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Town of Aurora
Committee of the Whole Report
No. CMS24-021

Subject: Aurora Historical Society – Hillary House Considerations

Prepared by: Robin McDougall

Department: Community Services

Date: June 4, 2024

Recommendation

1. That Report No. CMS24-021 be received; and
2. That the Town consult with the Aurora Historical Society and its members to receive their input on the future of Hillary House; and
3. That the Town and the Aurora Historical Society together host public consultations on the future of Hillary House; and
4. That staff report back to Council following these consultations with recommendations on the Hillary House.

Executive Summary

The Aurora Historical Society (AHS) has reached out to the Town expressing an interest in initiating discussions about the long-term sustainability of the Hillary House. This report brings the request from AHS forward for Council consideration.

- Letter from AHS was received requesting the Town to enter discussions regarding Hillary House
- Staff held an initial meeting with the AHS Co-Presidents to consider next steps

Background

Letter from AHS was received requesting the Town to enter discussions regarding Hillary House

The Aurora Historical Society reached out to Town staff and expressed their interest in entering discussions regarding the future sustainability of the Hillary House. The letter was received by email on March 5, 2024. The letter included a motion that was passed by their membership which stated:

"THAT the Membership of the Aurora Historical Society authorize the Board of Directors to enter into discussions with the Town of Aurora to explore options with respect to ensuring the long-term sustainability of Hillary House, and to report back to the Membership."

The Hillary House is a designated National Historic Site and has been maintained and preserved by a volunteer Board, its membership and community volunteers. Through annual fundraising events, donations and grants, the AHS has been able to maintain the facility and property over the years, but they are facing steeper challenges as the building continues to age and their volunteer base is dwindling. By way of a recent Building Condition Assessment, the repairs required on the building surpass the level of financial support that the AHS can provide on their own. The AHS is looking to the Town to work together on exploring options for the future sustainability of the building and property.

Analysis

Staff held an initial meeting with the AHS Co-Presidents to consider next steps

As a result of receiving the letter, staff set up a meeting with the Co-Presidents to consider how best to proceed with their request. It was during those discussions that staff recommended that representatives from AHS present their request to Council for consideration. Representatives from AHS will attend today's meeting to share their request and to answer any questions.

Assuming Council is interested in exploring options, the recommendations in this report will help establish next steps.

Advisory Committee Review

Not applicable for this report, however, in future as part of the consultation, staff could seek input from the Heritage Advisory Committee.

Legal Considerations

The property is subject to a Heritage Easement Agreement with the Ontario Heritage Foundation which contains obligations on the owner of the property to maintain the Hillary House and barn “...in as good and sound state of repair as a prudent owner would normally do...” to avoid deterioration of the heritage elements of the building. The owner is able to undertake repairs, however, any repairs, reconstruction or similar act that materially affects the appearance or construction of the heritage elements would require the approval of the Ontario Heritage Foundation.

Financial Implications

Depending upon the outcome of the sustainability plan and the Town’s participation in that plan, it may result in both capital and operating financial implications of which the Town has not considered as part of its existing multi-year budgets. These financial implications will become clearer upon the conclusion of the Town’s consultations with the Hillary House’s stakeholders. Staff’s upcoming report upon the conclusion of the consultations will offer greater detail in this regard.

Communications Considerations

This report will be posted to the Town’s website. Mor information in the follow-up report from staff will help determine the communications required.

Climate Change Considerations

The recommendations in this report do not impact greenhouse gas emissions or impact climate change adaptation.

Link to Strategic Plan

Exploring the Hillary House Considerations supports the following Strategic Plan goals and key objectives:

Supporting an exceptional quality of life for all in its accomplishment in satisfying requirements in the following key objectives within these goal statements:

- Invest in sustainable infrastructure
- Celebrating and promoting our culture
- Strengthening the fabric of our community

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. Council may provide further direction.

Conclusions

The Aurora Historical Society reached out to the Town seeking interest in exploring options together on the future sustainability of the Hillary House. Staff are seeking Council's approval to proceed with those discussions.

Attachments

1. Aurora Historical Society – Letter February 28, 2024

Previous Reports

None

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on May 16, 2024

Approvals

Approved by Robin McDougall, Director, Community Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer