# REVISED March 15, 2024 Revised Recommendation



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Item 13.2.1

Audit & Finance Standing Committee March 20, 2024

TO:	Chair and Members of Audit & Finance Standing Committee
SUBMITTED BY:	-ORIGINAL SIGNED-
	Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer
DATE:	March 07, 2024
SUBJECT:	Council Chamber Hybrid Meeting Technology Funding Request

## **ORIGIN**

This report originates from a need to increase the funding available for the purchase of Council Chamber Hybrid Meeting Technology.

# **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Halifax Regional Municipality Council approved, Dec 11, 2012, that all budget increases are to be presented to the Audit and Finance Standing Committee, prior to submission to Council.

Halifax Charter, section 93(1) - The Council shall make estimates of the sums that are required by the Municipality for the fiscal year; Halifax Charter, section 79 - The Municipality may spend money for municipal purposes in accordance with this section; Halifax Charter, section 35(2)(d)(i) - The CAO can only authorize budgeted expenditures or within the amount determined by Council by policy; Halifax Charter, section 120(6) - The Municipality may maintain other reserve funds for such purposes as the Council may determine; Halifax Regional Municipality policy on Changes to Cost Sharing for Capital Projects - Changes requiring Council approval; and the Halifax Regional Municipality Reserve Policy - No reserve funds will be expended without the CAO's recommendation and Council approval.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Audit and Finance Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council approve the transfer of \$155,000 from capital project Cl000021 - Public WiFi to capital project Cl240006 - Council Chamber Technology Refresh.

### **BACKGROUND**

The existing technology solution in the Council Chamber was installed in early 2019 as the previous technology was at end of life and to introduce improvements such as: graphics, speaker list for amendments, and automation. Audio/Video (AV) technology typically has a lifespan of 5 years so therefore

a full refresh is planned to be completed in 2024 to upgrade and to keep the existing maintenance agreement with our support vendor.

The current system was designed to enable Councillors and the public to participate in meetings exclusively in-person. To enable a Council Chamber *Hybrid* solution, some changes in technology are required.

During the March 7, 2023 Regional Council meeting, staff were directed to assess technology options to enable hybrid participation by Council members, and ensure there is no degradation in the current functionalities and capabilities for those participating in meetings from within the Chamber or remotely.

# **DISCUSSION**

On February 6, 2024, Regional Council voted in favour of migrating the current system to a hybrid system for a cost of \$654,540. To proceed with hybrid participation for members of Regional Council in Council Chambers an additional capital investment is required.

To perform the planned refresh in current Council Chambers technology, \$500,000 capital budget has been approved. However, an additional \$155,000 capital budget is required to move to a hybrid design. On February 6, 2024, Regional Council directed staff to obtain this additional funding from an alternate source. The alternate source chosen is from the Public Wi-Fi expansion capital account Cl000021. No additional locations to expand Public Wi-Fi have been identified and usage from existing installations has been lower than originally anticipated negating any need for additions or enhancements to the existing service.

# FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Estimated total project capital cost for Council Chamber Hybrid solution, which includes a replacement of the existing Audio/Visual hardware and implementation of new software with Hybrid capabilities is \$654,540.

There is \$500,000 in the Capital Budget under approved Capital Project Cl240006, with the remaining \$155,000 funding to be reallocated from capital project Cl000021 – Public Wi-Fi Expansion.

# **Capital Budget Summary:**

### **Project Account No. CI240006**

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Approved 2024/25 Budget	\$ 500,000
Plus: transfer from CI000021	<b>\$ 154,540</b>
Balance	\$ 654,540

# **Project Account No. Cl000021**

Cumulative Uncommitted Budget	\$ 222,060
Less: transfer to CI240006	( <u>\$ 154,540)</u>
Balance	\$ 67,520

### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations in this Report.

# **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

No environmental implications associated with the recommendations in this Report have been identified.

# **ALTERNATIVES**

Audit and Finance Standing Committee could choose not to allow the transfer of capital, resulting in insufficient funding to enable hybrid functionality within Council Chambers.

# **ATTACHMENTS**

None