

Priorities Committee Meeting_May17_2016

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AND UPDATE

Community Hall Sustainability Strategy Update

Report Purpose

To provide the Priorities Committee with an update on the public consultation and community hall condition assessments completed in Q1 of 2016.

Council History

July 14, 2015 – Council directed administration to bring forward a report on the utilization, functional obsolescence and overall physical condition of Community Halls and Senior Centres after a public consultation has been completed with the community and licensed hall operators.

Strategic Plan Priority Areas

Economy: Strategic investments in infrastructure provide long term value to the community.

Governance: By engaging community stakeholders, residents and neighbouring municipalities we will develop and maintain strong cooperative relationships to ensure the long term prosperity.

Social: Community Halls and Senior Centres support strong community development by providing social and recreational opportunities. County outreach programs are offered through the network of community halls.

Culture: Community Halls and Senior Centres support various cultural pursuits of the community. The Library also provides rural library services at the various rural community halls locations.

Environment: Proactive maintenance of the facility assets reduces the negative impacts on the environment by waste reduction through extending the asset life for as long as possible.

Other Impacts

Policy: n/a

Legislative/Legal: n/a

Interdepartmental: The Community Hall and Senior Centres are supported or used by Planning and Development Services (Land Management), Recreation, Parks and Culture and Facility Services, Family and Community Services, Strathcona Public Library, Transportation and Agricultural Services for community development.

Summary

The community hall infrastructure supports the 18 volunteer community associations for the delivery of community based programs. Through these programs the community groups provide services to the community for recreation, learning, social inclusion, club meetings and hall rentals to the general public.

Council has asked for unbiased feedback from the community associations on what is needed to provide guidance to Council for ongoing investments in the community hall infrastructure.

Facility Services and Recreation Parks and Culture have hired Calder Bateman Communications to complete a public engagement process and Ameresco Canada to update the facility condition assessments for the community halls/senior centres.

Calder Bateman Communications conducted public engagement meetings and included interviews with council, and with community and seniors associations operating the community halls. Three separate online surveys were conducted for the association membership, hall renters and general public. A focused youth session was conducted with the youth Council. After the information was collected, three “what we heard” sessions were held to validate the information back with the community hall associations.

From the public engagement, several themes emerged. These being;

Value to the Community

Community associations play an important role in the development of their community and make significant contributions to the quality of life. Each does this differently in a way that responds to the specific needs and demands of their local community.

Several recurring themes emerged on the value of the halls to the community serving as community hubs, encouraging neighbourliness, being responsive to community needs and fostering inclusion.

Common Barriers

1. **Volunteer challenges:** All of the associations expressed concern over obtaining volunteers to assist with their boards, programs and events.
2. **Reliance on executives:** Heavy reliance on executives can create stress and burn out for the executive members. This was identified as a risk for long term sustainability of the community associations.
3. **Balancing programs and revenue:** The requirement to rent the halls to provide funding to pay the bills means less available time to run programs.
4. **Facility spaces:** It is important to note that associations did not call for significant renovations to their halls to address usage needs. For the most part, a few found storage constraints to be an issue. Occasionally, associations found themselves hosting certain events or programs in other locations or partnering with nearby facilities.
5. **County processes:** For permits, information or County services, the County processes created frustration for some associations due to the time it takes to get to the right person or department.
6. **Changing communities:** Challenges in providing programs are occurring when the community is going through change caused by older individuals leaving and newer families arriving or when the numbers in a demographic increase.
7. **Recognition of effort:** The associations felt the County does not adequately recognize their effort for the delivery of services or programs to the community they provide.

Building Strong Community Hall Infrastructure into the Future

When asked to think about what could be done to sustain community hall infrastructure, three specific themes emerged:

1. Setting project management and contractor standards. Associations want a streamlined process for getting work done, quality assurance in workmanship and if possible, to take advantage of their own networks to get some of the work done.
2. Centralized facility resources that provide a predictable and easy system to deal with snow clearing and hall maintenance/repair issues.

3. County to take on maintenance while preserving association autonomy. The question was raised "Why are associations dealing with County facilities at all?" Associations see their job as providing services and events that improve the quality of life for their community.

Facility Condition Assessment

From the updated hall assessments, thirteen of the halls were rated to be in good shape, one was rated as being in fair shape, three were rated as poor and South Cooking Lake Community Hall with a rating of critical due to the cost of waterproofing and repairing its foundation. For 2016, the identified deferred maintenance backlog is \$1,105,000 or an overall portfolio condition rating of fair. An estimated \$5,000,000 (including the deferred maintenance) will be required to provide facility repairs and lifecycle renewal over the next 15 years.

Next Steps

Administration would like to review the options that are available to address the themes that emerged through the public consultation, their impact on the community and the overall long term care of the community hall infrastructure. These options will focus on three key areas; strengthening the community associations, improving communications, managing the physical assets.

Communication Plan

Communications with the community hall associations will be completed through emails, phone calls and meetings.

Enclosure

- 1 Community Hall Sustainability Strategy Update Presentation