

King Township takes over valuable archives

By Mark Pavilons

King's archives are a rich source of documents for residents who want to find out more about this historic municipality.

King council voted recently to take over the Archives from the volunteers at the King Township Historical Society. The archives will be operated out of the King Heritage and Cultural Centre on King Road.

The historical society (KTHS) established the archives as a subcommittee of their board in 2000. A friend of the Historical Society, Bernice Bell, gave a sizeable donation to the Society for its development in 2006.

It has been managed by volunteers since it began and has developed into a valuable and recognized community historical resource.

The physical collection was transferred to the cultural centre site in 2015, with the understanding a transfer of ownership would be considered in the future.

Under the steady and thoughtful leadership of Elsa-Ann Pickard, the Archives grew. In February, Elsa Ann won a Lieutenant Governor of Ontario's Heritage Award for Lifetime Achievement, nominated by Kathleen Fry of the King Township Museum, for her work on the King Archives.

The overall management of the collection and operations has become more than the volunteer committee is prepared to commit to.

The KTHS not only supports the idea, but initiated the transfer as the best possible solution for the longevity of the archives.

Under the auspices of the Township, the role and goals of the cultural centre can be expanded to provide additional services to the public. The archives will assist people doing family genealogy or local research.

Staff noted the cultural centre has operated in a versatile manner over the past decade. Along with heritage programs and historical displays, the KHCC has been used as a venue to exhibit local art work and it's been a key stop on the annual studio tour. Programming, exhibits and operating hours continue to grow and develop as the Township creates key partnerships with community stakeholders and groups. The archives bolstered their services.

Adding the archives to the KHCC has proven over time to be a valuable addition that has enhanced the site's heritage initiatives. By enacting the new ownership agreement, the collection will be available long into the future.

Staff noted they may look for a dedicated archivist and create a website for online access.

Acquisition of the archives represents an opportunity to not only preserve a part of King's cultural identity, but also the ability to celebrate and promote it as identified in the ICSP. This addition, in combination with the multiple other offerings at the KHCCC site will work together to enhance the profile of arts, culture and heritage, thereby contributing to the socio-cultural vibrancy, while adding another element that contributes to the site's goal of becoming a destination for both residents and visitors.

Currently, there's no cost associated with the change of ownership. Council approval would be needed to fund program or staff additions. Staff pointed out there may be some opportunities to generate revenue for archival services.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer said King is very fortunate to have the quality of archives that we enjoy. They are due to the dedicated and passionate volunteers. She said she's confident that the new ownership will not only maintain but improve the quality of the archives.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini singled out Elsa-Ann Pickard, Louise di Iorio and Ann Love for the amazing work they've done with the archives.