



Municipality of the District of Argyle

Item: Grants to organizations –
community halls

Date: January 28, 2020

VISION

We see Argyle as home to a healthy and thriving rural population. Our municipality promotes and supports economic and social opportunities for the region and engages in the active expression of our unique Acadian heritage. We are a place of choice for rural living and are widely recognized for our warm hospitality and joie de vivre. Surrounded by fresh air and cool ocean breezes, we work and play in the great outdoors. People choose to live in Argyle because of our commitment to each other, to our community and to our neighbors. Argyle is a place we are proud to call home.

Background:

4 years ago, the Municipal Council approved a 5-year policy on funding community halls. The project allowed for up to \$15,000 to be paid to 9 community halls across the municipality. We successfully funded all our active community halls in 4 years.

We are in the midst of changing our grants to organizations application forum from paper to an online version, streamlining the process for both staff and for the applicants. However, in this process, we require advice from Council as to how to address the community hall applications.

We have received feedback from Council that they really liked this way of funding community halls; allowing 3 applicants per year and taking turns funding each of them in a meaningful way was very successful. However, it was not meant to be a forever policy restarting at 15,000 every 5 years.

With the 5 year plan coming to an end a year in advance, we are asking Council to consider the following options:

1. Exclude the community hall requests as part of the grants to organization process, and consider it separate, same as we do with YASTA or other sister companies.
2. Include the community hall requests as part of the online application, and have their applications compete with all other non-profit applications.
3. Include the community hall requests as part of the online application, and restart the application process with no changes in funding (ie 15,000 per community hall per year, maximum of 3 halls per year)
4. Include the community hall requests as part of the online application and set aside an amount each year – same concept but less money.

MGA considerations:

Investing in a non-profit community hall is an allowable Municipal expense.

CAO's Analysis and Recommendation:

Option 1: First and foremost, it would be staff preference to use the online application function for all grant requests from non-profit organizations – or as many as we can – as the online function is designed to make it easier for both staff and the applicant. It is an option however, as the policy on community hall grants is technically a separate policy. However, this is an option of Council, albeit not our recommended course of action

Option 2: Again, this is at the discretion of Council, based on the survey results from Council, it appears that you do not wish to go back to providing small amounts to a multitude of halls, and prefer the policy that provided a larger sum of money for a meaningful capital improvement. Also, the survey was clear, that you prefer a capital contribution over an operations contribution.

Option 3: A continued support of 3 halls at \$15,000 (\$45,000 per year commitment) is a possible option. We have not completed any condition assessment of any of the community halls in any official capacity. There is no question that our project had a tremendous positive impact on each of the halls. Many halls used the funds to obtain additional funding to do additional work. Many halls used the funding to replace their heating system with heat pumps which are proving to be much more efficient. Increased accessibility to bathrooms and other facilities was also an area of investment.

This option is ideal and is consistent with the needs and wants of Council, except that we have made additional commitments to fire departments for truck funding support. This amount, being \$40,000 per year for the next 5 years, was not included in our budget at the time we created the community hall funding.

Option 4: Option 4 results in a continued support of community halls, but at a lesser amount. This option is the option of choice for staff, who is influenced by the following three factors:

- a. About \$135,000 was invested in community halls in the past 4 years, which is a considerable investment, and resulted in addressing much of the immediate capital needs (but not all of them);
- b. Additional grants to organizations issued to organizations such as fire departments, Pubnico Golf Course, Musee Acadienne and potentially others reduce our financial ability to maintain this level of investment;
- c. While capital is still needed in some community halls, it is generally a lesser need than it was before this policy.

Option 4 allows for a designated funding application for community halls, but at a lower threshold. For the purposes of this option, I would recommend an amount not exceeding \$16,000 (being up to \$8,000 per hall). Only two halls would receive funding per year, and those that apply and were denied for the current year would be pushed into next year's program.

Based on a brief description of the four options, staff recommend option 4. I would further recommend that the amount can be increased or decreased on an annual basis but that the amount per club would not change.

Suggested motion:

Move that staff include a budget line item of \$16,000 (or different amount) for 2020-21 to support community hall capital fund applications.

Move that the Community Hall policy be closed, and new guidelines to be incorporated in the revised Grants to Organizations Policy, and that the community hall leadership be engaged to explain the new program.