



The Corporation of the Town of Tecumseh

Parks & Recreation Services

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Paul Anthony, Director Parks & Recreation Services

Date to Council: April 14, 2020

Report Number: PRS-2020-09

Subject: Tecumseh Corn Festival Future Direction

Recommendations

It is recommended:

That Report PRS-2020-09 with respect to the future direction of the Tecumseh Corn Festival **be received;**

And that Council **approve** Administration to move forward with the proposed 2020 Tecumseh Corn Festival program inclusive of the removal of admission fees as outlined in Report PRS-2020-09;

And further that the Chief Administrative Officer be delegated the authority to reduce the scope of the 2020 Corn Festival by May 29, 2020 or cancel the 2020 Corn Festival by June 30, 2020, in accordance with the criteria set out in Report PRS-2020-09.

Executive Summary

In accordance with Council's direction at the Regular Council Meeting of November 12, 2019, Administration undertook individual and public consultations to discuss and review the current and future Corn Festival programming. The overall comments received indicate support for continuing the festival as a family event and for the Town's financial contribution towards the festival.

Administration has reviewed the 2020 budget and has determined that it can provide a festival with no general park admission by reducing and/or eliminating expenditures while still providing a weekend of family friendly entertainment.

Notwithstanding the plans in this report for the Corn Festival, should the current restrictions regarding social gathering, physical distancing and other limitations imposed in response to COVID-19 remain substantially in effect by June 30th, staff recommend that the Festival be cancelled.

Background

At the November 13, 2018 Regular Meeting of Council, the members considered the 2018 Tecumseh Corn Festival Post Event Report PRS Report # 22/18 and passed motion (RCM-322/18) which reads as follows:

That Report PRS-2018-22 respecting the 2018 Tecumseh Corn Festival Post Event Report be received;

And that as long as the Tecumseh Corn Festival continues, it will be an alcohol-free 3-day event managed by the Parks and Recreation Department.

At the November 12, 2019 Regular Meeting of Council, the members considered the Tecumseh Corn Festival Future Direction Report PRS-2019-16 and passed motion (RCM-367/19) which reads as follows:

That Report PRS-2019-16 Tecumseh Corn Festival Future Direction, **be received;**

And that Administration **be directed** to undertake a detailed program review and public consultations with Council, community members, current festival working group, OPP and municipal staff regarding the proposed future direction of the Tecumseh Corn Festival;

And further that Administration **prepare a report** for Council's consideration on the program and operational structure for the 2020 festival and subsequent years.

On February 27, 2020, the Tecumseh Corn Festival was once again named one of the Top 100 Festivals in Ontario. This award, granted by Festivals and Events Ontario, recognizes festivals and events that excel within the industry. This is the 17th consecutive year that the Tecumseh Corn Festival has received this award.

Comments

In accordance with Council's direction from the November 12, 2019 meeting, Administration undertook individual consultations with members of Council, OPP, current festival working group members, key vendors and festival partners to discuss and review their thoughts on the current programming and what they would like to see moving forward for future festival programming. In addition, comprehensive public consultations were undertaken.

On January 22, 2020, a News Release was circulated indicating that the Town was seeking public input on the annual Corn Festival and the future direction of the summer event. The public was invited to provide comments through an online form available on the Town's website. In addition, the public was encouraged to attend a Public Information Centre (PIC) on February 12, 2020 at the Tecumseh Arena.

The overall comments received through the individual consultations, online survey and PIC, indicated support for continuing the Festival as a family event and the Town's financial contribution towards the festival. This is consistent with the results of the recent Citizen Satisfaction Survey results.

The following consistent comments received regarding future programming recommendations, in no particular order, are as follows:

- No festival entrance admission fees
- Requests to bring back the "beer tent"
- Requests for newer and more variety of carnival rides
- An interest to see more arts and craft vendors and less information / promotional booths
- A recommendation to lower vendor fees in an effort to attract better / more vendors
- Support to include local bands as the festival's entertainment
- Interest in more interactive activities such as talent, art and cooking contests
- Interest to incorporate the Town's agricultural community into the Festival with exhibits and interactive activities
- Questions and concerns regarding the pageant as it relates to how it represents women in 2020 as well as issues raised regarding equal opportunities among the LGBTQ community to participate in the pageant
- Overall support of the parade but with recommendations that parade entries be more entertaining to include creative floats and more marching bands

Administration has reviewed and considered the suggestions received through the consultation process and provides the following comments:

Admission:

Since 2010, the Festival has included a general park admission ranging between \$2 and \$5. The admission collected over the years has been a significant source of revenue to support the overall cost to operate the festival. In 2019, the general park admission revenue was \$39,835. Should the general park admission be reduced or eliminated, the Festival would have to consider other opportunities to generate revenue and / or reduce expenditures.

