



WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY REPORT

Information ☐	Recommendation X	Decision Request ☐	Councillor Activity ☐
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To: Mayor Zebian and Members of Council

Submitted by: Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk

Date: November 25, 2025

Subject: Review of the Draft Noise By-law Through a DEI Lens

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Nova Scotia Municipal Government Act, Standing, special and advisory committees, Section 24 (1) The council may establish standing, special and advisory committees. (2) Each committee shall perform the duties conferred on it by this Act, any other Act of the Legislature or the by-laws or policies of the municipality.

RECOMMENDATION or DECISION REQUEST

THE DIVERSE, EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS COUNCIL PAUSE THE PEACE AND GOOD ORDER BY-LAW RCOPG-001 PUBLIC HEARING TO ALLOW APPROPRIATE REVIEW WITH THE DIVERSE, EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

BACKGROUND

Property ✓	Public Opinion ✓	Environment ✓	Social ✓	Economic ✓	Councillor Activity ☐
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The purpose of this report is to summarize the Committee's preliminary review and discussion of the draft Noise By-law, with specific attention to potential impacts on marginalized populations and alignment with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principles. As the draft By-law has not yet been formalized, this report reflects only the Committee's discussion and observations based on the version provided for review.

Over the course of the last few meetings this topic has been an agenda item and discussed in length. The Committee has expressed concern that several provisions within the draft may disproportionately affect marginalized individuals, including those experiencing homelessness and individuals living with mental illness and requested a copy of the updated draft for detailed review through a DEI lens.

DISCUSSION

The Committee expressed significant concerns that the draft By-law, as currently written, may not adequately account for the needs and circumstances of marginalized individuals.

Several key themes arose from these discussions:

Potential Disproportionate Impacts

There is apprehension that the By-law could be applied in a manner that disproportionately targets people experiencing homelessness or mental health challenges. These individuals may unintentionally violate provisions due to circumstances beyond their control and may lack the financial means to pay associated fines. The Committee also noted the potential for Charter challenges if the By-law is not carefully worded to avoid infringing upon individual rights.

Need for Community and Stakeholder Consultation

Members emphasized the importance of consulting with community organizations and service providers who work directly with affected populations. Such consultation would help ensure the By-law is informed from diverse perspectives and does not inadvertently create or perpetuate inequities. The Committee recommended that staff actively engage these groups during the re-drafting process.

Clarity of Definitions and Wording

Several sections of the draft were noted to be vague or overly broad. Members recommended that the language be tightened to ensure clear interpretation and consistent enforcement. A particular point of discussion related to the need to distinguish between:

- General foul language (e.g., profanity), and
- Harmful or discriminatory language (e.g., slurs or hate-based expressions).

The Committee recommended expanding the definition section to capture these distinctions more precisely. Members also suggested including a preamble outlining the purpose and intent of the By-law, which would strengthen clarity and guide enforcement practices.

Intent and Enforcement

The Committee emphasized that the intent of the By-law should be to support the Municipality's commitment to fostering a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all residents. Enforcement should be discretionary and proportionate, with officers applying judgment based on the specific context of each situation.

At the meeting held on November 10, 2025, the Committee revisited these concerns and expressed frustration and disappointment regarding the continued lack of consultation in the development of the proposed By-law. A substantial discussion occurred, mirroring concerns raised at the August meeting and members reiterated that the proposed measures, as drafted, risk further marginalizing vulnerable populations rather than supporting them.

Following extensive discussion, the Committee reached consensus to recommend, through a formal excerpt, that Council postpone the Public Hearing until February 2026. This postponement would provide sufficient time for the Committee to conduct a thorough review of the current draft and prepare proposed amendments for Council's consideration.

NEXT STEPS

Should Council support the recommendation, the Diverse, Equitable and Inclusive Communities Committee will review the draft by-law in detail at the next meeting and share a completed review and amended document to Council for consideration.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this recommendation, as any costs associated with advertising are already incorporated into the approved 2025/26 WHRM Operational budget.

ALTERNATIVES

Option 1 – Provide additional direction to staff.

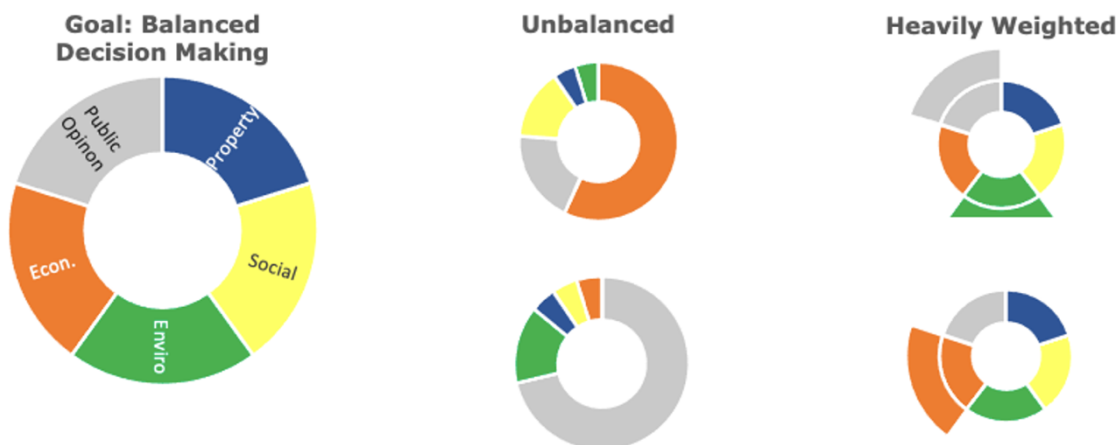
ATTACHMENTS

<https://www.westhants.ca/diverse-and-inclusive-communities-committee.html>

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER REVIEW

I support the recommendation as requested by the DEICC.

Council has been provided with a reference taken from the Meeting and Committee Procedural Policy , Appendix C “Decision Making by Council and Committee of the Whole” as a reminder of the principles highlighted for good decision making.



Report Prepared by: _____
Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk

Report Reviewed by: _____
Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk

Report Approved by:  _____
Mark Phillips, Chief Administrative Officer