



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee
From: Kate Sparrow
Director, Recreation & Cultural Services
Date: November 2, 2007
File:
Re: **Steveston Museum & Post Office**

Staff Recommendation

1. That the report be received for information
2. That Council send a letter to the Steveston Community Society thanking them for their support of the Steveston Historical Society and operation of the post office.

Kate Sparrow
Director, Recreation & Cultural Services
(4129)

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CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER 		
REVIEWED BY TAG	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
REVIEWED BY CAO 	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

Staff Report

Origin

At the September 10, 2007 Council meeting the following motion was adopted on consent from the July 24, 2007 Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee meeting:

- (1) That staff continue to work with the Steveston Historical Society to explore all viable options for continuing the operation of the post office as it is;*
- (2) That information containing precise details of the Tourism Richmond's proposal for the Steveston Museum building be provided to the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee;*
- (3) That staff explore the feasibility of a tri-party agreement, for operation of the Steveston Museum, Post Office and Visitor's Center from the same location, including details regarding size and necessary modifications to the building;*
- (4) That staff further investigate the option of keeping the building open as a Museum without the Post Office;*
- (5) That staff explore the option of establishing a different Society to operate the Steveston Post Office; and*
- (6) That staff communicate with the Steveston Community Society regarding their commitment and possible role in assisting the Steveston Historical Society and Museum to keep the Steveston Post Office operating.*

Analysis

- 1. Staff continue to work with the Steveston Historical Society (SHS) to explore all viable options for continuing the operation of the post office as it is*

Staff met with representatives of the SHS and a museums exhibit designer to explore viable options to increase the financial viability of the post office in order to maintain operations.

Option 1: Provide the Steveston Historical Society with a grant to offset operating costs of the museum and post office.

This would ensure that the museum remained open to the public and allow the Society to continue to operate the post office in the heart of Steveston Village regardless of the financial viability of the post office.

Option 2 : Improve programming in the Museum and park and upgrade the exhibits in the Museum.

It was determined that if the building and park were “brought to life” with an exhibit upgrade and increased programming, the resulting traffic in and around the building and park should lead to an increase in business for the post office as well as enhance the visitor experience and better tell the story of Steveston. This is in keeping with the SHS mandate and Goal 4 of the Museum & Heritage Strategy – A network of Museums, Historic Sites and Heritage Areas.

An additional level request has been submitted for ongoing funding to provide an operating grant to the Society to assist in keeping the museum accessible to the public and the post office open in the heart of the village.

An application through the City grants process has also been submitted by the SHS for assistance in programming the Museum and the park for 2008 should the additional level request not be successful. The grant outlines a pilot project for 2008 that would fund a small amount for supplies and a contract for programming staff who could work with the Society’s volunteers to provide additional services that would bring the Museum and Steveston’s story to “life.” Should the project be successful, ongoing resources will be identified as part of the Museum & Heritage Strategy Implementation Plan.

Upgraded exhibits could greatly enhance the visitor experience and better tell the Steveston Village story (the existing exhibits were installed over 20 years ago). More interactive exhibits would encourage both residents and visitors to return thereby increasing business in the post office.

The exhibit upgrade process could be phased. Phase 1 would be the exhibit design process which includes hiring an exhibit designer to work with Richmond Museum & Heritage Services staff and SHS volunteers to research and design appropriate exhibits. Funding for this phase will be taken from the Recreation & Cultural Services operating budget. Phase 2 and 3 would be the fabrication and installation of the exhibits. Costs for these phases will be determined upon final design and will be submitted through the Capital budget process.

This option enhances the opportunities for residents and visitors in Steveston and Richmond.

2. That information containing precise details of the Tourism Richmond’s proposal for the Steveston Museum building be provided to the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee

Under the direction of the newly appointed Director of Visitor and Member Services, Tourism Richmond is undertaking a market analysis to determine the needs for a year round visitor centre in Steveston. The research should be complete by December 2007. Current indications suggest that the Tunnel Visitor Centre is more appropriate for a year round operation due to a broader range of visitor traffic and Steveston may stay as a seasonal operation.