As a result of the request, Administration has reviewed the option to remove the festival entrance fees and, with the recommended changes to the festival program, the reduction in revenues will be offset by expense reduction and some revenue enhancements.

The reductions are staffing, stage and sound production services, event trailers, policing, and entertainment. The revenue increases are additional vendors and carnival revenues. The combination of both expenditure reductions and revenue increases are projected to offset the lost admission fee revenue.

Licensed Tent:

Through the online survey, some respondents indicated an interest in the return of a licensed area at the festival. It must be noted that the majority of those that made a comment regarding a licensed tent were only interested in this portion of the festival and did not offer comments and / or suggestions regarding any other aspect of the festival programming.

Council has previously endorsed that, as long as the Corn Festival continues, it is to be managed by the Parks and Recreation Department and will be an alcohol-free 3-day event.

In response to the requests to have an outdoor licensed event, Administration acknowledges that there is an opportunity in the community provided by the Optimist Club of St. Clair Beach – the Taste of Tecumseh Festival – which is held annually at Lakewood Park during the month of June. This event, along with numerous other regional licensed events, adequately provides opportunities for the public seeking outdoor licensed entertainment.

Carnival Rides:

In 2019, All Canadian Entertainment (ACE) purchased the rights to the Carter Show Ltd midway carnival, the midway that has been servicing the festival for years. In 2019, ACE worked closely with Administration to develop a new layout for the festival that incorporated the midway rides and games into the centre of the park, surrounding the vendors and corn booth. This change to the festival layout was very successful and Administration received positive comments from the festival's community partners, vendors and attendees.

Administration has been in discussion with ACE regarding this year's festival and ACE has confirmed with Administration that it is looking to purchase new rides. Administration has found that ACE is willing to work with the Town for improving the festival and is looking to improve its inventory of rides for the festivals it services.

Vendors:

In response to comments received that the festival's vendor rates were significantly higher than other local festivals, Administration conducted a comparison review of its vendor rates to other local festivals. The results of the comparison revealed that the Corn Festival's rates associated for Food Vendors was equal to or less than the other regional festivals. However, the fees associated with Merchandise, as well as Arts and Craft vendors, indicated that the Corn Festival's rates were higher. Based on this information, the vendor rates for merchandise and craft vendors will be adjusted to be more in line with regional festivals.

Entertainment:

Upon review of the comments received, Administration will be reviewing the festival's entertainment line-up to incorporate local bands and interactive activities as well as integrating the agricultural community. Administration will work with local community groups and partners, such as the Tecumseh BIA and the Tecumseh Arts and Cultural Committee, to incorporate new programming for this year's festivals and into the future.

Pageant:

Administration is working with local and regional pageants to review the Miss Tecumseh Pageant's participation rules to determine opportunities to address the concerns raised through the consultations. Furthermore, Administration plans to reach out to leaders in the LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) community to discuss opportunities to be more inclusive for the pageant and/or other activities associated with the Festival.

As one of the cost savings to offset the loss of admission is the elimination of the large mobile stage, an alternate location to host the pageant is required. In consultation with the Pageant Director, it has been determined that the L'Essor High School Theatre is the ideal location to provide the stage production equipment and professional setting required for show. The theatre has been reserved for the pageant for Thursday, August 27, 2020.

Parade:

Administration will encourage parade participants to ensure that their parade entry is decorated and entertaining. In addition, Administration will work within the approved budget to secure marching bands and buskers to incorporate enhanced entertainment within the parade's line-up.

2020 Festival:

Administration has reviewed the 2020 budget and has determined that it can provide a festival with no general park admission by reducing and / or eliminating expenditures while still providing a weekend of family-friendly entertainment. As the general park admission was the number one comment received from respondents, by eliminating the fee it will meet the requests of the residents.

The 2020 Festival will take place on the following dates and times:

Date	Description	Time
Thursday, August 27, 2020	Miss Tecumseh Pageant at the L'Essor High School Theatre	7:00 PM to 9:00 PM
Friday, August 28, 2020	Festival at Lacasse Park "Senior's Day"	12:00 PM to 9:00 PM Carnival continuing till 11:00 PM
Saturday, August 29, 2020	Festival Parade	11:00 AM to 12:00 PM
Saturday, August 29, 2020	Festival at Lacasse Park "Family Day"	12:00 PM to 9:00 PM Carnival continuing till 11:00 PM
Sunday, August 30, 2020	Festival at Lacasse Park "Classic Cars and Golden Oldies Day"	12:00 PM to 5:00 PM

Administration will reach out to community partners and agencies to establish relationships to work towards incorporating the aspects of the festival that the community is looking for such as: interactive activities, agricultural components, arts and cultural activities, contests, and local bands. Although the changes to the festival will take time, Administration will endeavour to incorporate as many aspects as possible for the 2020 festival dependent upon available budget, timelines and community partnerships.

