



Alternative formats and communication support available upon request. Please contact clerks@town.aylmer.on.ca or 519-773-3164 for assistance.

Date October 24, 2023
To Finance Committee – November 1, 2023
From Andy Grozelle, CAO
Josh Brick, Director of Corporate Legislative Services

Report No. CAO 68-23
Report Title 2024 Community Grants

Recommendation

That Report CAO 68-23, respecting 2024 Community Grants, be received as information; and,

That option ___ of the staff report be endorsed for inclusion in the 2024 Budget.

Executive Summary

On August 9, 2023, Aylmer Council established the 2024 Community Grant budget amount at a maximum of \$55,000. On September 18th received Community Grants were referred to the Finance Committee with a requirement for staff to evaluate the applications against the existing policy and make recommendations to Council.

Background

As outlined on August 9, 2023, Aylmer's historic contributions to community grants are comparatively high for a municipality of our population. While it is desirable to maintain a high level of support, that needs to be balanced against the reality of fiscal challenges

facing all municipalities. The minor reduction to a maximum of \$55,000 is reasonable and supported by staff.

Analysis

In considering the Community Grants policy staff reviewed the intention of the policy and evaluated the quality of applications.

Organization	Request	Ranking	Rationale
Kinsmen Club of Aylmer	\$2,500.00	A+	Santa Claus Parade and Canada Day Fireworks are both substantial Community events that attract many attendees and benefit the community.
Aylmer & East Elgin Agricultural Society	\$7,500.00	A+	Truck and Tractor Pull and Annual Fair are important events to the community that attract many attendees and benefit the community.
East Elgin Community Assistance Program	\$5,000.00	A	Program supports Corner Cupboard and other programs. Demonstrated need for financial support
Aylmer Lawn Bowling Club	\$2,000.00	A	Provides valuable recreational programming to the community. Funding helps offset costs of property taxes and watering.
Aylmer Area Community Band and Choir	\$1000.00	B+	Grant request meets criteria of policy
Aylmer Performing Arts Council	\$500.00	B+	Grant request meets criteria of policy
Knights of Columbus	\$1,400.00	B	Grant application is to provide funding to support soccer fields in an adjacent municipality.

Aylmer-Malahide Museum and Archives	\$20,000.00	B-	Large ongoing operational funding by Town/ Building redevelopment and sale was communicated to Town to be intended for 2024. Need details on resumption of service levels after pandemic, usership, exhibits and public opportunities.
Family Central	\$5,000.00	C	Receives \$70,000 in grant funding already from the tax levy. Application indicates funding to support salaries for employees that provide counseling or support. This is outside of our mandate as a lower-tier municipality.
Aylmer Cemetery	\$18,000	C or D	Application fails to demonstrate financial need as required within the policy.
	\$62,900		

County of Elgin Community Grant Program

It is worth noting that the County of Elgin currently provides a Community Grant Program, where “organizations and services can apply for supplementary funds to strengthen their responsiveness, effectiveness and resilience.” There are two (2) funding streams, being community services and festivals and events. The application deadline is November 10th of each year.

It could be suggested that several grant requests received for the 2024 Town program are better aligned with spheres of jurisdiction under the responsibility of the County of Elgin, and thus would be better suited for that application stream. More specifically, grant requests from the Aylmer-Malahide Museum and Archives and Family Central are both within the scope of services (Cultural/Library/Museum/Archival Services and Social Services) for which the County of Elgin currently delivers. The Town currently funds these services through the County taxation levy.

Regardless of the preferred approach, Council could consider directing staff to follow up with applicants directly to advise of the additional grant funding opportunity, especially for the aforementioned organizations that are seeking to deliver programs and services for which the County of Elgin is jurisdictionally responsible.

Aylmer Cemetery

The Aylmer Cemetery provides a valuable quality service to the residents of Malahide and Aylmer. The value of the Cemetery is not in question. In terms of the Community Grant Application there is an obligation for applicants to demonstrate a real financial need. The Cemetery's financial position is quite strong and indicates significant reserves established for items such as perpetual care. In addition, planned construction for a building in 2023 did not proceed. This would have allowed the Cemetery to retain the Town's \$18,000 grant contribution in 2023 depending upon how they decide to address their accounting.

As need is an important evaluation component of the Community Grant policy, the Aylmer Cemetery is ranked very low. This assessment is again not to question the value of services of the Cemetery. It is simply to indicate that reductions or non-issuance of a Community Grant in 2024 may result in the Cemetery drawing down their reserve positions slightly but cannot realistically be anticipated to impact the services provided.

Option One (1)

Council reduces the payment to the Aylmer Cemetery in 2024 to \$10,100 in order to achieve their established limit of funding for Community Grants of \$55,000.

Option Two (2)

Council spreads the required reduction of \$7,900 between the two lowest ranked Community Grant applications of Family Central and the Aylmer Cemetery. This would reduce the Family Central grant to \$1,050 and the Aylmer Cemetery grant to \$14,050.

Option Three (3)

Council spreads the required reduction of \$7,900 between the three lowest ranked Community Grant applications of Family Central, Aylmer Cemetery and Aylmer Malahide Museum and Archives. This would see a \$2,633 reduction for each of the applicants.

Option Four (4)

Council indicate that both the Aylmer Cemetery and the Family Central applications do not meet the minimum requirements for endorsement in 2024. This would reduce the overall grants amount endorsed in 2024 to \$39,900.

This approach would bring the Town of Aylmer somewhat closer to other municipalities funding levels. Such an option may not be politically saleable however it would reduce the 2024 taxation levy by an approximate quarter point.

Additional Considerations

In addition to any of the listed Options Council may also desire to consider a conditional approval provision for the Aylmer-Malahide Museum and Archives. The 2018-2022

Term of Council made a commitment to provide \$150,000 in capital funds to the museum's new location upon the sale of 14 East Street. This is pertinent to the Town as the sale of 14 East Street was anticipated to exceed \$150,000 which would allow the Town to create a reserve to address the annual requests from the museum.

Council may desire to place conditions upon a Community Grant to the museum. This could be in the form of not releasing funds until a plan is provided upon the sale of 14 East Street. This may take some time for the museum so Council could release 50% of the grant in the winter of 2024 and provide the remainder following Council receiving further details.

Conclusion

Council took a positive step in establishing a budgetary limit to Community Grants in 2024. Although it is never popular to not award grants to community groups or organizations, grants need to be evaluated within the broader budgetary process and pressures upon the Town.

As identified in the August 9, 2023, staff report, Council's 2024 established budget for Community grants in the amount of \$55,000 remains quite high for a municipality of our size. It is important to also note that non-award or reductions in funding do not reflect upon the value or services of any organization. Such outcomes only relate to the evaluation of the request against the existing Town policy. There is nothing preventing groups or organizations from coming forward in future years with improved applications and rationale for accessing the Community Grant program.

Strategic Priorities

This report supports the goals and objectives set out in [Council's Strategic Pillars](#). The goal it supports include: Pillar Five – Public Service Excellence.

Attachments

N/A

Respectfully,

Andy Grozelle
Chief Administrative Officer