



Subject: *Seniors Programs & Services*
To: Parks, Recreation & Culture Committee
Date Prepared: October 6, 2023
Related Motions: C23(188), C23(295)
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Summary

The Senior Safety Program Association of Hants County (Hants Senior Safety) sent notice to Council that they would no longer be operating in East Hants, and withdrew from the Community Partnership Fund program. Council has directed staff via Motion C23(188) to prepare a report with options for Senior Safety activity in East Hants including potential human resource needs. The following report summarizes current senior services and partners along with options for enhanced services that could be provided by the Municipality.

Financial Impact Statement

Hants Senior Safety has been receiving Community Partnership Fund money annually for eight years, \$20,000 for the last six years. In 2023/2024 the amount approved for their grant was \$10,000, but was not released prior to the group's disbanding. Further, upon dissolution the group returned funds to the Municipality in the amount of \$46,874.26. These funds have been credited to General Government Grant Reserve, as per motion C23(295). These funds could be used to support staffing and programming in the 2024/2025 budget.

Recommendation

Following review and research, there is a need for more senior specific services in East Hants. It is recommended that enhanced senior specific recreation programming and services related to senior safety be prioritized in the 2024/2025 budget.

Recommended Motion

Move that Parks, Recreation and Culture Committee recommend to Council:

*That Council support enhancing recreation programming that targets the senior population;
And, that staff draft 2024/2025 budget with resources to support senior safety specific services for East Hants;
And, that Council use the funds raised and set aside in General Government grants, specifically levied for senior safety, to fund these recreation and safety services.*

Background

Senior Safety Program Association of Hants County

- Hants Senior Safety revitalized in 2014/2015, providing programs that support the well-being, independence and health and safety of seniors.
- Hants Senior Safety dealt with issues like isolation, safety, abuse, continuing care, health care support, transportation, caregiver information/support, direction to find legal advice, housing, unsafe living conditions, help with heating rebates, fraud, mobility, information on food banks and community

gardens, grants available, hoarding, financial difficulties, depression, snow removal and healthcare (lack of family doctor).

- Programs included learning opportunities to increase awareness about health issues, personal safety and home security as well as social/recreation opportunities.
- Annual operating funding came from East Hants, West Hants and Senior Safety Program grant funding through the Province. Their annual operating budget in recent years was approximately \$60,000.(

Senior Programming & Services in East Hants

The Municipality offers a variety of programs for seniors through Recreations and Aquatics:

- Monthly Senior Socials
- Aquatic Fitness Programs
- Lane /exercise lane swims
- Drop-in programming - Pickleball, Badminton, Crochet

Throughout East Hants there are many other organizations with opportunities and services that seniors can access, such as:

- Senior Games (with Parks, Recreation and Culture support)
- CCOA is starting to offer opportunities (activities, provide cleaning services)
- Various senior socials (Enfield Legion, Noel New Horizons, Rawdon Gold Mines, Libraries)
- Walk and roll (NSHA Seniors Clinic)
- Various card activities and games at the Legions
- Community Learning Association: community garden, various workshops (e.g. fly-tying)
- VON (Day programs, meals on wheels, various health clinics in home)
- East Hants Crime Prevention: senior safety programming (Police Academy, fall & fraud prevention)
- Community Rider
- Library programming

Many of these organizations also receive support from the Municipality through grant funding programs and community development services.

East Hants also has several assets and built environment that supports seniors being active:

- Paved pathway & fishing pads at Shubie River Park
- Trail around ball field at Findley Park with benches
- East Hants Sportsplex Walking Track
- Sidewalks and Active Transportation routes
- Aquatic Centre

Discussion

Council has directed staff to increase senior safety services and programs in East Hants. It is important to look at the different types of services that may be required.

There is a need to support seniors, a rapidly growing and changing population. As listed above in the background, there are a variety of programs and services offered by a variety of providers, including the Municipality. There will be a gap left behind with the dissolution of Hants Senior Safety, particularly in the areas of safety, health and wellness. Hants Senior Safety often played the role of navigator for seniors and/or the family supports. While there are many organizations that can and do provide senior specific and/or senior friendly services, there are limited options for support when it comes to navigating the existing supports that many people require as they age.

As identified above, there are a variety of ways that the Municipality supports seniors through recreation and the built environment. There may be an opportunity to increase senior recreation programming in alignment with the Mount Uniacke Recreation Strategy's recommendations in regard to human resources, specifically increased recreation staff.

Any senior safety specific position that is not directly related to senior recreation programming could be explored and brought back as part of budget discussions.

The Provincial government supports seniors through Seniors' Safety Program. This funding program supports senior safety organizations like Hants Senior Safety with annual operating grants, specifically:

A Seniors' Safety Program is a community-based program that's operated and managed by a municipality or a non-profit organization. Programs support community's response to addressing senior's safety concerns and reduce incidences of elder abuse and neglect by:

- *promoting education and awareness about senior abuse, crime prevention and safety and health issues*
- *improving communication between seniors and the police*
- *providing information, educational sessions and referral services to seniors*
- *offering direct contact with seniors through the seniors' safety coordinator*

The seniors' safety coordinator works in close partnership with local police agencies and a large network of local, municipal and provincial partnering agencies. Typically, services are offered to seniors throughout a county, in their own homes and at other locations within the community.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

From Council's 2021 Strategic Plan, the key strategy of Strong Community:

A strong community is where people feel a sense of pride, are safe, connected and active. This is achieved through long-range community planning and by supporting those who live, work and visit in East Hants. Our goal is to provide services, programs and facilities, through direct service delivery and collaboration with others, that allow people and businesses to thrive.

Senior services have a clear connection to a Strong Community and our Vision as a vibrant, welcoming community that embraces rural and urban living - a place where everyone feels connected.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

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There are many sources of funding for senior specific initiatives. In addition to the Senior Safety Program funding, there is an annual Provincial application for the Age-Friendly Community Grant, and there is Federal funding in the form of the New Horizons for Seniors Program. Community Links has launched a new micro-grant for seniors' programs/supports this fall, and other opportunities are expected in the coming the year.

Alternatives

Council may give alternate direction to staff.