

STAFF REPORT TO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Report Prepared By: Chris Barfoot, Director of Parks, Recreation and Culture
Report Reviewed By: Erin Anderson, Acting Chief Administrative Officer
Meeting Date: July 14, 2020
File No:
RE: **TREE, BENCH AND AMENITY DEDICATION POLICY**

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Committee recommend that Council:

1. Repeal Park Bench Donations Guidelines Policy 12-5810-A, and replace with a new policy to include the dedication of trees, benches and other amenities; and
2. Direct staff to prepare an amendment to the "Town of Ladysmith Fees and Charges Bylaw 2008, No. 1644" to:
 - a. increase the Memorial Park Bench Fee to \$3,950.00; and
 - b. add a "Program Renewal Fee" of \$1,050.00.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Dedicating a memorial bench, tree or other amenity is a meaningful and popular way to commemorate a loved one, particularly immediately following a loss. A suggested 10-year renewal term allows those who would like to continue funding a dedication an opportunity to do so, or to exit out of the program, thereby providing an opportunity for others.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION

CS 2019-123 That Council refer the matter of a tree and bench dedication process to staff for consideration and clarification, and report back to Council.

2000-324 That the Park Bench Program policy be ratified and implemented.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND:

The Park Bench Dedication Program Guidelines Policy was introduced in June of 2000 and since then, there has been just over 90 park bench or tree dedications made. The existing policy is attached for information. The policy facilitates the dedication or memorialization of individuals through plaques placed on park benches in select parks and boulevards. A program review was recently conducted to assess long-term sustainability and community access to the program and to ensure the program operates on a cost-neutral basis.

To ensure this limited resource is accessible to as many community members as possible, and that the program is sustainably funded, Staff propose that the Committee consider recommending that Council discontinue dedications in perpetuity, but rather introduce a 10-year renewable term. A term such as this allows those who would like to continue funding a dedication the opportunity to do so, or, if

requested, to withdraw from the program, thereby providing an opportunity for others.

The attached draft policy will replace the current Park Bench Donations Guidelines Policy 12-5810-A, and will include memorial or commemorative trees which have been approved in the past but without a formal or consistent process.

Implementation and Administration

If the Committee recommends that Council adopt a new policy, staff will begin implementation of the new Tree, Bench and Amenity Dedication Program immediately. Information will be provided on the Town's website including promotional material, application form and accompanying map identifying available locations for the dedicated benches, tables and trees.

Dedications that are nearing or have passed the 10-year mark will be identified and the donors will be sent a letter expressing the Town's gratitude for their donation explaining the new policy and informing the donor that they will have an additional 10 years from the date of notification to decide if they would like to renew or withdraw from the program. At the end of the 10-year term, donors choosing to renew will be asked to provide a Program Renewal Fee for an additional 10-year term. If a donation is discontinued, the plaque will be removed and returned to the donor. If a donor cannot be contacted, the Town will hold the plaque for a year and the location will be made available to the public for future donors.

If a response is not received, extensive efforts will be made to contact donors or family members.

In cases of financial hardship, staff will work with individuals and families to find workable solutions to continue their dedications.

ALTERNATIVES:

The Committee may recommend that Council not make any changes to Park Bench Donations Guidelines Policy 12-5810-A at this time.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The existing fee for memorial benches does not reflect current cost for purchase (both bench and plaque), installation, ongoing maintenance and administration of the program. The proposed policy includes an increase to the initial cost of the donation and the accompanying 10-year program renewal cost.

Staff have compared the proposed donation amounts to those of other municipalities to ascertain consistency within the region for this type of program. We have learned that Town benches are more costly due to the style and wood type which has less long-term maintenance cost associated with them. Moreover, the increased donation amount will be included in the Fees and Charges Bylaw so that it may be annually reviewed and updated to ensure that the Town continues to recover the costs associated with the program.

The cost of the purchase and planting of dedication trees shall be charged to the donor. This is to be based on the average cost for purchase, type of tree and installation by Town staff and subject to annual review.

The cost of the purchase of a park amenity will be evaluated on an individual basis due to current costs and item type.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no legal implications identified at this time.

CITIZEN/PUBLIC RELATIONS IMPLICATIONS:

The Town's dedication program remains a popular opportunity for community members to recognize loved ones, while simultaneously contribute to the enhancement of the Town's parks and open spaces. The proposed updates to the program will allow for increased opportunities for individuals to become involved as well as the necessary means for the Town to sustain the program.

The Committee may also request that Council consider a public engagement process involving current donors and the broader public prior to making a final decision on the proposed policy.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL INVOLVEMENT/IMPLICATIONS:

There is no interdepartmental involvement identified at this time, however Financial Services will collect and process application fees.

ALIGNMENT WITH SUSTAINABILITY VISIONING REPORT:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Complete Community Land Use | <input type="checkbox"/> Low Impact Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Green Buildings | <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-Use Landscapes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Innovative Infrastructure | <input type="checkbox"/> Local Food Systems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy Community | <input type="checkbox"/> Local, Diverse Economy |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable | |

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure | <input type="checkbox"/> Economy |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waterfront | |

I approve the report and recommendation(s).

Erin Anderson, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S):

- Draft Tree, Bench and Amenity Dedication Policy
- Area Comparison
- Park Bench Donations Guidelines Policy 12-5810-A