



City contractors have already widened the path headed to Dartmouth South Academy and installed a culvert over what was a muddy ditch. (Photo: M. Townsend)

Esson Road beautification project gets funding boost, city involvement

By Lynnette Alford
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Work on the Esson Road beautification project has taken off quickly, thanks to surprise funding from Halifax Regional Municipality District 3 Councillor Becky Kent.

Area residents had planned to use their shovels and elbow grease to kick off the project, a community-led initiative aimed at improving the pedestrian paths connecting Esson Road to Dartmouth South Academy and Research Drive. Instead, the site received a “scrub off” organized by HRM Parks & Recreation staff and carried out by contractors, according to Kent, clearing overgrown brush and exposing the full extent of the parcel that community members hope to revitalize.

Kent told the *Post* that her district discretionary capital funds supported this new phase of the project, with a cost of just over \$10,000. The project began with a \$1,500 grant through Halifax’s Neighbourhood Placemaking Program, which will fund the purchase of plants to improve the space.

The Placemaking Program aims to bring community interest and energy together to offer modest but meaningful changes to any part of the city, while fostering greater connections between neighbours. The additional funding from District 3 Capital Funds has allowed for more dramatic enhancement.

Kent said HRM Parks staff stepped up very quickly to support the community. In fact, city contractors began work about a week after the councillor allocated funding. The site now has a more formalized – and safer – gravel pathway up to the field, with a new culvert over a frequently flooded ditch.

Additionally, this new work included removal of invasive roses from along the fence line, mowing down the area, and cutting any trees growing in the ditch.

Christian Ensslin, local resident and participant in the Neighbourhood Placemaking Program, said Kent’s help was unexpected.

“There’s a lot of thanks toward Becky’s initiative, and Becky’s involvement here,” Ensslin told the *Post*. “Without that we would just be literally digging weeds by hand.” □

Surprise sale of Pleasant Street development sends would-be tenants into housing hunt

By Lynnette Alford
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The recent sale of a newly constructed apartment building on Pleasant Street to the Department of National Defence (DND) has left some prospective renters scrambling to find housing, after they say they had already paid deposits and were expecting to move in soon.

The building at 171 Pleasant Street in Dartmouth was purchased earlier this year as part of a wider wave of federal defence investment flowing into Nova Scotia. The building sold on March 25 for \$59.5 million, according to ViewPoint property records. The same records show the property — the site of a former Salvation Army building — sold for \$400,000 in 2017 and for around \$5.8 million in 2021. Clearing of the property and construction of the new building began soon after.

For Kendra Gannon, one of the prospective tenants who paid a deposit to secure a unit in the building, the news came as a surprise.

“I was shocked and I was very upset and overwhelmed,” Gannon told the *Post*.

Gannon and her boyfriend had been searching for an apartment in Dartmouth earlier this year when they came across the new development. She said the building stood out because the units appeared more affordable than many currently available in the HRM rental market.

“It was a pretty good deal for a newer apartment being leased,” she said. “Their rents were pretty on the lower end of the market.”

After contacting J2K Properties, the leasing agent, Kendra said she was sent floor plans, pricing information and details about the building’s amenities. She later paid a deposit of \$937.50 to secure a unit, with the understanding that tenants would sign leases after construction had progressed enough

for in-person tours.

“It seemed pretty sure,” Gannon said. “They had an actual person who was the manager who you would talk to.”

“I know a couple people who live on J2K properties [. . .] and they only had good things to say.”

Gannon said communication slowed after the deposit was paid. Then, in March, instead of receiving information about move-in dates, Gannon received an email informing her the building had been sold.

The email, Gannon said, asked prospective tenants to confirm they understood they no longer had a lease. Deposits would be refunded along with an additional \$500 payment.

“I was shocked and I was very upset and overwhelmed.”

—Kendra Gannon

“There really wasn’t that much time,” she said.

