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Town of Aurora  
**Committee of the Whole Report**  
No. CMS24-010

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**Subject:** Town Square Resident Theatre Group

**Prepared by:** Phil Rose, Manager of Cultural Services

**Department:** Community Services

**Date:** April 2, 2024

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## Recommendation

1. That Report No. CMS24-010 be received; and
2. That the Town enter into a five-year agreement with Marquee Theatrical Productions Inc. to be Aurora Town Square's Resident Theatre Group on terms set out in this report.

## Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to obtain authorization from Council to execute a new five-year agreement between Marquee Theatrical Productions Inc. ("Marquee") and the Town of Aurora ("Town") for the consistent use of Aurora Town Square by Marquee at a reduced rental rate to host a variety of educational classes, camps and workshops focused on musical theatre and drama for the period from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2028.

- As a volunteer driven and professionally managed community organization, Marquee is one of the Town's most active Cultural Partners.
- The proposed agreement sets out parameters to establish a collaborative partnership for the consistent activation of Town Square that benefits both parties, and the community as a whole.
- In exchange for consistent use of Town Square, ongoing volunteer support at Town special events, and program collaboration, Marquee would be provided a 25 per cent discount on not-for-profit rental rates.

## Background

One of the main goals of Town Square is to help amplify the impact of the Town's Cultural Partners through expanded collaboration. Marquee has been an important part of Town Square's development, and the Town and Marquee have worked to strengthen their partnership in preparation for Town Square's opening.

Marquee has provided integral feedback into the design of the Performance Hall with the understanding that they would be one of the key players activating the space upon opening. Mutually beneficial partnerships such as this will strengthen the cultural sector and contribute to a wider range of quality programming at Town Square.

As detailed in the Town Square Business Plan, the Aurora Cultural Centre (ACC) will provide technical production services for all Town Square performances, including those to be hosted by Marquee. The executive directors of Marquee and ACC have met to discuss Marquee's technical production needs and have come to a mutual understanding of what is required for Marquee performances. Both organizations are excited to work together at Town Square.

## Analysis

**As a volunteer driven and professionally managed community organization, Marquee is one of the Town's most active Cultural Partners.**

Marquee was founded in 2003 and is an award-winning registered charitable community theatre group and performing arts school located in Aurora. Marquee offers a variety of education classes, camps and workshops centred on acting, improvisation, voice instruction and dancing. They support the development of Aurora's youth and contribute to the local economy through various volunteer and employment opportunities.

Marquee is an active Cultural Partner and supports various Town events by providing volunteer services and programing support for which they receive a small honorarium that does not equal the value of their services or extent of their contributions. The following table details the level of support Marquee has provided the Town over the last ten plus years.

<b>Event</b>	<b>Volunteer support provided by Marquee</b>
Santa Under the Stars	Marquee has participated in the parade since 2012, contributing a float each year.
Haunted Forest	As a contributing partner since 2012, and throughout Covid, Marquee has supported this event with interactive displays along the event trail.
Christmas Market	Marquee has provided full theatre shows at this event prior to Covid, which will resume this year.
Town Staff Kids Holiday Party	Marquee has provided entertainment at the staff party from 2019 to 2022.
Teen Idol	Marquee has been an integral supporter of Teen Idol by helping with promotions and providing judges. Since 2022, this event has transitioned to Aurora's Performing Arts Festival spearheaded by Marquee.
Movies in the Park	From 2018 to 2020, Marquee has provided entertainment at the start of each movie that aligns with the movie's characters and plot.
Concerts in the Park	Marquee participated in the opening concert of the 2019 season featuring child performers with their Travelling Troupe.
Cultural Campfire	As part of Culture Days, Marquee provided improv entertainment for the Cultural Campfire.
Family Campfire	In 2021, as a Covid measure, Marquee provided entertainment for Family Campfire nights.

The proposed agreement sets out parameters to establish a collaborative partnership for the consistent activation of Town Square that benefits both parties, and the community as a whole.

