



MUNICIPALITY OF THAMES CENTRE

REPORT NO. CS-009-24

TO: Mayor and Members of Council
FROM: Director of Community Services and Facilities
MEETING DATE: May 13, 2024
SUBJECT: Applications for Community Grants

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. CS-009-24 **BE RECEIVED** for information;

AND THAT Council **APPROVE** the remaining 2024 Community Grant funds be awarded to the Dorchester Dream Park Committee, Thorndale Agriculture Society and London Children's Museum as outlined in this report.

PURPOSE:

This report provides a summary of the applications received for the Community Grants along with providing recommendations from the Application Review Committee for Council's consideration.

BACKGROUND:

The 2024 budget includes \$40,000.00 for a new Community Grants Program.

At the March 11, 2024 meeting, Council approved the process to receive applications and award grants for the first year of this Program, and allocated \$31,600 of this budget to specific groups that have traditionally been receiving funds for the past two or more years. This leaves \$8,400.00 in the budget to consider awarding to applicants.

Applications were open until May 1, 2024, with seven applications received before the deadline, and an eight the next day, totaling over \$60,000.00 in grant funding being requested.

The application evaluation committee met on May 2nd to review the applications and formulate recommendations for Council consideration.

COMMENTS:

The evaluation committee consisted of the Municipality's Deputy Treasurer/Tax Collector, the Communications Coordinator and the Director of Community Services & Facilities.

Key points specified under the “Criteria” section of the Application, which the committee took into consideration while reviewing the proposals, were as follows:

- Preferences will be given to applications which meet one or more priorities set out in the Thames Centre Strategic Plan. “Active Living” was a match for all but one of the applications, while no other Strategic Plan priorities were covered off. In addition, some of the applications also addressed recommendations from the 2023 Community Services & Facilities Master Plan.
- Each application must demonstrate that:
 - This grant is not the primary source of funding for the project
 - Financial assistance is needed as other sources lack adequate funding

One application was received for a private business. This applicant has been referred to our new CIP program for possible economic development grants that will be made available there.

The recommended applications to receive the remaining balance of the 2024 grant monies (\$8400) are:

Dorchester Dream Park Committee \$1,038.08 – this project promotes “Active Living” and is the crown jewel for accessibility & inclusiveness in Thames Centre (and growing in this regard with each new phase that is added). After the Municipality budgeted \$400,000 to cover the initial phase of this incredibly popular attraction at Dorchester Community Park, the Committee has successfully raised over \$157,000 for the second phase (senior exercise equipment that is in the midst of installation now).

In addition, they have successfully found donors for a 25’ x 25’ foot cement pad, six custom reinforced posts and 5 custom sun shades in order to bring a much needed shade structure to the Dream Park (total value of items donated for the cement, posts and shades is over \$50,000). Also, this group is already planning events to raise funds for yet another phase, which will include a wheelchair swing.

Their application is requesting a grant to cover the only part of the shade structure project which is not being donated, that being the required engineering for the cement pad. They have requested the full amount of the engineering (just over \$3,300), however, staff have since determined that a confirmed decrease in the total cost of phase two from the contractor will result in some remaining donation funds to cover all but \$1,038.08 of the engineering cost.

As a result, the recommendation is to grant \$1,038.08 to cover the balance of this cost. This demonstrates that Thames Centre continues to be a supportive partner of their commitment to expanding the accessibility and inclusivity of the Dream Park.

The above recommended grant to the Dream Park project leaves \$7,361.92 available, with the committee recommending this amount gets split 50/50 (\$3,680.96 each) between the following two applicants:

Thorndale Agricultural Society \$3,680.96 – the Thorndale Fair promotes “Active Living” and its request for an outdoor sound system will enhance its annual event along with reducing their annual costs (no longer needing to rent this equipment). The Municipality is already supporting this group in 2024 by providing \$1,500 from this Community Grant.

London Children’s Museum (LCM) \$3,680.96 – a grant to LCM allows Thames Centre to work with a Strategic Partner and honours their request when they presented to Council in December 2023. The new location will be a nearby attraction for residents of Thames Centre as well.

Due to the remaining 2024 available budget of \$8400 not being able to cover the demand from applications, the committee has suggested alternatives to monetary grants for some of the applicants for this year, for Council to consider, as outlined below:

B.A.D. Girls Hockey Association – this request is for assistance with their “FUNdamentals” program, which is a good fit with “Active Living” and also addresses Recommendation #64 of the 2023 CS&F Master Plan, that being “increasing girls and women’s participation in sport and recreation.” B.A.D. Girls offers this program for free, designed for girls of all ages who are new to hockey. B.A.D. Girls traditionally rents 8 hours of ice per week at the FlightExec Centre. *The committee recommends offering 1 hour of ice per week*, for the balance of 2024 (the start of their 2024/25 season), at the FlightExec Centre, which must be dedicated to the FUNdamentals program. In addition, we would require that registration details be provided to Thames Centre well in advance, so that we can promote to our residents.

Boys & Girls Club of London (BGC) – this application is a match with “Active Living” along with several recommendations in the 2023 CS&F Master Plan (#24, 50, 51, and 54). BGC was recently approved for a free 12-month trial lease of space at the FlightExec Centre and also has an agreement with Thames Centre providing free use of space in Thorndale (which began July 11, 2022 and currently runs until December 31, 2026). BGC’s application discusses the benefit of obtaining 2 hours per week of gym time in Dorchester in order to allow them consistent programming across both communities, which appealed to the evaluation committee. However, at the same time, the availability of gym time is incredibly sparse. *The committee recommends offering BGC two free hours per week of gym or auditorium use at the FlightExec Centre* for the duration of their 12-month trial lease of space at this facility (this will span into 2025).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The grant monies being recommended to Dorchester Dream Park, Thorndale Agricultural Society and the London Children’s Museum are covered by the remaining 2024 budget for the Community Grants initiative.

Should Council desire to provide one hour per week of free ice to B.A.D. Girls Hockey for the balance of 2024 equates to \$198.06 per hour before HST. This would be for approximately 18 weeks, totaling \$3,565.08 in lost rental revenue.

Further, providing BGC with two free hours per week of gym or auditorium use at the FlightExec Centre for the duration of their 12-month trial lease of space at this facility equates to between \$3,500 and \$4,100 in lost rental revenue (depending on how many of these hours are auditorium usage, at \$33.66/day versus gym time, at \$39.34/hour).

STRATEGIC PLAN LINK

Pillar: *Community Communications & Engagement*

Goal: *3E: The Municipality provide funding for community groups*

CONSULTATION:

Diane Gallinger, Deputy Treasurer/Tax Collector
Shannon Zylstra, Communications Coordinator
Devon Brown, Parks & Facilities Supervisor
Tori Garrett, Administrative Assistant – Recreation & Fire

REFERENCES:

Report #CS-002-24 – Community Grants Program – March 11, 2024
Thames Centre's Strategic Plan
2023 Community Services & Facilities Master Plan

ATTACHMENTS:

B.A.D. Girls Hockey Application (4 files)
Boys & Girls Club Application (3 files)
Dorchester Dream Park Application (3 files)
Dorchester Pet Fest Application (3 files)
London Children's Museum Application (3 files)
North Dorchester Agricultural Society Application (6 files)
Thorndale Agricultural Society (6 files)

Prepared by: S. MacDonald, Director of Community Services & Facilities

Reviewed by: D. Barrick, Chief Administrative Officer