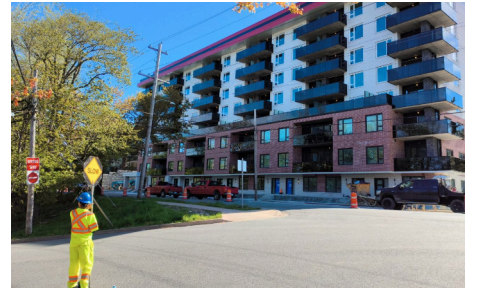
Gannon explained that the timing created immediate pressure to secure another apartment before their expected May 1 move. She and her boyfriend did find another apartment in Dartmouth, but at a significantly higher cost.

“We would have been paying \$1,900 at [171 Pleasant Street], and we’re now paying \$2,500,” she said.

She said the extra payment did little to offset the stress and cost of suddenly re-entering Halifax’s competitive rental market.

“And \$500, sure okay great, but like in the grand scheme of things that doesn’t do much,” Gannon said. “It’s literally a quarter of what the rent is.”

Gannon said her larger concern is for other prospective tenants



A worker directs traffic on May 21 outside of 171 Pleasant Street, Dartmouth. (Photo: M. Townsend)

who may have had more urgent housing situations.

“There’s probably people who are worse off,” she said.

Similar accounts have also surfaced in comments posted to the Pleasant-Woodside Neighbourhood Association Facebook group, and Halifax Reddit page, where multiple users describe paying deposits for units in the building before being told the property had been sold.

In a statement to the *Post*, J2K Properties confirmed the building was purchased by DND for military housing, but said it could not disclose details about the sale.

The company said the transaction happened “very quickly,” and that leasing activity stopped immediately once the deal was finalized.

“Southdale is a beautiful neighbourhood community, and we were very much looking forward to being part of the residential landscape in that area,” the statement said.

DND declined an interview request, saying they were unavailable to comment at this time.

The purchase comes amid a broader federal push to expand military infrastructure and operations in Nova Scotia. In March, Prime Minister Mark Carney visited Halifax to announce more than \$3 billion in new defence-related spending across Atlantic Canada.

Gannon, whose mother works for DND, said she understands the need for additional military housing in Halifax, but hopes future housing transitions are handled with more clarity for prospective renters. □

Police investigate possible arson in Pleasant St. fire

By Amy Ward
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Halifax Regional Police (HRP) are investigating February’s Pleasant Street fire as possible arson — but the results of the fire investigation by Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency (HRFE) don’t shed much light as to why.

The fire at 205 Pleasant Street broke out around 7:30 p.m. on February 7 at the former Sobeys building. It burned well into the night and brought dozens of firefighters to the scene.

“The investigation is ongoing,” Cst. Martin Cromwell, public information officer with HRP, told the *Post*. He was unable to provide any further details at this time.

The police investigation into possible arson is distinct from the investigation launched by HRFE,

which considers more scientific details like the fire’s point of origin, igniting objects, and fuels involved.

HRFE has now closed that investigation.

HRFE Assistant Chief Sherri Dean told the *Post* that the cause of the fire is listed as undetermined. Dean said the undetermined cause is the result of their investigation, and that this classification is used when there is no way for HRFE to determine the cause of the fire.

The HRFE investigation findings are available in an online database that lists arson as a possible cause. Since 2019, less than 5% of fires in the public database attribute a fire’s cause to possible arson.

Dean said that arson is listed in cases where there is some reason to suspect arson, such as a witness account or some other detail on the scene. She said this does not im-

pact how the fire investigation is conducted. It is under police jurisdiction to investigate whether arson has occurred.

“The police may come back later, or be on it now,” Dean said about the arson note in the database. HRFE may help the police with an arson investigation, but such an inquiry is outside the scope of HRFE.

Dean could not provide further details about this specific case.

Based on the online database, the Pleasant Street fire likely originated in product or material storage with trash as the first material to be ignited.

