Review of Strathcona County community event calendar guidelines

Report Purpose
To report on the results of a review of policies and regional practices related to the Community Events Calendar.

Recommendation
None.

Our Prioritized Strategic Goals
Goal 7 - Provide opportunities for public engagement and communication
Continuously improving the way we work, as one organization, in an agile and sustainable manner

Report
There are currently no administrative or Council policies relevant to the community event calendar.

Communications added a community calendar to Strathcona County's external website in 2002 as part of a website redesign. The intent was to provide local community groups and not-for-profit organizations with an outlet for sharing information about their upcoming events. This step was taken in response to requests for the County to profile events on its website, and in recognition of the limited opportunities available within the community (one newspaper, limited use of social media, signage regulations, etc.) to promote these events.

Communications reviewed City of Edmonton guidelines, and worked with Legal and Legislative Services (LLS) to develop its own guidelines for what events to include in the calendar. The Information and Volunteer Centre (IVC) took on the role of moderating submissions. Criteria at that time supported the posting of events by not-for-profit organizations and community groups. Postings by for-profit businesses, political organizations and religious groups were denied, based on the organization's wish to remain non-partisan, non-commercial, and to not take advertising dollars from the local paper.

When Communications redesigned the organization's external website again in 2011, the department looked for a more robust calendar tool. Trumba, an off-the-shelf calendaring solution, was adopted as the best solution. The guidelines for posting events were reviewed again with input from LLS and based on IVC's experience in moderating submissions.

Over the intervening years, the calendar guidelines have been reviewed, based on input from users. The basic inclusions and exemptions have remained constant; some language has been modified to improve clarity. Use of the calendar tool has increased dramatically, as it has been customized to accommodate different categories of event (to make searching easier), and to support internal event and training registration.

In reviewing the guidelines and practices of 13 municipalities across Alberta, only the three largest have specifically identified guidelines on their websites. For those without guidelines, some were able to share their 'unwritten' approach to including events. Additionally, a review of content since the end of October found no political posts from any level of government above the municipal level; a number reference their refusal to post for-profit events; particularly, those that are commercial in nature.

Endorsement of existing guidelines ensures continued operation of the County's community event calendar with no additional resourcing required or impacts to existing capacity. Expanding eligible events to include for-profit and/or political activities requires additional oversight to avoid unintended consequences, such as perceived business or political endorsement, competition with local advertisers and electioneering.

Strathcona County's community event calendar and the guidelines for posting to it, are aligned with what others in the region are doing; therefore, we recommend they be maintained in their current state.

Council and Committee History

November 26, 2019	Council approved a motion directing administration to "review the current policy, and any relevant Council Policies, for the Community Events Calendar and provide a report to Council with recommendations to include a possible expansion of eligible events and enhance usability of the Calendar for our community."

Other Impacts
Policy: N/A
Legislative/Legal: N/A
Interdepartmental: Family and Community Services (as calendar administrators)
Master Plan/Framework: N/A

Communication Plan

Enclosure

1	Calendar – guidelines in region

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