

## REPORT

**REPORT TO:** Chair and Members of the Community and Corporate Affairs Committee

**REPORT FROM:** Catherine McLeod, Cultural Development Coordinator

**DATE:** March 27, 2019

**REPORT NO.:** ADMIN-2019-0010

**RE:** Next Steps in Cultural Vibrancy Implementation

### RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. ADMIN-2019-0010, dated March 27, 2019, regarding Next Steps in Cultural Vibrancy Implementation be received for information;

AND FURTHER THAT a new “Arts and Culture Working Group” be established consisting of representatives of the local cultural community, with the support of Town staff, to continue to strengthen and grow the local cultural sector, and to facilitate effective community cultural communication and engagement;

AND FURTHER THAT, recognizing that the Halton Hills Cultural Roundtable has dissolved, the existing \$42,100 annual budget previously allocated to the Halton Hills Cultural Roundtable, be reallocated to the Cultural Services budget to fund the new Arts and Culture Working Group, support the delivery of arts and culture programs and initiatives, and to augment resources needed to accelerate Cultural Master Plan implementation;

AND FURTHER THAT the existing \$9800 which has been part of the overall Halton Hills Cultural Roundtable-related allocation be reallocated to the Cultural Services budget and continue to be provided from the Cultural Services budget to the Halton Hills Public Library to offset costs related to staffing the John Elliott Theatre Box Office in support of cultural programming;

AND FURTHER THAT any additional necessary funding and/or resource requirements be brought for consideration to the Budget Committee as part of the development of the 2020 Budget.

## **BACKGROUND:**

In February 2019, the Halton Hills Cultural Roundtable dissolved.

Since 2011, the Roundtable received about \$40,000 annually from the Town under an MOU (plus an economic adjustment in later years). Each year, since 2015, another \$9,800 had been allocated to the Halton Hills Public Library to support the John Elliott Theatre Box Office. The MOU funds currently sit in Council's operating budget, similar to the approach of funding other Town committees.

With the Cultural Roundtable dissolved a new model is needed to keep advancing cultural vibrancy and engage the cultural community. Based on an extensive review of best practices; current and future workplan demands and priorities; available resources; service delivery gaps; and the review of recent input collected from the local arts and culture community as to its priority needs, it is recommended that the existing funding previously allocated to the Roundtable be reallocated to continue to strengthen, maintain, expand and enhance cultural initiatives.

**It is important to note that the recommended approach:**

- **Relies on exiting funding;**
- **Will maximize the benefits of currently available funding;**
- **Proposes the launch of innovative supports to the cultural community such as a Town-first 'micro-grant' program for artists, and arts and cultural groups;**
- **Addresses existing service gaps;**
- **Helps respond to existing workplan and resource needs;**
- **Will result in the launch of enhanced communication tools; and**
- **Represents continued Town investment and support of local arts and cultural initiatives.**

**Overall, the recommended approach will continue to support the growth of a robust arts and culture sector – generating social and economic benefits.**

## **COMMENTS:**

### **1. Best Practices Review**

Research into 12 Ontario cultural roundtables/committees<sup>1</sup> supports the recommendation of adopting a Cultural Working Group/Advisory Committee model that is managed by the Town. Main areas of work of similar groups include:

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<sup>1</sup> Arts Milton; Headwaters Cultural Roundtable; Orangeville Arts & Culture Committee; Dufferin Arts Council; Minto Cultural Roundtable; Gravenhurst Cultural Roundtable; Orillia Cultural Roundtable Wellington North Cultural Roundtable; Hamilton Cultural Roundtable; Kawartha Lakes Cultural Roundtable; Prince Edward County Arts Council; Dryden Cultural Roundtable.

- Producing cultural events (e.g. Culture Days);
- Developing professional development and networking events;
- Recognition of local arts sector (e.g. awards);
- Administering small grants for cultural organizations or events;
- Reviewing the progress of Cultural Master Plans;
- Providing support to Cultural organizations/members;
- Leading community conversations on culture;
- Being a sounding board for municipal policies, plans, actions, etc; and
- Linking the cultural sector with business and tourism sectors to leverage culture and cultural tourism as economic drivers.

## **2. Local Cultural Community Needs**

In 2018, the Cultural Roundtable conducted a survey of the needs of the local cultural community. The top five priorities that the community identified in the survey were:

- 1) Marketing local cultural activities, events and opportunities to the public;
- 2) Fundraising and support including grants;
- 3) Advocacy;
- 4) Networking opportunities; and
- 5) Annual Cultural Symposium.

Marketing and communications has been an ongoing issue. Not knowing what events are happening in Halton Hills was the highest reported barrier to participation in cultural events with 48% of respondents reporting the issue in a community survey in 2013 for the development of the Cultural Master Plan. The fact that this issue rose to the top of the 2018 survey as well, illustrates that it is an ongoing challenge.

Developing new cultural communications channels that are tailored to the needs of the arts and cultural sector will be critical to strengthening and promoting the cultural sector.

## **3. Recommended Model**

Based on the review of best practices, existing workplans and demands, and identification of gaps, it is recommended that a new “Arts and Culture Working Group” be established.

The “Arts and Culture Working Group” would have representation from key community stakeholders - representing different and diverse aspects of the local cultural community. The Cultural Development Coordinator would actively support the Working Group by acting as a resource and staff liaison. Administrative support would be provided by the Cultural Services Assistant. The Working Group would hold regular meetings and have an annual workplan. The main objectives of the Working Group would be to provide the Town with advice on cultural matters; act as a “sounding board” for cultural matters; develop and deliver cultural opportunities for local artists, arts and

cultural groups, and organizations; be a ‘community-connector’; and develop and facilitate community cultural communication, consultation and engagement.

Subject to the development of new Terms of Reference for the Working Group, confirmation of a detailed workplan and recruitment of members, the Working Group’s potential workplan will likely include the following:

- *Cultural Connections:* Connecting the cultural community by providing opportunities for engagement, collaboration, capacity building and/or professional development, including hosting cultural networking/social events (e.g. artist meet-ups, culture chats, consultations, etc.).
- *Cultural Communications and Marketing:*
  - In consultation and coordination with Corporate Communications, increase community knowledge of cultural events and activities through the establishment of dedicated cultural communication channels that are tailored to the needs of the cultural sector, including the use of the Town’s existing online community engagement tools, as appropriate.
  - Increase the cultural community’s knowledge of potential grant and professional development opportunities through dedicated communication channels.
- *Develop a Culture Days Micro-Grant Program:* Implement the Town’s first-ever micro-granting program of modest amounts to offset the costs of developing and delivering Culture Days activities. Subject to future budget discussions and funding availability, the value and eligibility for the micro-grants may be expanded.
- *Develop New Cultural Programming:* Create, curate and present cultural programming at the Helson Gallery, John Elliott Theatre and other venues, as appropriate.

#### **4. Re-allocation of Existing Funds**

Based on a review of best practices, existing workplans and demands, and identification of gaps, it is recommended that the \$42,100 currently held for the no-longer existing Cultural Roundtable as well as the \$9,800 allocated to the JET Box Office, be integrated into the Cultural Services budget to effectively and efficiently deliver cultural initiatives. Funds will be allocated to:

- Offset staffing costs related to the John Elliott Box Office – this reallocation was already occurring and will be maintained once the budget moves to Cultural Services.
- Launch and support the new Arts & Culture Working Group (e.g. operating costs, artist networking and professional development events, support cultural

communications and marketing, micro-grants for artists and cultural groups for Culture Days and programming fees).

- Support various arts and culture initiatives and staff resource needs, as well as the implementation of the Arts and Culture Working Group's workplan.

### **RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:**

Implementing the Arts and Culture Working Group model will support the Strategic Plan's focus on:

- Effective, efficient and economical delivery of the Town's existing services; and
- Continuing to implement the Integrated Community Sustainability Strategy, in particular as it relates to the Cultural Vibrancy pillar.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

This report recommends the reallocation of existing funds to maximize arts and cultural benefits. By managing funds directly the Town will be able to ensure transparency and accountability, and expedite the delivery of cultural initiatives.

### **CONSULTATION:**

The recommendations of this report are based on past consultations with the local arts and culture community. Communication on relevant aspects of this report took place with appropriate Town staff.

### **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

The public will be engaged through a call for applications to the new Arts and Culture Working Group and will then be engaged through the activities of the Working Group's workplan.

### **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:**

The Town is committed to implementing our Community Sustainability Strategy, Imagine Halton Hills. Doing so will lead to a higher quality of life. The recommendation outlined in this report advances the Strategy's implementation.

This report supports the Cultural Vibrancy, Economic Prosperity and Social Well-being pillars of sustainability. In summary, the alignment of this report with the Community Sustainability Strategy is Excellent.

## **COMMUNICATIONS:**

Communication about the Arts and Culture Working Group will be expanded as part of the call for membership for the Working Group.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Since 2015, the Town has continued to substantially increase its commitment and resources allocated to advancing the Cultural Vibrancy pillar. The reallocation of existing funding as recommended in this report will enable the Town to address gaps, respond to growing demand for cultural services, and launch additional innovative supports for the arts and culture sector. The new Arts and Culture Working Group will be an efficient and effective method to respond to identified needs and to continue to engage arts and cultural stakeholders. The Working Group will drive the development of new and innovative programs to support the sector, including micro grants to support artists and community groups that have embraced the Town's award winning Culture Days program. Ultimately, the local cultural sector will continue to grow and strengthen – generating social and economic benefits for Halton Hills.

Reviewed and Approved by,



Damian Szybalski, Manager of Economic Development, Innovation & Culture



Brent Marshall, Chief Administrative Officer