

Council moves ahead on public art policy

By Mark Pavilons

Showing off King's true colours is the intent of a new public art policy.

King councillors supported a staff report Monday night that will lay the groundwork to expanding public involvement in various art displays throughout the township.

King is known for its thriving arts community and the Public Art Policy will capitalize on such unique characteristics and establish a long-term vision for public art.

“The Policy provides a sound foundation for an emerging public art program and plans for its continued success and economic sustainability,” according to a report presented by Kathleen Fry, King Museum curator, and Chris Fasciano, director of parks, recreation and culture. “Public art creates an engaging aesthetic profile within our community of communities ... it enhances the natural and cultural heritage that is so prevalent in King. Public art also plays a role in attracting creative businesses and workers, and encourages the growth of a culturally informed public.”

Both Fry and Fasciano stressed that public art can be an economic driver and provides a real value to enhance public spaces.

This policy is meant as a guide to developing public art as a priority in King and maintaining it as a valuable asset to the community.

In keeping with King's mandate, “a successful (Public Art) Policy creates awareness, promotes engagement and ensures longevity through responsible stewardship.”

It's really a win-win situation, where artists can make meaningful contributions and it opens up unique artistic partnerships on special Township initiatives. Putting this down in a policy reflects the Township's commitment to supporting the arts.

This policy has been a collaborative effort between staff, external stakeholders and members of the arts community.

“Staff believes that the document ... is truly representative of the voice of the community and provides a solid approach for moving forward.”

Going forward requires funding and the Township will need to create an annual budget. Initially, it's suggested staff will seek voluntary contributions from private donors and they will be contacting potential supporters in early 2016. They will up the ante in 2017 and likely draw council budget support at that time.

The effectiveness of the funding mechanism and success of the program will be reviewed, working toward a sustainable model with ongoing sources of revenue.

An advisory committee will be established to set guidelines on acquiring and selecting art and setting standards. Some typical forms of public art include sculptures, murals, fountains or water features, landscaping components and features such as walkways, walls and windows that contribute to their surroundings.