



Subject: Downtown BIA Pilot Project with Farmers' Market

To: Council

From: Chief Administrative Office

Report Number: 2021-67

Meeting Date: March 8, 2021

Recommendation:

That Chief Administrative Office Report 2021-67 be received;

That Council approves the Downtown BIA managing the farmers' market as a two-year pilot project; and

That Council direct the Economic Development Officer to work with the Downtown BIA on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and an amended by-law.

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to update Council on a proposal from the Downtown Business Improvement Area (BIA) to manage Port Colborne's farmers' market on a two-year trial basis and to seek Council approval for this arrangement.

Background:

The Port Colborne farmers' market has been managed within the Community and Economic Development Department by a City-employed Market Clerk position. Due to restructuring within the City, the Community and Economic Development Department has been eliminated. This has resulted in leaving the Market Clerk position vacant. The Downtown BIA has approached City staff with a proposal to manage the farmers' market as a two-year pilot project. City staff would continue to be involved, working with the Downtown BIA regarding logistics, set-up, and garbage removal. A copy of the BIA's proposal is attached as an Appendix to this report.

Discussion:

There are other examples in Ontario where the BIA manages and operates the farmer's market. Throughout the province 18% of farmers' market are managed by the municipality and in most of these cases, it involves a City owned building. The remaining 82% are managed by BIA's, service groups or other not-for-profit organizations.

In order to undertake this new opportunity, the City's by-law for the farmers' market would need to be amended to designate the Downtown BIA Administrator as the Market Clerk to oversee the operations of the farmer's market. The by-law will also need to be amended to change the "Director" from the Director of Community and Corporate Services to the Manager of Strategic Initiatives.

The BIA and City staff will report back to Council after the completion of one year.

Internal Consultations:

This proposal has been discussed between the CAO, the Director of Corporate Services, the City Clerk, the Manager of Strategic Initiatives, the Economic Development Officer, and the Events and Volunteer Coordinator.

Financial Implications:

The City has been requested to provide up to \$2,500 in start-up funding to the BIA for this initiative. The City has collected the fees from the vendors for the farmers' market in the past and had budgeted for \$4,000 in 2021 and those fees under this proposal would go to the BIA.

The farmers' market does not operate at a surplus for the City. Based on financial statements from 2018 and 2019, the City has incurred a deficit from the farmers' markets operations. The primary expense for the farmers' market is related to staff wages. 2018 and 2019 financial statements were determined to be more accurate representations of the numbers than the 2020 statement. In 2020, the farmers market did not run at full capacity due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. With the reorganization of the Community and Economic Department there is staff expense savings related to the Farmers market under this proposal and additional staff time savings have been re-allocated. We anticipate that the staff expense savings will exceed the \$4,000.00 in vendors fees budgeted in 2021.

Public Engagement:

This proposal has been discussed and approved by the Downtown BIA Board of Directors.

Conclusion:

The Downtown BIA has approached the City about managing the Port Colborne farmers' market for two years as a pilot project. This proposal has the support of the Downtown BIA Board of Directors. If Council approves this arrangement, staff are recommending that a joint Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) be prepared to outline responsibilities and expectations of both parties and the current farmers' market by-law be amended accordingly. This MOU and an amended by-law could come back within a staff report for the March 22 Council meeting.

Appendices:

- a. Letter from Downtown BIA Chair

Respectfully submitted,

Bram Cotton
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Report Approval:

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