

Council Memo



To	City Council
Service Area	Public Services
Date	Tuesday, June 25, 2024
Subject	Guelph Centre for Visual Art Feasibility Study Parameters

At the June 4, 2024 meeting of Committee of the Whole, in response to report #2024-261 [Drill Hall Responses to Expressions of Interest and Planned Future Use](#), the following motions were passed for which staff are now providing supplementary information for Council's consideration.

Motion #1

That Council direct staff to explore an agreement with the Guelph Centre for Visual Art (GCVA) board, for the lease of 72 Farquhar (the Drill Hall), providing a time limited window ending June 2025 for the GCVA to secure commitments for the required resources needed to convert the facility into a functioning community arts centre. Recognizing that no additional financial commitment from the City is approved, staff will work with GCVA to explore alternative funding opportunities.

In response to the above motion, City staff would like to provide the clarification that we do not have capacity within staff work plans to assist GCVA with fundraising efforts, and are concerned that there could be a risk of being in competition for the same private or public sector funds that we already are pursuing to support both our cultural programming as well as our City facilities including Guelph Museums, River Run Centre and the new Central Public Library. Notwithstanding that concern, City staff could work with the GCVA to provide letters of support for any grant applications that they may be submitting provided that the City is not applying for the same grant, and to pass along any information that we become aware of pertaining to applicable grant programs that may be suitable.

There was also a question at Committee of the Whole on June 4, 2024, regarding possible alternate funding and lease / ownership scenarios. Currently, as stated, the City does not currently have funding within their long-term capital plan to support further restoration and revitalization of the Drill Hall as it was not clear what the final use of the building would be. Likewise, there is no available operating dollars to support an additional community benefit agreement to support an operating subsidy. If Council were to direct capital or operating funding, it would need to be added as part of the upcoming Multi-Year Budget confirmation, and could be under one of the following scenarios:

- A. The City could lease the building to the GCVA for a nominal annual fee in its current "as is" condition, with no further capital or operating funding provided.
- B. The City could sell the building to the GCVA for a nominal charge in its current "as is" condition with no further capital or operating funding provided.
- C. The City could complete the remaining estimated \$5M in capital repairs needed to finish the life safety and other requirements to enable basic occupancy, and then sell the building to the GCVA for a nominal charge, with no further operating funding provided.
- D. The City could complete the remaining estimated \$5M in capital repairs needed to finish the life safety and other requirements to enable basic occupancy, and then lease the building to the GCVA for a nominal charge, with or without annual operating funding provided through a Community Benefit Agreement.

Based on how motion #1 is worded, staff would be pursuing the consideration of scenario A with the GCVA for reporting back by June 2025. From a risk management perspective, while no further capital or operating funding will be provided to GCVA, there will be a City budget requirement to maintain the building to a certain life safety/occupancy standard given City-ownership and lease model.

Motion #6

That staff be directed to allocate up to \$10,000 from the unspent 2024 Community Investment Strategy account, to be paid to the Guelph Centre for Visual Arts, and used towards conducting a formal feasibility study for the potential future use of the Drill Hall, which must be completed and made public no later than December 31, 2024, subject to the satisfaction of the Deputy CAO of Public Services.

Staff have had a discussion with representatives from the GCVA about how they would undertake a formal feasibility study for the potential future use of the Drill Hall. The City will need the following included to satisfy the requirements for the funding to be allocated:

- Independent consultant hired to lead the study
- Addressing of equity and inclusion considerations to respond to the concerns of equity deserving artists in the community
- Broad-based engagement with wide ranging diversity and representation across various arts constituencies and throughout the community
- Demonstration of how accessibility will be achieved in its various forms and functions

City staff will require bi-monthly progress meetings with the GCVA for updates on the feasibility study, in advance of the final report being submitted.

One suggestion for Council's consideration may be regarding the timing for completion of this feasibility study. In discussion with representatives from the GCVA, they expressed that a completion date of December 31, 2024 may be challenging, and there was a request that the feasibility study completion date could be shifted to no later than the end of Q1, 2025 to allow three additional months for fulsome community engagement.

Attachments

None

This memo was approved by:

Danna Evans
General Manager, Culture & Recreation
Public Services
519-822-1260 extension 2621
danna.evans@guelph.ca

Jodie Sales
General Manager, Strategic Initiatives & Intergovernmental Services
Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
519-822-1260 extension 3617
jodie.sales@guelph.ca

This memo was recommended by:

Colleen Clack-Bush
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Public Services
518-822-1260 extension 2588
colleen.clack-bush@guelph.ca