



PORT COLBORNE

Subject: Canal Days – Museum By-law Exemptions

To: Council

From: Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

Report Number: 2024-148

Meeting Date: July 23, 2024

Recommendation:

That Chief Administrative Office Report 2024-148 be received; and

That the Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum be granted an exemption from By-law No. 7026/63/22 to permit the discharge of firearms (without ammunition) for a historical demonstration during the 2024 Canal Days Marine Heritage Festival; and

That the Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum be granted an exemption from By-law No. 5642/73/11 to permit camping on the Museum grounds for a historical demonstration during the 2024 Canal Days Marine Heritage Festival.

Purpose:

This report is presented to Council in order for the Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum (the Museum) to obtain an exemption from the City's Discharge of Firearms By-law and from the by-law that regulates camping in City parks.

Background:

By-law 7026/63/22 Being a by-law to regulate the discharge of firearms and bows in the City of Port Colborne regulates the discharge of firearms within the City and states that "no person shall discharge a Firearm or Bow in the City except in accordance" with the by-law.

By-law 5642/73/11 Being a by-law to provide for permission to camp and to establish rules and regulations for camping in H.H. Knoll Park, Lions Park, Nickel Beach and Centennial Park in the City of Port Colborne regulates camping in City parks and states that camping in municipal parks shall only be allowable by permit for significant

community or special events and upon the approval of the Council of the Corporation of the City of Port Colborne...”.

Discussion:

Traditionally, the Museum provides an extensive slate of activities during the annual Canal Days Marine Heritage Festival (Canal Days). These activities include historical reenactments of the typical life of infantry and soldiers during the War of 1812. In order to host these reenactments, Museum staff are requesting by-law exemptions that would permit the discharge of firearms (without ammunition) and camping on the Museum grounds.

Discharge of Firearms

During Canal Days, the Museum host War of 1812 reenactments that include musket firing demonstrations and the discharge of small canons. These demonstrations are enjoyed by Museum visitors and described by Museum staff as a ‘fan favourite’. The discharge of firearms does not use ammunition, just a powder that makes a bang and generates smoke. Even though there is no ammunition, safety practices are in place that include roping off the area so that the public is not close to the demonstration and firing towards a wall rather than an open area. The local Niagara Regional Police Sergeant is aware of the demonstrations and has offered no objection.

Staff believe that the demonstrations are permitted under section 12(i)(i) of the Discharge of Firearms By-law which states that “this by-law shall not apply to the discharge of a Firearm or Bow by a Person firing blank ammunition for the purposes of a ceremonial event, historical display or educational program”. Nonetheless, staff seek this exemption to ensure that there is certainty that the museum is compliant with the By-law 7026/63/22.

Camping

During Canal Days, the reenactors camp overnight on the Museum grounds in historically accurate canvas wedge tents. The tents are large enough for one person to sleep in and are normally left up during the day to demonstrate typical camp life for soldiers during the War of 1812. Most groups have about three or four tents and set up other historically accurate items in the camp to show how they would cook and live while camped during battle.

The Acting Deputy Fire Chief is aware of the plans to allow camping and has offered no objection.

Staff seek an exemption from By-law 7026/63/22 to permit camping on the Museum grounds during Canal Days.

Internal Consultations:

Staff from Recreation and Events, By-law Services, and the Chief Administrative Officer have taken a role in preparing this report.

The need for by-law exemptions was also discussed at meetings of the Special Events Response Team and the Canal Days Committee.

Niagara Regional police have been consulted on the discharge of firearms and the Fire Department has been consulted on the camping activity.

Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications associated with the granting of the requested by-law exemptions.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

The initiative contained within this report supports the following pillar(s) of the strategic plan:

- Welcoming, Livable, Healthy Community
 - Economic Prosperity
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Conclusion:

The Museum would like exemptions to City by-laws in order to provide historical reenactments that include the discharge of firearms (without ammunition) and camping on the Museum grounds during the Canal Days Marine Heritage Festival.

Staff recommend granting the exemptions so that Museum visitors can enjoy the typical Canal Days programming that has been provided in the past.

Respectfully submitted,

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Report Approval:

All reports reviewed and approved by the Department Director and also the City Treasurer when relevant. Final review and approval by the Chief Administrative Officer.