



Date: February 13, 2023

To: Mayor and Council

Author: Karen Loney, Manager of Recreation Programs and Special Events

RE: Special Events Committee Review

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. That the Kingsville Highland Games Advisory Committee **BE DISSOLVED** and that the Highland Games **NOT BE OPERATED** in 2023 by the Town.

BACKGROUND

Kingsville has long recognized the positive impact of festivals and special events on the community. Events are viewed as a source of diverse and affordable programming, a tourism draw, a positive economic driver, a contributor to the overall high quality of life, and an affirming contributor to Kingsville's "brand" with a vital main street, a genuine sense of community, and a friendly, welcoming town feel.

Kingsville manages and supports festivals and events in three ways.

1. **Advisory Committees of Council.** These are Town events managed by staff with event decisions supported by an advisory committee of Council. These include Fantasy of Lights, Migration Festival, Communities in Bloom, and Highland Games
2. **Department Initiatives** These events are led by staff without the assistance of an advisory committee and include Easter Egg Hunt, Canada Day, Open Streets, Truth and Reconciliation, Fire Fest, Bike Kingsville, New Years Eve fun, etc.
3. **Independent Events and Festivals.** These are events hosted by other agencies or organizations and may, or may not, receive support from the Town financially or in-kind, including Kingsville Music Festival, Hogs for Hospice, Art Society of Kingsville events, etc. If these events are held on Town property, they undergo an event review and require such things as event insurance, tent inspection, health inspection, road closure approval, etc.

The Manager of Recreation Programs and Special Events has responsibility to coordinate Town events and festivals and to provide support to independent events and

festivals, as directed by Council or the CAO. This is in addition to the Manager's responsibility to create and deliver recreation and cultural programming.

Many administrative departments support events including road closures, preparation of parks and facilities, review of contracts and insights into risk mitigation, communication and marketing, and Tourism alignment. Significant staff time goes toward these events.

Many events cannot be operated without the support of volunteers who provide a valuable resource and benefit. The Town is grateful for its many volunteers who give their time and energy to making the Town a better place.

DISCUSSION

In July 2021, Council approved changes to Committee structures, and directed that a report on the Special Events be presented to Council. This report focuses only on the Special Events that have Advisory Committees appointed by Council.

In January 2023, Council approved Terms of Reference for Committees of Council. These Terms of Reference apply to all Committees including the committees described in this report.

Fantasy of Lights (FOL)

Fantasy of Lights has been a long tradition in Kingsville. For years, decorative lights have been made by students at Kingsville District High School (KDHS) and now grandchildren of past students can still view the lights.

The FOL event has transitioned over the years.

- In 2021, the Kingsville Express Electric Train was purchased and people can enjoy seeing the lights in Lakeside Park weekends in November and December. This event is completely run by volunteers and service groups. In 2022, almost 2,000 people rode on the train, enjoyed hot chocolate and occasional musical performances.
- In 2021, Administration took over organizing and hosting the FOL Santa Parade. The parade has featured 65-75 floats annually, from 90 different participants.
- Several music events were added to FOL in 2022.
- In 2022, KDHS made a pumpkin light for the Communities in Bloom Pumpkin Parade and to be placed in the park for 2023.
- Other facets of the event include; Opening Ceremonies where Santa flicks the switch to turn the lights on at Lakeside Park, Fireworks, weekend Kingsville Express Train Rides, Crafts with Santa, Paws and Claus, Artisan Market and several music events in 2022.

The FOL Committee will be reviewing each facet of the event to identify improvements. Based on past learnings, it is proposed that the fireworks will be changed to New Year's Eve as a closing of the year and FOL event.

Upon review of the FOL Advisory Committee, event, donations, participation, and work impact for administration, it is recommended that the FOL is one of Council's signature events and the governance of the event continue as is.

Communities in Blooms (CIB)

The CIB Advisory Committee is a member of the Canada Communities in Bloom and works to beautify the Town of Kingsville. A key component in the Communities in Blooms philosophy is the importance of collaborations focused on the areas of, Community Appearance, Environmental Action, Heritage Conservation, Tree Management, Landscape and Plant and Floral Displays. Like FOL, the CIB program has evolved over the years:

- The Pumpkin Parade started in 2018, and now has over 500 pumpkins donated annually.
- The CIB hosted three dances at Grovedale Arts and Cultural Centre to raise funds to support CIB initiatives.
- In 2022, Council endorsed being a Bee/Pollinator Friendly City. The CIB promoted pollinators and hosted an education event.
- A new Mural, championed by CIB, is being completed to be installed at Lakeside Park in spring 2023.
- In 2022, the committee entered the National Competition and was pleased to receive Five Blooms – Gold award. For 2023, the CIB has agreed to not enter the judging competition but rather assess the feedback from the judges and develop a strategy to accomplish the recommendations.

CIB is closely linked to different service clubs in town as well as Parks and Recreation Staff who work closely with CIB. Though not recommending changes for 2023, as the CIB continues to evolve, and become more operational, it is recommended that Administration meet with community groups to determine if CIB would be enhanced more if merged with an existing group.

Migration Festival (MF)

2023 will be the 54th year the Migration Festival is held. Over the years MF has adapted to community interest, COVID restrictions and volunteers' level of support. Traditionally, Migration Fest has included an opening ceremonies, children's activities, a market, and a daytime parade.

