are housed in two primary locations – Town Hall at 359 Main Street and the Public Works/Community Development Building at 200 Dykeland Street. The Town Hall location currently hosts the Mayor, CAO, Finance Department (4 employees), Corporate Services Department (2 employees plus a part-time IT consultant) and the Director of Public Works and the Public Works Administration Assistant.

The Dykeland location, which was built in 1991, currently hosts the Public Works and Parks Departments on the main level, along with the Community Development Department on the partial upper level. The Community Development Department currently has one Director and 8 full-time staff positions. As noted in the Municipal Facilities Condition Assessment (2016), there are several code and other factors that need to be addressed if the Town continues to utilize the building in its current capacity. Of particular note is that the building does not currently comply with the accessibility requirements of today's codes given the Community Development Department occupies the partial second level. The Town has budgeted \$200,000 in the 2018-19 capital budget to undertake the work required to achieve compliance.

### ***Why Are Staff Recommending The Utilization of the RCMP Space for Municipal Purposes?***

There are several reasons why staff are recommending the utilization of the existing RCMP space for municipal purposes:

- 1) It would be advantageous to have all office-type staff in one facility to improve inter-departmental communication and encourage efficiencies in the utilization of key staff, such as administrative assistants. For example, having all administrative assistants in one location allows for improved back-up and one-stop shopping for customers for all municipal needs. It also provides the Community Development Department with readily accessible meeting space;
- 2) The Community Development Department does not currently have a store front location in a visible area. Given the customer service focus that the areas of Planning, Development Control, Economic Development and Recreation have, locating these services at Town Hall make the staff more visible to the general public;
- 3) Moving the Community Development Department to the Town Hall facility will allow those services to be provided in an accessible manner and the capital upgrades currently in year 2 of the 10 Year Capital Plan would be saved (approximately \$200,000). This move will also help the Town comply with the proposed accessibility legislation that is currently being considered by the Province;
- 4) The RCMP will be re-locating traffic services once the New Minas Detachment is completed, and Wolfville will no longer have their presence, both in terms of members and policing vehicles.

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The two constables that report to the Wolfville Detachment are often on the road, leaving the Detachment Assistant as the sole employee working full-time out of the office. The loss of traffic services will result in the existing space being under-utilized;

- 5) There are also benefits to the RCMP in having all of their East Kings Detachment members reporting out of one office given the 2 Wolfville members are part of the broader District Policing model and all other members report out of New Minas. The Sergeant responsible for Kings East, which includes Wolfville, also currently reports out of New Minas;
- 6) As part of the provision of RCMP services to municipalities, the RCMP provides both the service and the office space. Since the Town has provided office space at no charge we are essentially paying twice in that regard;
- 7) The RCMP Offices recently underwent renovations that will suit Town purposes well. These renovations include a new boardroom and a more open office environment.

### ***What are the Potential Questions or Concerns with This Proposal?***

- 1) ***Will response times be impacted?*** The Town has been told that response times to calls and service levels for policing will not be impacted if the RCMP Wolfville members re-locate to New Minas. Once members start their shift they are primarily on the road throughout the Kings East District (unless they are catching up on paperwork), and respond to calls as they come in. Members currently do not sit in Wolfville waiting for calls.
- 2) ***Will Wolfville "lose" the RCMP presence?*** The traffic division brought not only members, but police cars to the Town of Wolfville. By the end of 2018, the traffic division, and their fleet, will be relocated to New Minas, which will result in an immediate visual impact in terms of the number of squad cars parked at the Wolfville Detachment. It is important to note that traffic services currently do not provide any policing services to the Town of Wolfville.

The two Wolfville constables will remain focused on the Town and will continue to provide policing services to the community. The key changes with the proposed move is the (1) all paperwork by members would be done out of the New Minas Detachment and (2) the Detachment Assistant would work out of New Minas. The RCMP would continue to provide operational planning and support for key weekends in Wolfville, and would continue to deliver on the Wolfville-specific deliverables identified in the Annual Performance Plan;

- 3) ***What Services are most impacted?*** By far the greatest driver for foot traffic into the Wolfville RCMP Detachment is for criminal records checks. If the Detachment is relocated to New Minas, residents could pick up the paperwork for criminal records checks at Town Hall but the paperwork would have to be returned to the New Minas Detachment.

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---



### ***What Would the Timing Be for This Move if Approved?***

In speaking with the RCMP, if notice was given in May/June 2017 that the Town wanted to occupy the space, the move could happen as early as August/September 2017. August would be ideal as there are no/limited Council and Committee meetings and tax/water bills are not due until later in the fall, resulting in limited foot traffic to the Town Hall Building.

## **6) FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The 2017-18 Operational Plan identifies the consideration of this move as an initiative, however there were no dollars allocated to facilitate this move. It is anticipated that the initial move will more than likely result in some costs being incurred. Initially, it would be ideal to (1) create an internal pathway between the Town Hall and RCMP space, (2) ensure that adequate dividers are in place to separate staff working in common areas, and (3) ensure that a board room table is located in the RCMP Space.

At this stage, staff are still determining the best way to achieve the internal connection and determine what, if any, RCMP furniture would remain if a move is approved. Once these details are known, a better financial plan can be developed on what would be required immediately. This information will be presented to Council in June once staff have finalized more details. Depending on the costs needed initially, funding may come from existing budget funding (eg. CAO/Corporate Services may have to dedicate their \$10,000 Contracted Service budget to this move).

Longer term, if Council deems the existing Town Hall space as suitable to meet our needs into the future, a plan for long-term renovations would be presented to Council and incorporated into the 10 Year Capital Plan.

As noted, this move will result in the second floor of the Public Works/Community Development Building being unoccupied for office use. The \$200,000 of accessibility upgrades that currently sits in 2018-19 in the Capital Plan will no longer be required for that purpose. They could be repurposed towards the renovation/set up costs that inevitably will be part of moving Town staff to the RCMP space.

## **7) REFERENCES TO COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN AND TOWN REPORTS**

This initiative supports Council's Strategic Goal of Maximizing Our Infrastructure Investments by creating efficiencies and utilization of Town-owned buildings.

## **8) COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS**

It will be crucial to communicate with the public that Council is considering this change. It is suggested that a public open house meeting be held in May to allow for information to be shared, questions to be

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asked and concerns/support for the proposal expressed. Additionally, staff would conduct a “pop up” exercise to get feedback. An FAQ on the proposal will also be developed with key information from this RFD, and circulated via social media, on the Town’s website and through other more traditional means, such as in the Grapevine. Members of the RCMP Advisory Board will also be encouraged to have discussions within their social networks and get feedback.

### 9) ALTERNATIVES

To not authorize staff to proceed with the occupation of the RCMP space located at 363 Main Street.