3. That staff explore the feasibility of a tri-party agreement, for operation of the Steveston Museum, Post Office and Visitor's Center from the same location, including details regarding size and necessary modifications to the building

A tri-party agreement is feasible but it would be cumbersome and time consuming to administer. Neither the Steveston Historical Society nor Tourism Richmond representatives were in favour of a tri-party agreement due to concerns particularly about space and potential complications with three operations (post office, museum and visitor centre) in one small building.

4. That staff further investigate the option of keeping the building open as a Museum without the Post Office

As part of Goal 4 in the Museum & Heritage Strategy – A Network of Museums, Historic Sites and Heritage Areas, the Steveston Museum could operate as a Museum as an addendum of the Richmond Museum & Heritage Services. This would require capital funding for renovations and exhibit development and upgrades in addition to ongoing operating funding for staffing to keep the building open to the public.

Capital

Funding

- removal of current post office space and renovation of walls and floor - \$2000;
- additional exhibits installed in former post office space – 150 sq ft @ \$300-500/sq.ft - \$45,000-75,000; and
- Current Exhibit Upgrade – The existing exhibits in the Steveston Museum were installed over 20 years ago. The exhibits could be upgraded to better tell the story of Steveston Village using different media including hands-on components to make the museum more interactive. These costs are estimated up to \$300,000 (600 square feet @ \$300 – 500/sq ft) according to industry standards.

The exhibit upgrade process could be phased. Phase 1 would be the exhibit design process which includes hiring an exhibit designer to work with Richmond Museum & Heritage Services staff and SHS volunteers to research and design appropriate exhibits mentioned above. Phase 2 and 3 would be the fabrication and installation of the exhibits

Operational Funding

- staffing – 2 auxiliary (PG 15 +12%) positions @ May – October, 10 am – 6 pm, Tuesday-Sunday and November- April, 10 am – 4 pm, Friday-Sunday.– \$83,000 to keep the building open and programming staff as sited in the City grant from the SHS

5. That staff explore the option of establishing a different Society to operate the Steveston Post Office

While Council could direct staff to establish another not-for-profit group to operate a post office out of the Steveston Museum building, it may be difficult to find volunteers to be involved in an operation that is not proving to be a financially viable operation as a stand alone business.

SHS has committed to working with the City to increase traffic through the Museum through increased programming and exhibit upgrades in order to make the Post Office a financially viable operation. To date, the additional postal outlet in Steveston has resulted in a slight decrease in business at the Steveston Museum Post Office.

6. That staff communicate with the Steveston Community Society regarding their commitment and possible role in assisting the Steveston Historical Society and Museum to keep the Steveston Post Office operating

At the August 27, 2007 Executive meeting of the Steveston Community Society it was approved “that the Steveston Community Society approve supporting the Steveston Museum Society with an honorarium of \$6000.”

These funds provide a financial one time “cushion” for 2007 for the Steveston Historical Society while they assess the effect of another postal outlet nearby.

Staff recommend continuing to work with SHS members to keep the post office open, develop and deliver additional programming in the Museum and the park and begin the exhibit design process to upgrade existing exhibits.

Financial Impact

No financial impact to the recommendation.

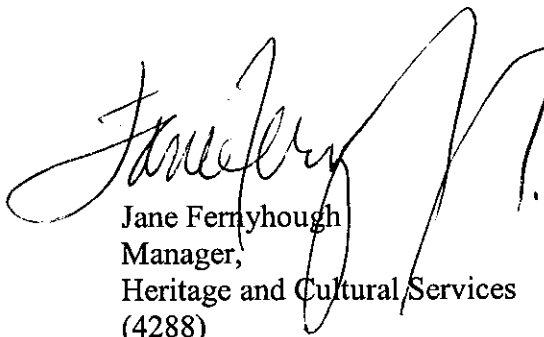
An additional level request for ongoing funding to provide an operating subsidy to enable operation of the Post Office and provide some programming to animate the Museum has been submitted in the 2008 budget process.

Conclusion

Additional programming to animate the Museum and park and an upgrade of the existing exhibits will benefit the Post Office and the City of Richmond with a more substantial heritage service in the centre of Steveston Village.



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