In 2020, the Great Migration Paint Out began, where artists registered for a four-day 'en Plein air' painting competition. This past year, a category for students was added with the hope of having ten youth in the first year. 21 adults coming from as far as Michigan

and Toronto participated, along with 97 students. All artists painted scenes from Kingsville reflecting the Town's heritage, culture, waterfront, or agriculture, and paintings sold quickly at the final Art Show and Sale.

Other new additions to MF has been the historical walks highlighting Kingsville history and the slow roll bike rides that tour the Town and stops at Jack Miners Bird Sanctuary.

After the last MF, the Committee completed a debrief of the event and the following items were identified.

- The name is confusing for those who don't know Jack Miner's Bird Sanctuary history.
- That Town events directly competed with other events.
- Overlapping events at several locations caused confusion.
- The traditional daytime parade was missed by some in the community.
- The public was confused whether events were hosted by the Town or at Jack Miners Bird Sanctuary.
- The committee was action oriented and dedicated.
- New fundraising dollars were raised to support the event.

The Migration Festival is one of Kingsville's first signature events and it is recommended the Migration Festival, and the governance model remain status-quo. That said, and in response to concerns listed above, the Committee proposes to re-brand Migration Fest to a Fall Festival to reach a broader audience and host town events, or support partners hosting events under that banner. For example:

- Administration proposes partnering with the Jack Miners Foundation to host migration-related events.
- An Octoberfest-type event could be hosted by the Town and other partners.
- Fall markets are currently operated by different businesses throughout Town. Rather than compete, the Town could support those businesses to 'brand' their fall markets as part of the Kingsville Fall Festival.
- The Town work with organizers to continue to host the Great Migration Paint Out throughout Town.

With support from Council, the committee will be engaging businesses, non-profit groups and organizations to develop a festival that will continue to celebrate Kingsville history and all there is today.

Highland Games (HG)

The HG Advisory Committee hosts a festival to celebrate the Scottish and Celtic Culture.

Highland Games were organized in Kingsville until 1987. In 2019, the Kingsville Games were restarted and approved by Council to operate as a Town-led event.

The Kingsville Highland Games is the only Highland Games in Ontario that is led by a Municipality. All others in Ontario are led by non-profit groups, service groups, or are their own entity.

In 2019 the HG committee led an event where over 6,000 tickets were sold and a revenue surplus resulted. During this time administration supported HG through providing staff resources to the committee and provided items requested through the Special Events Review Team application.

Throughout the COVID pandemic the Highland Games had to be cancelled, though the HG Advisory Committee continued to meet to plan for the 2022 games.

Unfortunately in 2022 fewer people attended the event than in 2019, which impacted anticipated revenues, resulting in a deficit of approximately \$18,700 in 2022.

The remaining reserves from prior years covered the majority of the expenses resulting in a net loss of \$6,140.

The Town committed significant staff resources to the event from legal services, financial services, public works, and parks and recreation staff (which alone allocated over 300 staff hours to the event).

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM THE CAO

Several members of the Highland Games Advisory Committee have resigned and the CAO spoke to remaining committee members who indicated they would like the committee to be dissolved. Former volunteers on the committee are looking at operating the event at other locations and without Town involvement.

The Mayor and CAO met on February 6, 2023, with the Executive Director of Jack Miners. That organization has expressed an interest in operating the event in 2023. No final decision has been made by Jack Miners.

The CAO has advised the Executive Director of Jack Miners that if Jack Miners (or any organization) takes over the event that it would be on the following conditions (subject to change by Council):

- a. Any financial profits, losses, or liabilities for the event will be the responsibility of Jack Miners;
- b. Town resources will no longer be provided for organizing the event (for example: insurance, program operations, financial services, legal services, public works); and
- c. Any request for a grant from the Town toward costs of the event are not guaranteed and will be at the sole discretion of Town Council.

Administration would have no concerns in giving the Kingsville Highland Games logo and Facebook page to any Kingsville-based Not-for-Profit Corporation who applies to Administration to use the logo and Facebook page with the intention of operating the Highland Games in Kingsville in 2023.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is recommended that FOL, MG and CIB budgets continue to be approved through the budget process.

The following Table summarizes the (unofficial) operating results for each Special Event committee in 2022. For clarity, the cost of staff time has not been applied to any of these budgets.

	2022 Revenue	2022 Expense	Less: Reserve Transfer	Net Cost
FOL	\$11,690	\$24,085		\$12,395
CIB	\$5,111	\$14,761		\$9,650
Migration Festival	\$6,285	\$16,711		\$10,426
Highland Games	\$81,141	\$99,841	\$12,560	\$6,140

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

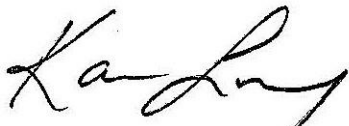
Each Special Events Advisory Committee reviews the events through an environmental lens and works to adhere to banning single use plastic.

CONSULTATIONS

Migration Festival Advisory Committee
Communities in Bloom Advisory Committee
Highland Games Advisory Committee

Senior Management Team

PREPARED BY:



Karen Loney, MA
Manager of Recreation Programs and Special Events

REVIEWED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Norton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Norton
Chief Administrative Officer