Appendix 1 reflects an initial program outline for the festival. Upon approval from Council, Administration will begin to secure festival program entertainers.

Impact of COVID-19 on the Festival:

Under current conditions with the COVID-19 pandemic, Administration has put on hold all financial commitments for services related to the 2020 Corn Festival. These commitments

include equipment rentals, lighting, tents, security, staffing, vendors, parade and entertainment contracts. In addition, with the large number of nonessential businesses being shut down and the uncertainty of when things may change, it is impossible to contact businesses to make alternate contract arrangements, secure sponsorships, and plan for the Festival at this time.

In addition, without any certainty of when any Town operated events may be permitted to operate again, Administration has put on hold the recruitment for the Special Events Assistant until further notice.

A Provincial Order bans gatherings of five (5) or more individuals, and a 2-metre (6 feet) physical distancing requirement is in place for all individuals. With no certainty of an end date indicating the removal of either restriction, it is not feasible to stage any type of festival or public event with these restrictions in place.

Administration has undertaken a review of planning for the 2020 Corn Festival and what the different festival format scenarios could be as well as the required timelines to prepare and present the Corn Festival under each scenario, as follows:

1. **Full Festival Programing:** Event format as presented in this report. Would need to begin to plan implementation before May 29, 2020. If the restrictions related to COVID-19 are not substantially lifted by May 29, 2020, event planning would roll over to a One-Day Festival.
2. **One-Day Festival:** Event providing a full day of events, parade, limited vendors, entertainment, corn, family programming and possibly carnival rides. Would need to begin plan implementation by June 30, 2020.
3. **Cancellation of the 2020 Corn Festival:** If the restrictions related to COVID-19 are not substantially lifted by June 30, 2020, the Festival would be officially cancelled. Staff will monitor the restrictions in effect for COVID-19 including but not limited to permitted number of people gatherings, social/physical distancing requirements as well as nonessential business closures. Should restrictions remain to the extent that would make the Festival infeasible and/or pose a public health threat, it is recommended the Festival would be cancelled as of June 30, 2020.
4. **Reschedule Festival to an Alternate Date:** Due to the already crowded schedule of festivals and events in the region, securing equipment, vendors, entertainment, carnival rides, etc. would not be feasible and staff do not recommend rescheduling the Corn Festival.

Consultations

Optimist Club of St. Clair Beach
Muscle Cars and Classics
All Canadian Entertainment
Former Committee Members and Festival Event Lead Volunteers
Tecumseh OPP
Finance Department

Financial Implications

As reported to Council on November 12, 2019 in report number PRS-2019-16:

“It must also be noted that the Council-approved budget commitment to the 2020 Corn Festival will be the financial commitment that Administration will be directed to work within, regardless of what the program review and operational recommendations reflect.”

Appendix 2 reflects an adjusted budget for the 2020 festival that meets the financial commitment approved in the 2020 budget.

Link to Strategic Priorities

Applicable	2019-22 Strategic Priorities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Make the Town of Tecumseh an even better place to live, work and invest through a shared vision for our residents and newcomers.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ensure that Tecumseh’s current and future growth is built upon the principles of sustainability and strategic decision-making.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Integrate the principles of health and wellness into all of Tecumseh’s plans and priorities.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Steward the Town’s “continuous improvement” approach to municipal service delivery to residents and businesses.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Demonstrate the Town’s leadership role in the community by promoting good governance and community engagement, by bringing together organizations serving the Town and the region to pursue common goals.

Communications

Not applicable

Website

Social Media

News Release

Local Newspaper

This report has been reviewed by Senior Administration as indicated below and recommended for submission by the Chief Administrative Officer.

Prepared by:

Kerri Rice
Manager Recreation Programs & Events

Reviewed by:

Tom Kitsos, CPA, CMA, BComm
Director Financial Services & Chief Financial Officer

Reviewed by:

Paul Anthony, RRFA
Director Parks & Recreation Services

Recommended by:

Margaret Misek-Evans, MCIP, RPP
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment Number	Attachment Name
1	2020 Tecumseh corn festival program outline
2	Corn festival budget