



REQUEST FOR DECISION

MEETING DATE: March 28, 2022

TITLE: Spruce Grove & District Agricultural Society Preservation of Archives

DIVISION: Community & Protective Services

SUMMARY:

As directed by Council at the November 8, 2021 Committee of the Whole, Administration has completed a review of the opportunities to protect and preserve the archival documents currently being housed in a small metal industrial trailer on the Spruce Grove and District Agricultural Society Grounds. Administration will continue to work closely with the Spruce Grove and District Agricultural Society and Archives volunteers to address the risk to these historical, community resources.

PROPOSED MOTION:

A motion is not required.

BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS:

The Spruce Grove and District Agricultural Society (Ag Society) oversees the Archives standing committee of their organization. As such, they currently are responsible for the collection. The collection is the result of community volunteers who have meticulously and carefully collected and preserved photographs, books, files and other documents that contain the community's history. These records and documents are housed in a typical industrial trailer on the Ag Society grounds and are subject to various environmental hazards. In addition, the number of dedicated volunteers responsible for the collection is now down to two and this also increases the urgency in the need to digitize the collection.

Short Term

The Ag Society is currently pursuing the purchase and use of software called PastPerfect, which is designed for museums and the cataloging of historic artifacts and documents. This software is used in other regional museums as well. Pursuing a separate license for the archival documents with the same software would enable volunteers to be cross-trained, create a separate data-set in case the collection was ever to move to another steward, and eliminate any potential confusion for items catalogued in the museum and the archives with the same numbers. In addition to the cataloguing software, the equipment required to transfer the files into electronic data is also required, along with the human resources to complete the task.

Administration has identified a number of potential grants that could be completed and submitted by the Ag Society to assist in the funding and licensing of the required software, equipment and human resources required to complete the digitization of the archival records. Administration will work with the Ag Society to complete those applications over the remaining time in 2022 and complete detailed cost estimates to complete the project. If required, additional requests for financial support will be brought to Council for consideration during the Corporate Planning process.

Interim/Long Term

With the potential move of the Allied Arts Council to the proposed Civic Centre location, there would be available space at the downtown Spruce Grove Library to create an archives area that would be environmentally controlled and protected. In consultation with the Library Director, this is a welcomed and supported plan.

While the current preference of the Ag Society is to maintain the archival collection on the Ag Society grounds, the Board agreed that until there was a space that met the environmental requirements of the collection, an interim location in the downtown would be acceptable.

The Ag Society is also considering a longer-term strategy for the archival collection on their current site, however this is in the very preliminary stages and will take significant resources and time to implement.

OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES:

Council can choose to make the following motion:

THAT the City financially support the digitization of the archival collection in 2022 for \$85,000.

This amount is currently not budgeted in the approved 2022-24 Corporate Plan and the Ag Society would likely lose out on the possibility of grants being investigated should the work start earlier.

CONSULTATION / ENGAGEMENT:

The Spruce Grove and District Ag Society, Archives volunteers, City of Spruce Grove Director of Information Systems and the Spruce Grove Library Director have been engaged in the discussions and are in agreement with the options and strategies being proposed.

The City's Information Systems department is currently reviewing the software from security and risk perspectives.

IMPLEMENTATION / COMMUNICATION:

Administration will continue to support the Ag Society in their efforts to digitize and protect the archive collection through grant applications and other supports. Additional resources required for the completion of the digitization will be brought forward for consideration during the 2023 Corporate Planning process.

IMPACTS:

The importance of the preservation of historic records and archival documents is critical to the cultural heritage of a community.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Initial financial cost estimates for the digitization process for the current archival collection is approximately:

Staffing: \$80,000 (2080 hours) (one staff for one year)

Equipment: \$5,000

Software: (\$750 One-Time and \$2,000/year)

This would need to be confirmed and reassessed once grant dollars are determined.

STRATEGIC VISION ELEMENT:

Where People Choose to Experience Community - A vibrant place for community involvement and social wellness

RELATED GOAL:

Spruce Grove has a diverse arts and culture environment that reflects the interests and needs of the community.