The Pleasant-Woodside neighbourhood has seen three fires since February, including the incident on Pleasant Street. The other two fires, both residential, do not list arson as a possible cause in the database. □

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Topher Kingsley-Williams poses in one of the Templar Marine vessels. (Photo: @flyteboat/Insta.)

All-electric water taxi service launches in Dartmouth's COVE

By Lynnette Alford
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Dartmouthians could soon be commuting to downtown Halifax, taking their dog across the harbour for coffee, or catching a ride home from a Mooseheads game – all on an electric boat that will dock at the COVE facility.

That's the idea behind FlyteBoat, a new all-electric water taxi service founded by Topher Kingsley-Williams and Chris Watters. Slated for launch in late May, the company hopes to make Halifax Harbour feel less like a dividing line between communities, and more like an everyday transportation route.

"We kind of saw a gap in the Halifax-Dartmouth area market for alternative routes and what the ferries run," Watters told the *Post*. "And a lot of other harbours have water taxis."

The idea started after Kingsley-Williams and his father purchased B.C.-based electric boat builder Templar Marine last year and moved operations to Nova Scotia. Watters, a former Sail Canada coach of the year, said he became involved after spotting one of the boats at the yacht club last fall.

"I went and chatted with him about it," he said. "And I said, well, what's your plans for these boats?"

What followed was a winter spent building the business from scratch – acquiring another vessel, completing training courses, hiring staff, and planning routes around the harbour.

The company's fleet includes three fully electric Templar boats, each capable of ferrying between eight to 12 passengers. Designed for more than just a sunny day of sightseeing, the boats are enclosed, heated, and protected from the weather.

Morning service will focus on commuters travelling between areas

like King's Wharf and downtown Halifax near Pier 21, while afternoons and evenings will shift toward more on-demand transportation. This will include trips to George's Island, McNabs Island, Fisherman's Cove, and private bookings.

The company sees Dartmouth as central to its long-term plans. Watters said the COVE facilities offered both the infrastructure needed for electric boats and a community already connected to marine innovation.

"We see the COVE as kind of the leaders in the marine industry for the area," Watters said. "So we wanted to position ourselves with other like-minded individuals who are working with boats."

The electric boats are also key to the company's business model. Watters said operating fuel-powered boats all day can become expensive quickly.

"If the boat's going to be moving for eight, nine hours a day, it's a significant cost in gas and fuel," he said. "So the electric was a really good answer to that."

The founders hope the lower operating costs will help make the service affordable enough for everyday use.

FlyteBoat's first public launch was scheduled for May 30, though the boats began operation earlier in the month as the transportation sponsor for the Optimist North American Championship at the Royal Nova Scotia Yacht Squadron.

For Watters, the launch is about more than simply introducing another way to cross the harbour, it's about encouraging more movement between both sides of the harbour.

"You look at the Halifax waterfront and it'd be fairly congested at times," he said. "But when you get to the Dartmouth side, it's quieter."

"We're really looking to open up communities on the waterfront." □

Four paid journalists join the Post

By Matthew Townsend

Four freelance journalists are now paid to write for *The South Dartmouth Post*, thanks to funding from the Local Journalism Initiative (LJI). Their stories, written about and for Dartmouth, will appear in print and online at southdartmouth.ca.

Two of the new freelancers are experienced journalists with strong connections to Dartmouth: Jeremy Hull and Katy Jean.

Jeremy is a Halifax-based journalist whose work has appeared in *The Narwhal* and the *National Observer*. He is currently on assignment with *Canadian Geographic*. A graduate of the Master of Journalism program at the University of King's College, he is a recipient of an RTDNA Award and a 2026 Atlantic Journalism Awards finalist. He brings community and national reporting experience to the *Post*. Jeremy covers conservation, defence, and culture for publications across the country. He has family in Dartmouth and has lived here. In his spare time, Jeremy writes fiction, trains jiu-jitsu, makes movies, and fly-fishes.



Bringing experience from *The Chronicle Herald* and the *Dartmouth Wire*, Katy is a historian, storyteller, taphophile, and paranormal investigator from Dartmouth. As a historian, Katy knows the importance of writing down and telling stories from the community. As a storyteller, she likes to find the histories that need to be told anew. When Katy isn't wandering around cemeteries or searching for information, you can find her with her little boy, Vincent.



Jeremy will be reporting for the *Post* a few times each week; readers can anticipate seeing Katy's articles once or twice a month. They are expected to remain with the *Post* until at least March 2027, when the current LJI grant cycle ends.

In addition, two student journalists will be paid to write for the *Post* this summer: Lynnette Alford and Amy Ward.

Lynnette is a journalism student at the University of King's College. Originally from British Columbia and now living in Halifax, she fell in love with the East Coast's ocean air, coastal landscapes, and strong sense of community. The *Post* is her first official reporting role and her internship placement for King's. She hopes to build a career telling stories that make people feel more connected to the places and people around them.



Already known to *Post* readers, Amy is a student at NSCC in the Radio, Television, Journalism program, right here in Pleasant-Woodside. Previously, Amy studied philosophy, particularly the work of Iris Murdoch and concepts of moral attention. She hopes to help people understand complex ideas and stories through her writing. A resident of Dartmouth, Amy is currently completing an internship with the CBC and is writing for the *Post* as a student journalist.



The \$31,400, one-year LJI grant was awarded to the Pleasant-Woodside Neighbourhood Association (PWNA) as the *Post*'s publisher. Though the *Post* now has paid writers, it will continue to depend upon volunteers for stories, art, and ideas as the publication continues to grow. However, a small portion of the grant has been earmarked to compensate local, non-professional writers who develop stories of public interest within the next year.

"We're so pleased to welcome these talented new faces to our scrappy little team," said Brian Foster, PWNA board member who serves as publisher of the *Post*. "We think that local news and stories are an important part of what make our community feel like a community." □

Exhibit highlights 200 years of local art

By Christian Ensslin

A new exhibition has opened at Dartmouth's Evergreen House, showing 200 years of local artwork that celebrates places, histories, families, and traditions connected to the community of Dartmouth.

Named the D(art)mouth Museum Gallery, the exhibition is a mix of local paintings, basket-making craft, and needlework, some of which has never been shown pub-



Amanda Furniss (Photo: C. Ensslin)

licly before, drawn from the collection of the Dartmouth Heritage Museum.

Among the paintings shown in the exhibition are works by famous Dartmouth artist Tom Forrestall,

botanical drawings by Halifax artist Maria Morris, and paintings by Margaret van Gorp. "The overall idea of the exhibition is that local art fosters community and creates connection across generations," Museum Director Amanda Furniss told the *Post*, adding that there are a lot of stories connected to the works.

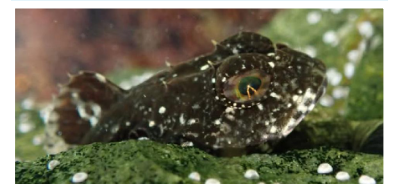
Furniss draws particular inspiration from a doll, a tea set, and a photograph, all of which entered the museum collection only last year. The doll was handmade approximately 100 years ago, and the photograph bears witness to the girl it was made for playing with the doll and the tea set in her garden. "The doll is beautifully made and such a lovely example of textile craftsmanship that has been done locally," Furniss explained, adding that the work shows how craft and art connect with tradition, family, and community.

The exhibition is open to the public at Evergreen House, 26 Newcastle Street. There is no entry fee to the museum. □

Dive into More Local Journalism at SouthDartmouth.ca



Dartmouth Cove legal disputes intensify
Amy Ward, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter



The hidden world beneath Dartmouth Cove
Lynnette Alford, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter



'I will miss my 696 kids':
DSA principal to retire in June
Lynnette Alford, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

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