

Staff Report

Report To: Corporate Services Committee
Report From: Kate Allan, CPA, CA, Director of Corporate Services
Meeting Date: October 10, 2024
Report Code: CR-24-099
Subject: City Grants to Community Groups Policy

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CR-24-099 respecting City Grants to Community Groups, the Corporate Services Committee recommends that City Council direct staff to bring forward a by-law to approve the policy, substantially in the form attached to the report.

Highlights:

- The City of Owen Sound supports local charities, non-profits, and minor sports organizations in a variety of ways.
- The city supports the efforts of Community Foundation Grey Bruce in providing grants and funding support to local organizations.
- The City continues to provide grant funding and in-kind support to several organizations including the Billy Bishop Museum, Community Waterfront Heritage Centre, Owen Sound City Band, Festival of Northern Lights, local senior organizations, and other service groups.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: Collaborative City.

Climate and Environmental Implications:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

Previous Report/Authority:

N/A

Background:

From the minutes of the December 1, 2023, Special Meeting of Council respecting the 2024 operating budget, Councillor Merton presented a motion respecting the review of Policy CS9 – Guidelines for Corporation Grants which she subsequently withdrew as Ms. Allan advised that staff are already planning to review this policy in 2024.

The attached policy was drafted to ensure equitable, transparent, and efficient management of grant funding requests and distributions within the Municipality. The new policy aims to facilitate a clear and consistent framework for organizations requesting grants from the City.

The development of the policy was considered in the context of existing programs that aim to support local charities and community groups.

The 2024 budget and anticipated 2025 budget include ongoing funding arrangements with Owen Sound City Band, Community Waterfront Heritage (Marine and Rail Museum), Billy Bishop Museum and Festival of Northern Lights. Each of these organizations has an established multi-year funding agreement with the City that includes a transfer of funds as well as services in kind.

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| Grant in lieu of facility rental for senior's groups plus operating costs for McQuay Tannery | \$25,000 \$2,500 |
| Owen Sound City Band | \$3,750 |
| Marine and Rail Museum plus building operating costs for CN Station | \$29,600 \$18,638 |
| Billy Bishop Museum | \$35,250 |
| Festival of Northern Lights plus labour and equipment plus hydro | \$20,000 \$45,800 \$2,000 |

The City of Owen Sound supports the efforts of Community Foundation Grey Bruce in providing grants and funding support to local organizations. Specifically, in 2009 from the proceeds of Owen Sound's 150th Anniversary Homecoming, the Owen Sound Fund (formerly named the Owen Sound Community Funds) exists to enrich the quality of life for the people of the City of Owen Sound by supporting projects of not-for profit charitable organizations within the city.

Additionally, under the Assessment Act, Section 3 details the real property categories that may be exempt from taxation including Churches, Provincial Education Institutions, non-profit child care centres, non-profit philanthropic, religious or educational seminary centres, public hospitals, care homes as defined by the Residential Tenancies Act, non-profit hospices, long-term care homes, The Canadian Red Cross, St John's ambulance or any charitable, non-profit philanthropic corporation organized for the relief of the poor if the corporation is supported in part by public funds, Children's Aid societies, Royal Canadian Legion, Conservation Land and small theatres. Organizations that receive exemption under this section of the Act continue to access municipal services.

If you are a registered charity operating out of a commercial or industrial property, you can apply for a tax rebate of 40% of the annual property taxes paid by the Charity.

Other programs for financial relief offered by the City of Owen Sound include Community Improvement Programs (CIP). Under the CIP, special property tax incentives and grants encourage community improvements. Active CIP programs in the City include the Start-up Space Leasehold Improvement Grant, Façade Improvement Grant, Accessibility Improvement Grant, Vacant Conversion Grant, and Landscape Improvement Grant.

Analysis:

The key elements of the proposed Grants Policy are as follows:

1. Eligibility Criteria
 - Organizations must be registered non-profits, local minor sports associations or charities operating within Owen Sound.
 - Services provided by these organizations should align with what is traditionally offered by lower-tier municipalities and not fall under federal or provincial jurisdictions.
2. Application Process
 - Eligible organizations may request grant funds at any time.
 - Applicants must provide a detailed project plan, budget, and evidence of their status as an eligible applicant.
3. Evaluation Process
 - Funding requests will be assessed based on their alignment with the City's strategic goals, financial need, potential impact on the community, and sustainability.
 - Emphasis will be placed on projects or programs demonstrating broad community benefit and inclusiveness.
4. Funding Allocation:
 - Grants requests must be within the constraints of the Municipal Budget or feasible in a year with a forecasted surplus.
 - Allocation will be dependant on the presentation of projects that either enhance Municipal service delivery or generate additional revenue.
5. Reporting and Accountability
 - Approved funding requests will require a funding agreement which includes the terms of the funding request approved by Council.

Financial Implications:

The proposed policy shall not have a financial implication. The eligibility requirements dictate that requests will either enhance existing municipal service delivery through efficiencies generated or generate additional revenue that can be used to offset the grant amount.

Communication Strategy:

Detailed information on the updated policy will be accessible via the City's website.

Consultation:

Strategic Leadership Team

Attachments:

AF005 City Grants to Community Groups - Draft

Recommended by:

Kate Allan, Director of Corporate Services

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Kate Allan at kallan@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 ext. 1230.