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Date: May 9, 2021
To: Mayor and Council
Author: Karen Loney, Manager of Recreation Programming and Special Events
RE: Kingsville Express Train
Report No.: PR_SE - 2021 – 03

RECOMMENDED ACTION

That Council authorize Administration to purchase a new electric Train, as described in this report, once 50% of funds required for the purchase of the Train are collected through fundraising initiatives.

BACKGROUND

In 2012, as part of the Santa Claus Parade, the Kingsville Fantasy Express train had its inaugural run. The vision and creation of the Train originated from the Fantasy of Lights Committee of Council. The Train was built in partnership with welding students from Kingsville High school and Town staff using used items from an old school bus and a riding lawnmower.

Since that first parade, the Train has created memories for young and old as people come aboard to view Christmas lights and enjoy a tour of the park. The train usage was expanded from this one event and was used for other festivals and special events. Donations were accepted from passengers to offset the cost of the Train.

In 2020, concerns were raised about the safety of the Train. A work review found that the engine overheats and boils over, the alternator is not strong enough to run lights and charge the batteries. One battery was replaced in 2019, and the second battery cannot hold a charge, the frame supporting the train engine is cracked and split, the wiring is corroded, resulting in unknown costs on parts; the cowcatcher guard is broken, the entire Train needs new painting, the front light post is rotted, and the rear tires need replacing. The estimated cost of materials and labour is approximately \$10,000.

In 2020, the Fantasy of Lights Committee began pursuing replacement options for the Train and researched potential vendors. A Canadian company called Wattman trains was found that provide environmentally friendly trackless trains that can be used indoors and outdoors.

An initial quote was obtained to identify potential costs, and the Fantasy of Lights committee began to talk to potential sponsors.

During the 2021 Council budget session, Council moved, "That \$5,000 be allocated from the Donations and Grants budget and transferred to reserves to purchase a new Train, and that the capital budget line item be moved to the Parks Budget".

There is currently \$8,624 in reserves allocated to the Train, including the Council's 2021 allocation.

DISCUSSION

At the March 23, 2021 Fantasy of Lights meeting, it was moved to add the acquisition of a new train be an agenda item at the following Parks, Recreation, Arts and Culture Committee of Council (PRAC) meeting.

At the April 15, 2021 PRAC meeting, it was, "Moved by T. Neufeld, seconded by A. Hickmott that Mayor N. Santos present to Council that the train used by Fantasy of Lights be considered a Town asset, to be used at all events, and provide an update on fundraising to buy a new one."

Following this meeting, an updated quote from Wattman Trains was obtained, and it was learned that the cost of the Train would increase by a minimum of ten percent on June 1, 2021, because of material costs increasing.

The recommended Train to purchase is the four-car Express 48 volts, which includes an engine, coal cart, two passenger cars and a caboose. This Train is electric and can run up to 12 hours per charge, at six kilometres per hour. The capacity on the Train is 24 children or 12 adults. This Train includes a sound in motion kit so that everyone can hear the sounds of a steam train, a spare tire, a mini compressor and a tool kit. Optional items requested in the quote include; LED lights on each wagon for safety, an audio package with speakers to provide commentary on the tours; a water distribution system to extend the life of the Train; a camera for the driver cabin to view surroundings; and a front window on the locomotive to protect the driver. Additional options were reviewed, like roll-up windows, underfloor lights, but it was learned these could be added after-market if desired.

The company and Train can be viewed at these links:

<https://wattmanworld.com/brochure-trains/> and <https://vimeo.com/wattmanworld>.

To confirm the quality of the Train, a reference from a neighbouring Municipality was received which confirmed the professionalism and quality of the company. It was learned that in the three years the Municipality had owned the Train, the only

maintenance cost was distilled water. Wattam Trains Company stated that the lifecycle of the Train is twenty plus years and there is a two-year warranty.

To ensure the Train is probably stored a suitable place has been identified to protect from the weather and other potential harms.

To expedite the purchase of the Train and be fiscally responsible, it is recommended that the community raises 50% of the cost and that Council approves 50% of the costs to come from reserves.

A fundraising campaign has been designed asking for sponsors as follows:

- Engine - \$20,000 (this has been confirmed and will be submitted if Council approves the purchase)
- Caboose - \$10,000
- Express Passenger Cart - \$5,000 (up to four available)
- Rooftop - \$5,000

The campaign intends to raise more than the cost of the Train to offset maintenance, repairs, signage for the Train and optional lights or roll-up windows.

The Parks, Recreation, Arts and Culture motion requested the Train to be a Town asset to include the Train in the fleet reserve schedule. Administration does not recommend this as it is an additional cost to the base budget and impacts tax rates.

Should Council approve the purchase of the electric Train, a policy will be created on the usage of the Train and a fee schedule if needed.

In support of Council's priority of increasing recreation programming, the Train will be used as an asset in the programming area via all special events and creating birthday packages for youth to have a ride on the Train.

Additionally, the Train supports individuals who have mobility challenge, plus supports an age-friendly community.

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Promote the betterment, self-image and attitude of the community.

Improve recreational and cultural facilities and opportunities within the Town of Kingsville.

Support growth of the business community.

Link to Council 2021-2022 Priorities

- ☒ COVID-19 and the health and safety of the community
- ☐ Customer Service: Training, Technology, Staff, Review Standards/Level of service
- ☐ Housing: Affordability (lot sizes, developer incentives, second dwellings, density, etc.)
- ☐ Greenhouse: lights & dark sky, odours (site plan compliance, bylaws, other tools)
- ☒ Programming Increase: Youth and Seniors
- ☐ A development plan for Downtown Kingsville / Main Street
- ☐ Financial savings: Schools closings, Migration Hall
- ☐ Economic Development: strengthen tourism/hospitality
- ☒ COVID - economic recovery
- ☐ Communications: Strategy – Policy (social media), Website refresh and other tools, Public engagement
- ☐ Housing: Migrant Worker Housing – Inspections (Building/Fire), regulate, reduce, or increase
- ☐ Committees / Boards: Review and Report
- ☐ Policy Update: Procedural Bylaw
- ☐ Economic Development: diversify the economy, create local jobs, industrial, Cottam
- ☐ Infrastructure (non-Municipal): Union Water expansion & governance
- ☐ Infrastructure (Municipal): Asset Management Plan update, the infrastructure funding deficit
- ☐ No direct link to Council priorities

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The quoted cost of the train, including shipping and non-refundable taxes, is approximately \$75,000. If a deposit of 25% is put down by June 1, 2021, there is no increase in rate and full payment is not required until the Train is shipped, which is approximately three months. This quote expires on June 1, 2021 and if a 10% increase occurs the cost of the Train would be approximately \$82,500.

The breakdown of shared costs for the purchase of the Train would be:

- Council contribution: \$37,500
- Community contribution: \$37,500

It is recommended that the amount of Council's contribution, in excess of the existing reserve balance of \$8,624, is funded from the Parks Equipment Reserve, with a commitment to repay the money in the 2022 budget.

CONSULTATIONS

Fantasy of Lights Committee of Council
Parks, Recreation, Arts and Culture Committee of Council
Director of Financial & IT Services
Manager of Public Works & Environmental Services
Manager of Municipal Facilities and Properties
Manager of Municipal Facilities and Properties

Karen Loney

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