

Presentation to the City of Owen Sound Council



JANUARY 16, 2023

Overview of Request

The SweetWater Music Festival is seeking financial support from the City of Owen Sound and expanded support in terms of City marketing and promotion.

Support for the festival would strengthen the City's commitment to:

- 1) foster its reputation as one of Canada's best places for arts and cultural activities;
- 2) develop the River District as a vibrant downtown centre for local activity and tourism; and
- 3) attract business development and population growth.



What is the SweetWater Music Festival?



- a local arts organization that showcases top musical artists from across Canada and around the world.
- presents exceptional classical, jazz, roots, and world music through a spring concert, a four-day festival in September, year-round virtual performances, and enrichment opportunities for area students.
- attracts audience members locally and from across the region and the Greater Toronto Area.
- recently has offered free outdoor community concerts throughout the weekend festival.
- Last year, we launched the festival with a free concert at Georgian Shores United Church and introduced a “pay what you can” ticket pricing for the remaining indoor concerts.
- Celebrating our 20th anniversary in September 2023

SweetWater provides more than music performances

- It promotes aspiring young artists through its Next Wave program.
- SweetWater supports music education through its contact with the schools.
- The festival also stages a String Instrument Showcase annually to highlight local luthiers as well as luthiers from across Canada.



How Does the SweetWater Music Festival align with the City of Owen Sound's Strategic Plan? – Fourth Pillar: Society and Culture



- SweetWater contributes to the City's growing reputation as an important arts community, one that attracts arts patrons to visit and that draws artists of various disciplines to live in the community.
- By programming artists from across Canada and beyond our borders, the SweetWater Music Festival rounds out the offerings of the local artists supported and promoted by the City.

How Does the SweetWater Music Festival align with the City of Owen Sound's Strategic Plan? – Economic Development

- Audience members and visiting musicians patronize local restaurants and businesses.
- Venues include: Georgian Shores United Church, The Roxy Theatre, Harmony Centre, Heartwood Hall, the Farmers Market, and outdoor spaces such as the Grey Gallery – all part of or within walking distance of the City's recently named River District.
- The festival musicians are housed downtown or in local hotels.
- In addition to renting local venues, the festival hires local photographers and sound and recording professionals.
- The festival orders meals for the musicians from local caterers and provides opportunities for local vendors to sell food and beverages at its outdoor venues.



What is SweetWater seeking from the City of Owen Sound?



Expanded Promotion and Marketing Support

- The City's 2007 Cultural Master Plan, updated in 2012, promotes a broad range of actions the City should take to support local arts organizations, including festivals.
- Many of the recommended actions relate to marketing support and could be more fully adopted by the City to reflect the spirit and intentions behind the Plan.

What is SweetWater seeking from the City of Owen Sound?

Financial Support

- SweetWater is a local success story and represents a significant accomplishment for the size of the community.
- It's a story of the “little festival that could” and one that features members of the community who were and are fiercely passionate about making world class music available locally.
- We are planning to produce a documentary film that profiles this story as part of the festival's 20th anniversary and are seeking \$3,500 from the City to support the project and running of our \$20th anniversary festival.



Video Project



The video would:

- document the origins of the SweetWater Music Festival and celebrate this unique local arts organization;
- profile the local community members and the first artistic director who initiated the festival and pursued the dream of creating a longstanding arts organization committed to classical, jazz, roots, and contemporary music;
- convey SweetWater's vision of continuing to bring exceptional and exciting live music to the area;
- promote the beauty of Grey County and its connection to the arts;
- engage local sound and recording professionals;
- be used as a marketing tool to promote the festival and the community in the future.

Other municipal support

- For the last few years, SweetWater has received modest funding from Meaford, but not the City of Owen Sound, even though most performances are held in Owen Sound.
- Other music festivals in Ontario, such as Festival of the Sound in Parry Sound, Collingwood Music Festival, and Stratford Summer Music Festival, receive funding from their local municipalities.



Support from the City of Owen Sound



Providing support for the documentary project will

- contribute to the success of the project,
- give the City the opportunity to demonstrate its support for an important local arts organization, and
- enhance the City's profile as a cultural hub.