The purpose of the agreement is to:

- Ensure the spaces at Town Square are vibrant and active with meaningful cultural and community programming geared to a wide age range and skill level.
- Provide increased opportunities for both parties to work together on new and diverse programming that will benefit the community.
- Ensure dynamic space usage at Town Square and high quality in-demand programs and services from a trusted Cultural Partner that has successfully operated in Aurora for over 20 years.

As part of the agreement, Marquee would be provided approximately 390 hours each year at a 25 per cent reduced rate, scheduled by Town staff in accordance with the Town Square Space Usage and Permitting Policy. Marquee would have access to all spaces at Town Square based on availability, but their programming would predominantly take place in the Performing Arts Dance Studio, Performance Hall, and one of the program rooms. The extent of their proposed programming is detailed in the following table:

Room	Program Type								Total
	Drama	Elite Musical Theatre	Kinder/Junior	Senior	Concert	Showcase	Vocal/Recital	Adult Cast Rehearsal	
Dance Studio	0	78	0	0	24	0	12	30	<b>144</b>
Performance Hall	27	33.5	114	30	0	12	0	0	<b>216.5</b>
Program Room	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>26</b>
<b>Total</b>									<b>386.5</b>

Marquee is also committed to collaborating with the Town to introduce new revenue-generating programs at Town Square, such as pantomime and dinner theatre.

**In exchange for consistent use of Town Square, ongoing volunteer support at Town special events, and program collaboration, Marquee would be provided a 25 per cent discount on not-for-profit rental rates.**

Assuming a 1.75 per cent rate of inflation per year, the proposed fees that would be payable by Marquee are as follows:

- 2024 – to be determined based on construction completion and opening date
- 2025 - \$34,500
- 2026 - \$35,104
- 2027 - \$35,718
- 2028 - \$36,343

for a total of \$141,665 between 2025 and 2028.

Marquee may also require the use of the Town's box office ticketing system, for which the following rates would apply:

<b>Fee</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Handling/Processing	\$2.00 per ticket plus 3% on final ticket price
Admin	\$200 flat rate

Any additional fees collected by the Town for technical production services would be remitted to the ACC which is responsible for this function.

In accordance with the details described above, staff are recommending a five-year agreement with Marquee, with an option to renew for an additional five years.

### **Advisory Committee Review**

Not applicable.

### **Legal Considerations**

A new agreement is being proposed between the Town and Marquee to govern the use of Town Square space for the delivery of musical theatre and drama programming. If approved by Council as requested in this report, staff will be authorized to negotiate, finalize and execute a new five-year agreement with Marquee, based on the parameters

set out in this report. Any proposed agreement will be reviewed and approved by the Town's Legal Services Division.

## **Financial Implications**

Should the Town proceed with an offer of a 25 per cent discount on its not-for-profit rental rates to Marquee, it will forego \$47,222 in rental revenues between 2025 and 2028. It is anticipated that this revenue loss will be offset through new revenue generating programs supported by Marquee; as well as other expenditures savings through Marquee's provision of volunteer services and program support.

## **Communications Considerations**

Communications will inform the public by posting this report on the website.

## **Climate Change Considerations**

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

## **Link to Strategic Plan**

The Resident Theatre Agreement with Marquee 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
- Encourage an active and healthy lifestyle
- Strengthening the fabric of our community

## **Alternative(s) to the Recommendation**

1. Council may ask staff to amend certain aspects of the agreement through further discussion with Marquee.
2. Council may provide further direction.

## **Conclusions**

Staff recommend that Council authorize the execution of a new five-year agreement between Marquee and the Town to govern the use of Town Square by Marquee at a reduced rental rate to host a variety of educational classes, camps and workshops focused on musical theatre and drama.

## **Attachments**

None.

## **Previous Reports**

None.

## **Pre-submission Review**

Agenda Management Team review on March 14, 2024

## **Approvals**

**Approved by Robin McDougall, Director, Community Services**

**Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer**