

Staff Report

Report To: River District Board of Management

Report From: Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services

Meeting Date: March 13, 2024

Report Code: CS-24-025

Subject: Update to the Agreement between the River District Board of Management and the City of Owen Sound

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-24-025 respecting the Update to the Agreement between the River District Board of Management and the City of Owen Sound, the River District Board of Management:

1. Approves the updated agreement as attached to the report; and
2. Requests that staff present the agreement to City Council for approval.

Highlights:

- The City and River District Board (previously the OSDIA) have had an agreement for many years that supports the shared vision of a vibrant and vital area.
- The 2019 Agreement reflected a major shift to Business and City sponsored complimentary parking and additional administrative support for the Board through City staff, and in 2021, a contract staff was added dedicated to the River District and implementing the River District Action Plan.
- In 2021, the Agreement was updated, reflecting the new contract staff.
- The current agreement expired on February 28, 2024. The Board had previously directed that the Board Chair write to the City and request that the current agreement be extended. A meeting was

held with the Board Chair and Treasurer to discuss necessary updates to the Agreement to continue to support this partnership.

River District Action Plan Alignment:

Strategic Objective: Create an impactful and bold identity.

Strategic Objective: Create a safe and clean space.

Strategic Objective: Create a visually appealing River District.

Strategic Objective: Create an engaging space.

Strategic Objective: Attract people to the River District.

Climate and Environmental Implications:

This supports the objectives of the City's Corporate Climate Change Adaptation Plan by creating conditions to minimize health and safety risks.

Previous Report/Authority:

[CM-19-001 - Downtown Improvement Area Sponsored Parking](#)

[CS-21-020 - River District Action Plan, Branding Strategy and Next Steps and Agreement Review](#)

[CS-21-041 - Joint DIA Contract Staff Proposal and Review of Operating Agreement with the DIA](#)

[CS-23-106 - Draft 2024 River District Budget](#)

RD-231108-005

"THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-23-106 respecting the Draft 2024 River District Budget, the River District Board of Management:

- 1. Directs staff to provide notice of a public meeting to be held on January 10, 2024;**
- 2. Requests that, pending the approval of the budget by the Board and City Council, the City make the River District Coordinator position a permanent full-time role funded by the Board; and**
- 3. Directs the Chair to send correspondence to the City to indicate a request to meet to extend the current agreement."**

Background:

The 2019 Agreement between the City and OSDIA was a new beginning for the collaborative working relationship between the parties founded on a shared goal of support, improvement, beautification, maintenance, and marketing and promotion (including events) for the River District.

The 2019 Agreement was established as a 5-year agreement and contemplated an annual review of the Agreement by the parties to ensure that it continues to reflect the needs of both parties. Amendments are to be done with the Agreement of the partners.

In 2021, the Agreement was updated to reflect and integrate the River District Action Plan and make several other administrative-type changes. At this same time, an 18-month contract position was reflected in the Agreement to support the implementation of the River District Marketing Action Plan.

The 2021 update added the shared funds generated from the sale of parking passes. Although these funds had been shared beginning in 2019, this was formally included in the Agreement in the 2021 update.

The City and the River District Board share a goal of promoting the River District as a thriving commercial area supporting its promotion and beautification. The Agreement has served the River District Board and its membership well over the last five (5) years in terms of advancing the goals toward maintaining and enhancing the viability and vitality of the River District as the primary economic, commercial, financial, cultural, tourism and employment focus for the City.

Through the Board and the work of the River District Coordinator, the Board has advanced the actions set out in the River District Action Plan in the areas of Branding, River District Management, River District Experience Development, and River District Promotion.

The City supports the River District with short and longer-term strategies, including ongoing capital investment in the River District that commenced with the “Big Dig” in the early 2000s and continues with the implementation of the Downtown River Precinct Phase 2 Plan in 2024, the Community Improvement Plan with programs including the Façade and Structural Improvement Program, Accessibility, and Landscape Grants that all give priority to lands within the River District. In addition to the activations and

events planned directly by the River District, the City continues to have no-charge events in the River District, including Music at the Market and movie nights. The shift of tax policy to reduce ratios for commercial properties and the elimination of the vacancy rebate also support the vibrancy of the River District.

Together, the City and the River District Board have and continue to work to support the vibrancy and economic vitality of the area.

The current agreement expired on February 28, 2024. At the November 8, 2023 meeting, the Board requested the Chair send correspondence to the City to indicate a request to meet to extend the current agreement. The letter was sent and received by the City, and a meeting was held between City staff and the Board Chair and Treasurer on January 8, 2024. The Vice-Chair was unable to attend.

Analysis:

Based on the meeting and experience in implementing the agreement, only minor changes are reflected in the red-line draft attached.

The agreement reflects the approved operating budgets for the City and the River District Board concerning the costs to both parties.

The changes are summarized as follows:

- Replace all references to OSDIA with River District Board of Management and reference the River District Constitution that was approved by the Board.
- There is a blank in the updated version to reflect the resolution supporting the updated Agreement by both the Board and the City.
- The term is a 5-year term expiring in February of 2029.
- Reflect the title of the new full-time staff position as the "River District Coordinator".
- Section 2.8 reflects that the website has been updated and the wording focuses on maintaining the site.
- Monthly budget updates to the Board from the City are now quarterly; the previous agreement was monthly. It also reflects the new practice of providing detailed monthly financial accounting to the Board's Treasurer. This reflects a practice that began in 2023.
- Section 6.0 on watering updated to reflect the 7-day watering schedule.

- The current agreement includes the financial contribution to flora (\$7,500). The updated agreement reflects the budgeted amounts for sidewalk cleaning and maintenance (\$5,000), sidewalk washing (\$3,000), and complimentary parking (\$120,000).

Schedule A to the Agreement reflects in-kind services provided under the Agreement.

Financial Implications:

The River District Board has a balanced budget (no use of reserves).

The financial consideration within the agreement is within the City and River District Board approved budgets.

The contributions of the River District for flora, sidewalk maintenance, and street washing have not increased since 2019. Future budgets and agreements will need to address these increasing costs.

Communication Strategy:

The City and River District Board will continue to communicate with members, stakeholders, and the public in the implementation of the Plan, including the new brand identity and new website.

Consultation:

River District Board Chair and Treasurer; Director of Corporate Services

Attachments:

Redlined agreement

Recommended by:

Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services, at pcoulter@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 ext. 1252.