



AGENDA ITEM

Policy RC(9) County Support of Community Programs, Events & Activities - Update

May 28, 2020

BACKGROUND

Under the County's Recreation Policy RC(9), the County allots funding on an annual basis for community events in the County and surrounding urban municipalities. In 2020, the County awarded \$34,287 in funding to 26 groups, with events occurring throughout the year.

Since March, the current pandemic situation has affected most of the groups creating uncertainty as to the status of their events. Approximately seven of the groups have carried out all or a portion of their annual events while another eight have outright cancelled their events for 2020. The remaining events are still pending or have been postponed pending what happens with gathering restrictions over the next few months.

The issue before the County is what to do about funding that has been advanced to events that may not take place in 2020.

ANALYSIS

The purpose of Policy RC(9) is to fund community programs, events and activities that strengthen the quality of life of its residents and foster civic pride.

Of the 26 groups who received funding, only two are first-time applicants. Their events were one-time events and have for the time being been postponed. The remaining organizations have been hosting events in their communities for several years.

Of the over \$34,000 allocated in 2020, \$17,957 was allocated to two organizations, being the Lacombe Days Association, and the Town of Blackfalds for their respective community events. Both events have already been cancelled for the year.

Given the high degree of uncertainty related to events for 2020, Council has inquired as to what steps should be taken to protect the County's investments in these community events.



ALTERNATIVES:

1. Request return of funding from those organizations and events that have already cancelled their event for 2020. This provides the least risk to the County as it ensures that funds not used in 2020 are returned. It may be premature to implement this option as only 8 of the 26 groups have cancelled their events for the year.
2. Wait until the end of 2020 and determine which groups cancelled their events and then seek a return of that funding. The downside is that many of the grant allocations are small, over half are \$540 or less and some of these organizations may have incurred costs before the event took place. Most of these organizations also carry these events out on annual basis and will likely apply for funding again in 2021.
3. Rather than having the funding returned, give the option to the receiving organization of keeping the money. In exchange, the organizations would have to agree to use the funding for an event in 2021. The organization would also be prohibited from receiving County funding in 2021. Given that most of these organizations have hosted events on annual basis, it is likely that these events would continue in 2021. For those hosting one-time events which are cancelled, then the County would seek out return of that funding.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The County's 2020 operating budget includes provisions for the Policy RC(9) applications for each community. The funding has been allocated and paid out in 2020 in line with amount identified in the 2020 budget.

LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Lacombe County Council Policy RC(9) – County Support of Community, Program, Events, Activities.
2. Municipal Government Act, RSA 2000, c M-26 (MGA)
Section 3 of the MGA states the purposes of a municipality are:
 - (a) *to provide good government,*
 - (b) *to provide services, facilities, or other things that, in the opinion of Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the municipality, and*
 - (c) *to develop and maintain safe and viable communities.*

Section 180(1) of the MGA states that Council may act only by resolution or bylaw.



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Lacombe County sees the value in engaging and informing the public/stakeholders through a variety of mediums as outlined in the Policy AD(40): Public Participation Policy. The appropriate level of engagement for each public participation opportunity is selected on a project-to-project basis.

For this item, the following engagement will take place: Administration will inform the Public of Council’s decision through Council highlights, while organizations who have received funding will be informed directly of Council’s decision.

STRATEGIC PLAN

The following elements of the County’s Strategic Plan are relevant to this issue:

Our Vision: “An attractive, balanced and progressive community”.

Our Mission: “To build a safe and vibrant community through leadership, innovation and the development of healthy relationships”.

Key Principles: 1) “Fair and Objective in our decisions and in how we treat individuals”, and 2) “Accountability for our decisions and for our actions”.

Recreation Strategy: A. Pursue more recreational opportunities

Key Success Measures:

- Sustainability: “Current services are maintainable and provide benefits for the future, while minimizing negative impacts on the community”,
- Stakeholder Satisfaction: “Healthy relationships with neighbouring municipalities, communities and our citizens.”

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve the following resolution:

That municipalities and community groups that received funding through Lacombe County Policy RC(1) County Support of Community Programs, Events and Activities who have cancelled their 2020 events be allowed to retain their funding and use it for their 2021 events; and further, those municipalities and community groups who cancelled their events in 2020 and do not plan to host an event in 2021 be required to return their funding to the County.

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