



Report 2018-124

Committee Information Report

To: Chair and Members of the Community Development Advisory Committee

From: Alison Vandervelde, Community Development Officer
Richard Allen, Manager of Economic Development

Date of meeting: October 11, 2018

Re: **Community Development Advisory Committee – Investigation into the establishment of a Frontenac Arts Fund**

Recommendation

Recommend That staff continue to coordinate with the Kingston Arts Council in regard to the development of a program to support the arts in Frontenac and report back with recommendations as part of the 2020 budget process.

Background

At the September 20, 2017 public meeting to permit members of the public to make funding requests to County Council for consideration in the 2018 budget, Mr. Jonas Bonnetta presented his proposal for a Frontenac Arts Fund.

The request was reviewed during the Committee of the Whole two-day budget deliberations on October 25 and 26, at which time Mr. Bonnetta's proposal was deferred to the Community Development Advisory Committee:

Moved by: Councillor Smith
Seconded By: Councillor Nossal

That the request for a Frontenac Arts Funding be removed from the budget deliberations and be referred to the Community Development Advisory Committee for further investigation

Carried

The Growing Creative Community in Frontenac

A cursory glance at current artistic platforms and outlets in Frontenac – without even scratching the surface of our artistic heritage – gives us a glimpse of the breadth of our creative community

- Music festivals such as the Canadian Guitar Festival, Blue Skies Music Festival, and the Wolfe Island Music Festival draw visitors from near and far year after year.
- Residents gather weekly at commercial establishments including Cardinal Café, Sharbot Lake Crossings Pub, Wolfe Island Pub & Pizzeria, Wolfe Island Grill, General Wolfe Hotel & Restaurant, The Creekside Bar & Grill, and the Holiday Country Manor to enjoy vibrant, high calibre live music performances.
- Local visual artists inspire creativity and make their living through exhibits like the Bon Echo Art Exhibition and Sale, Free Spirit Gallery, Mill Street Café, the Back Roads Studio Tour, and the Arden Artisans Garden Party.
- Musicians visit our communities create new songs and records at two recording studios, Port William Sound in Mountain Grove and the Post Office Studio of Wolfe Island Records.
- The North Frontenac Little Theatre Company continues to host a well-attended youth summer camp and produces theatre shows that entertain community-wide.

In the Rideau Heritage Route Tourism Association [Tourism Economic Impact and Product Feasibility Study](#) released on November 1, 2017, the Township of South Frontenac's artistic community was estimated to have contributed "\$18.9 million to the municipality's GDP in 2016" and "the township's tourism industry grew from 197 jobs in 2011 to 238 jobs in 2016." Of the various tourism sectors, the greatest increase in jobs is "independent artists, writers and performers" (74 jobs) as compared to food and drink (41 jobs) and other amusement and recreation industries (22 jobs). The study continues to identify that the main contributor to job increases in the Township is independent artists, writers, and performers indicating that parts of Frontenac are attractive to creatives, likely due to the low cost of living, the natural and wild beauty of the region and the proximity to Kingston, Ottawa, Toronto via transportation corridors like HWY 7 and the 401.

An Economic Development Charter for Frontenac (2015)

In the spring of 2015, a group of 50+ Frontenac community members came together over the course of two days and created the [Economic Development Charter for the Frontenacs](#).

One of the three priorities of the charter is "Recreation Lifestyle". While a first reading of the priority seems to connect it to the development of more trails and outdoor recreation opportunities, the ultimate goal is to leverage Frontenac's existing assets to attract families and businesses who seek more of a "lifestyle" occupation that may include working remotely and from home. Many creatives have flexibility in the location of their

office or studio and their work schedule. Therefore creatives are a demographic that should be invited to experience the Frontenac region.

Recreation Lifestyle	
Scope of Priority	Promotion of the Frontenac lifestyle with access to the natural beauty and amenities of the region will appeal to families and businesses. The recreation lifestyle will be complimented by a “connected” community.
The “Why” of Priority	Youth and families that yearn for a rural lifestyle with access to nature, connection to trails and opportunities to work from home will help provide balance to our economy.
General Definition of Success	Attraction of families and retention of youth. Growth of home based businesses.

Communities that support artists perform better than those that do not

According to the [Creative City Network of Canada](#), “municipalities that adopt culture as an industry have gained positive economic benefits for their communities. Cultural industries create job growth, turn ordinary communities into destinations, create interconnections between arts and business, revitalize urban areas, attract skilled workers, and create spin-off businesses”.

The National Endowment for the Arts 2017 report on [Rural Arts, Design, and Innovation in America](#) concludes that, “in rural counties, highly design-oriented and innovative firms tend to cluster around performing arts centers”.

[Creative Minnesota 2017](#) “shows that supporting artists and arts activity is a pathway to solving problems and achieving the goals of our communities. [Artists] are already contributing to the health of our economy and are already working to improve their communities. Our artists give Minnesota a competitive edge.”

Comment

Mr. Bonnetta met with the Community Development Advisory Committee in February of 2018 to further discuss his proposal, outlined as the appendix A to [Report 2018-010](#). The [minutes of this meeting](#) highlight discussion between the committee, Mr. Bonnetta and staff. Concern was raised around County staff capacity to administer an arts program and the committee discussed feasibility of an independent Arts Council in Frontenac County.

As a result of these discussions, Mr. Allen approached the Executive Director of the Kingston Arts Council about the possibility of developing a partnership. The Kingston Arts Council does have a regional mandate, and has experience administering grants and awards on behalf of organizations such as the City of Kingston and the Community

Foundation for KFL&A. In June of 2018, the Executive Director for Kingston Arts Council and Richard Allen, Manager of Economic Development met with Mr. Bonnetta to further discuss possible directions to take to the Arts Council Board of Directors.

The Kingston Arts Council Board expressed interest in pursuing a partnership, but were unable to address it over the summer months. The Arts Council recommended consideration of a baseline needs study and engagement of the arts community prior to the development of new programs or committing funds before determining their most effective use. The Arts Council were to create a proposal to this effect however, due to a transition of staff at the Arts Council, County staff have been unable to coordinate further discussions and follow up with this project.

Due to the role artists play across Frontenac County as professionals, tourist destinations and cultural contributors, staff recommend that discussions be reactivated with the Kingston Arts Council to engage the Frontenac artist community.

Sustainability Implications

The Frontenac County Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) identifies recreation and leisure as a focus area. This is also reflected in the County Economic Development Charter as a key priority and strength. Regions that celebrate their artistic communities and that encourage creativity have more vibrant, resilient economies.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Organizations, Departments and Individuals Consulted and/or Affected

Community Development Advisory Committee
Kingston Arts Council