



STAFF REPORT

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG

Community Services, Protection, and Economic Development Standing Committee

Report to: Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillors

From: Brian Geerts: Director, Community Services
Adam Giddings; Director, Corporate Services & Treasurer

Standing Committee Date: 27 November 2024

Report Number: COMM-2024-026

Council Meeting Date: 18 December 2024

Subject: **Cobourg Museum Foundation MOU**

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1. Recommendation:

WHEREAS the Committee adopt the following recommendation and refer to Regular Council for final approval.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receive this report for information purposes; and

FURTHER THAT Council approve the attached Memorandum of Understanding and authorize the Mayor and Clerk to execute the document, subject to the finalization of minor terms and conditions by staff and the Cobourg Museum Foundation.

2. Executive Summary:

The Cobourg Museum Foundation has been a recipient of grant funding through the Community Grants program for many years. This funding typically included payment of their annual property taxes. During the review process for the 2024 grants program, Council determined that shifting recipients of annual long-

standing grants to a memorandum of understanding format would be more effective. This report and the attached MOU complete this transition for the Cobourg Museum Foundation. Separate MOUs are in progress for other organizations.

3. Background

This report relates to the following resolution of Council, related to report LS-2024-011 as discussed during the 2024 budget process.

Report No. LS-2024-011 from the Grant and Policy Writer regarding Municipal Community Grants:

WHEREAS at the Strategic Priorities and Policy Standing Committee meeting on April 2, 2024, the Committee considered Report No. LS- 2024-011 from the Grant and Policy Writer regarding Municipal Community Grants.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receive the staff report for information purposes; and

FURTHER THAT Council approve \$33,025 in cash and in-kind grants per the Council breakdown from January 2024 budget deliberations; and

FURTHER THAT Council authorize staff to enter Memorandum of Understandings (MOU's) with long-term cash and in-kind grant recipients per the organizations mentioned in Report No. LS-2024-011, effective January 1, 2025; and

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to develop a Concert Hall Room Allocation policy; and

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to develop a draft Community Grant Program for 2025 that would identify a decision-making protocol for a Task Force to be appointed by Council.

4. Discussion:

The Cobourg Museum Foundation maintains and operates the Sifton-Cook Heritage Centre at 141 Orr St, Cobourg. The museum operates seasonally, with regular hours during the tourist season and special events delivered at other times of the year. The Museum maintains an active website with its history and a detailed history of the Town of Cobourg and area:

[The History of Cobourg - Cobourg and Area Museum](#)

All levels of government invest in museums to ensure that cultural heritage and identity are maintained. Museums ensure that future generations can understand and appreciate their cultural heritage. They increase opportunities for education and lifelong learning and offer inspiration for creativity and inspiration by learning from the past. Museums contribute to tourism revenue and add to the diverse offerings for cultural experiences. Museums often feature programs or displays for social inclusion, ensuring under-represented groups are showcased in their contributions to the cultural and historical fabric of the area. Museums enhance civic pride, displaying the durability of people in tough times and changes in culture.

Through all these areas, it becomes apparent that making a profit is not the primary purpose of museums. Operating a financially viable museum requires a diversified financial strategy.

For the Sifton-Cook Heritage Centre, a site-specific MOU has been drafted to clarify the relationship and responsibilities of the Town and the Cobourg Museum Foundation; the draft is attached to this report. Beyond the annual payment of property taxes, practical operational details have been added to the MOU to ensure a smooth transition from the annual community grants program to the MOU. For example, the ownership of tourism/directional signs for the SCHC is clarified in the MOU.

5. Financial Impact and Budget

Operating public museums can be very financially challenging, as user fees (entry fees) are not typically enough to sustain the operation. Museums typically seek:

- Public funding from all levels of government,
- Donations and sponsorships,
- Partnerships, such as offering educational programs for schools,
- Earned revenue through special events or fundraisers,
- Memberships or subscription models,
- Crowdfunding or community campaigns,
- Volunteer support to reduce financial burden,
- Capital campaigns using financial commitments or endowment funds to fund operating and capital budgets,
- Tourism and marketing dollars to collaborate and partner with other local organizations.

Annual property taxes for 141 Orr St, the location of the Sifton Cook Heritage Centre, will average approximately \$4600.00 per year for the duration of the term. As stormwater costs used to be included in property taxes during the years

when CMF received community grant funding, it is understood that stormwater fees will be included in the scope of the MOU based on an interpretation of past practice.

At an estimated value starting at \$4500.00/per year for property taxes for the term. This MOU has an estimated value of \$56,000, noted as foregone revenue (assuming a 2% inflation average for 10 years).

6. Relationship to Council's Strategic Plan Priorities 2023 to 2027 and beyond:

Thriving Community

Maintain resiliency and competitiveness through investments in people and resources in collaboration with other public sector agencies and levels of government.

Service Excellence

Make it easier for residents to access the services they want.

Sustainability

Take a community approach to making the future of Cobourg equitable, resilient, and sustainable.

7. Public Engagement:

This report was posted publicly as part of the Committee and Council process, and is in response to the public Community Grants program which was evaluated publicly in April, 2024.

8. Attachments:

Cobourg Museum Foundation MOU Draft

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Cobourg Museum Foundation MOU.docx
Attachments:	- MOU Sifton Cook 2025-2034 Draft.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Nov 20, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Tracey Vaughan, Chief Administrative Officer - Nov 20, 2024 - 3:49 PM