

## Staff Report

---

**Report To:** City Council

**Report From:** Michelle Palmer, Senior Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Operational Effectiveness

**Meeting Date:** November 10, 2025

**Report Code:** CM-25-035

**Subject:** Temporary Loan of Artifacts (Bells, Clock Face, and Clock Mechanism) to Grey Roots Museum & Archives

---

### Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CM-25-035 respecting a Temporary Loan of Artifacts (Bells, Clock Face, and Clock Mechanism) to Grey Roots Museum & Archives, City Council:

1. Approves the transfer of the bells, clock face, and clock mechanism to Grey Roots Museum & Archives for a temporary period of December 2025 to January 2027; and
2. Directs staff to bring forward a by-law to authorize the temporary loan agreement.

### Highlights:

- A temporary loan of artifacts between the City and Grey Roots Museum & Archives enables the community to enjoy these historical items.
- Grey Roots Museum & Archives engages and educates the community in the human and natural history of Grey County by preserving and sharing collections, stories, and memories.

### Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: Embracing and Celebrating Culture

---

Staff Report CM-25-035: Temporary Loan of Artifacts (Bells, Clock Face, and Clock Mechanism) to Grey Roots Museum & Archives

## **Climate and Environmental Implications:**

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

## **Previous Report/Authority:**

None.

## **Background:**

The City has received a request dated October 30, 2025, from Grey Roots Museum & Archives, regarding the Old City Hall clock and bells, requesting a temporary loan of the bells, clock face, and clock mechanism.

### **History of Clock & Bells**

The Owen Sound town hall was built in 1868-1869 and included a cupola with a fire bell and a "dummy clock" that constantly read "9:03". When Owen Sound became a City in 1920, Council decided that a functional clock should be added to the building. A square brick tower was added to City Hall in 1921, replacing the cupola. The tower included a four-sided clock, with Roman numerals and spade hands set against white glass. Inside the tower were five bronze bells from Gillet and Johnston of Croyden, England (who also supplied the bells for the Peace Tower Carillon in Ottawa in 1926) that chimed every half hour. The clockworks were weight-driven.

When a fire destroyed most of Old City Hall in February of 1961, the clock stopped, but the tower remained standing. The four clock faces, clockworks, and five bells were salvaged from the building. In 1965, Council offered the clock and bells to the County of Grey-Owen Sound Museum (now Grey Roots Museum & Archives). The items were given to the Museum in 1967.

Sometime prior to the move, the smallest bell was stolen (the bell was later recovered by the City at a cost in 1998). When the Museum became a wholly County department in 2004, the City and County reworked their arrangement. Through the negotiation, the City regained possession of the artifacts. The items remained stored at the Museum in the meantime as a courtesy to the City and without a formal agreement. In February 2001, a fire at the workshop where the clock and bells were stored may have caused further damage to the clock faces. Grey Roots continued to store the items on behalf of the City until 2016, when the County required the storage space for their own property during the renovation and expansion of their

administration building. The items were moved and have been stored by the City at Public Works.

## **Analysis:**

Grey Roots Museum & Archives is working on an exhibit, "Living Histories: Grey County", where photographs are displayed along with accompanying artifacts (items that are from or relate to the businesses in the photographs). One of the exhibit's photographs is by J. James, showing the City's clock tower in the distance. Displaying the bells, clock face, and clock mechanism will complement the photograph. The exhibit is planned to run from mid-January to the end of April 2026 and then be remounted from September to December 2026.

Grey Roots has proposed that pick-up would be in December 2025 or January 2026, and the artifacts would return to the City in mid-January 2027.

Terms of the temporary loan agreement would include the following conditions:

1. It is understood that the objects in this loan will remain in the condition received and will not be repaired, cleaned, or altered in any way without written permission from the lender. The lender will receive copies of all documentation regarding any conservation treatment.
2. All damages to objects at any point in this loan from the out date until returned will be reported to the lender immediately.
3. Grey Roots is responsible for the transportation of borrowed items and is responsible for returning said items at the time stated.
4. Grey Roots will provide wall-to-wall insurance coverage for borrowed items for the duration of the loan period.
5. Grey Roots will credit the City on labels and in catalogues connected with the exhibition.
6. If an extension of time is desired, Grey Roots will make such a request at least five (5) days prior to the return date, and appropriate forms will be completed.

7. Grey Roots agrees to use the loan only for the purposes stated on the form and will not lend any borrowed material to a third party without the advance written approval of the lender.

This temporary loan would enable the public to enjoy these artifacts and free up limited storage space at a City facility.

### **Financial Implications:**

Grey Roots Museum & Archives will be responsible for all transportation costs and will provide insurance coverage for the borrowed items for the duration of the loan period. There are no anticipated costs for the City.

### **Communication Strategy:**

A media release outlining this collaborative approach and promoting the Grey Roots Museum & Archives exhibit will be issued to inform the community about the temporary loan.

### **Consultation:**

City Clerk and Director of Public Works and Engineering

### **Attachments:**

None.

### **Recommended by:**

Michelle Palmer, Senior Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Operational Effectiveness

### **Submission approved by:**

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Michelle Palmer, Senior Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Operational Effectiveness at [mpalmer@owensound.ca](mailto:mpalmer@owensound.ca) or 519-376-4440 ext. 1245.