

REQUEST FOR DECISION 028-2017

Title: Town Utilization of RCMP Space
Date: 2017-05-02 Updated 2019-09-20
Department: Office of the CAO



SUMMARY

Town Utilization of RCMP Space

Update: September 2019

This is the original RFD that was prepared on this topic in 2017. We have updated this RFD instead of drafting a new one so that Council and the public can see what was originally proposed, the FAQ's at the time, and the rationale for staff bringing this forward for direction. Any text in black is from the original RFD.

Since this RFD was drafted the following has occurred -

In June 2017 a public information session on this issue, along with policing in general in Wolfville, was held. The notes from this meeting have been attached. Subsequent to this meeting, Council decided not to proceed with utilizing the RCMP Space for Town purposes in the fall of 2017.

In the winter of 2019, Council decided to revisit this issue as during the budget process it was identified that the proposed upgrades to the Public Works and Community Development Building were going to be more costly than originally forecasted. To summarize these discussions:

- November 6, 2018 COW Meeting – Public Works and Community Development Building renovations were introduced to Council during the preliminary Capital Budget discussion. It was noted \$300,000 was placed in the capital budget for this project but that the estimate was soft.*
- December 4, 2018 COW Meeting – A Councillor noted that the issue of using the RCMP space for town purposes should be revisited given the fact that \$300,000, which was a soft estimate, was a significant investment for the Public Works and Community Development Building.*
- January 8, 2019 Special COW Meeting – It was noted that more information would come back to COW in February on the Public Works and Community Development Building Upgrades and the potential use of the RCMP Space.*
- February 5, 2019 COW Meeting - The Director of Finance confirmed that the most recent estimate of the Public Works and Community Development Building was approximately \$500,000. Council provided direction for staff to move forward in looking into the RCMP space for Town use. As a result, utilizing the RCMP space was incorporated into the 2019-20 Capital Budget at a value of \$50,000 to accommodate small modifications for town staff office use and \$200,000 was placed in the budget to do improvements to the Public Works and Community Development Building for code upgrades. Under this scenario, office space upgrades would not have to be made to the Public Works and Community Development Building.*
- March 19, 2019 – Council approved the Capital Budget with \$200,000 for upgrades to the Public Works and Community Development Building and \$50,000 for renovations to the RCMP Building.*

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Staff noted that during budget consultations, including at the budget Open House, several concerns were raised by citizens regarding the RCMP being asked to relocate to New Minas if the Town was to utilize the RCMP Building. As a result of this feedback, Council decided to leave the budgeted items for both the RCMP and the Public Works and Community Development Buildings in the 2019-20 Capital Budget but directed staff to do more consultation on the issue before proceeding with any move or renovations.

At the June 4, 2019 COW Meeting the CAO requested a reaffirmation that Council wanted to proceed with pursuing the use of the RCMP Space for Town purposes before any consultation efforts were undertaken. It was noted that if the RCMP space is not to be utilized that staff would come back with a report to Council to deal with the anticipated overages in the capital budget that would result in doing full renovations at the Public Works and Community Development Building. After some discussion, direction was provided to the CAO to not move forward with pursuing the RCMP space.

On September 3 2019 staff brought forward an RFD to Committee of the Whole seeking approval to move forward with the proposed upgrades to the Public Works and Community Development Building. In this RFD, an additional \$250,000 was requested from Council to complete this work, which would include required code upgrades, accessibility improvements and the provision of additional office space for staff. Due to the fact that the total cost of this project estimate remains at \$500,000, Council asked staff to go back and revisit the usage of the RCMP space and seek additional consultation from the public.

The public is being encouraged to provide feedback to the CAO in writing or to attend a public meeting on this topic on October 15th from 5:30 – 6:30 pm at Town Hall.

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 office 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
- *Public Meeting Notes – June 2017*
- *RFD 053-2019 – Community Development and Public Works Facility Upgrade*

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. *In the spring of 2019, the traffic division was relocated to the New Minas detachment.*

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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.

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. *Please refer to RFD 053-2019 for more updated information on the proposed renovations and costs for the Public Works and Community Development Building.*

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

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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. 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,

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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.

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. *The timing for this would likely be in early 2020 if approved.*

6) FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is anticipated that \$50,000 will be required to make small modifications to the existing RCMP space to make it suitable for staff. Refer to RFD 053-2019 for more information on required costs and upgrades to the Public Works and Community Development Building. Should the RCMP building be utilized for town staff a reduction in cost for the creation of offices and accessibility improvements will be realized for the Public Works and Community Development renovation.

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

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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

We will be asking for feedback on our website and social media on this issue and will be holding a public meeting on October 15th from 5:30-6:30 pm.

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 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.