

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE DECEMBER 9, 2002

VAUGHAN CULTURAL INTERPRETIVE CENTRE

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Community Services recommends:

That Council approve the establishment of a Vaughan Cultural Interpretive Centre at the City-owned Vellore Township Hall to preserve, make accessible and exhibit the material culture and history of the Vaughan community; and,

That staff develop a mandate and operational policies for the Vaughan Cultural Interpretive Centre to be reviewed and approved by Council; and,

That Council approve the continuation of the part-time Cultural Interpretive Technician position for 2003 (salary at \$21,600) and the associated material costs (museum materials and supplies at \$11,300) as submitted in the 2003 Cultural Services Operating Budget.

Purpose

To obtain Council approval for the establishment of a Vaughan Cultural Interpretive Centre at Vellore Township Hall and for the initial start-up funding for the program.

Background

Council first reviewed the concept of establishing a "heritage centre" for the City of Vaughan at Vellore Hall and School in November 2001. Council approved the following recommendation at its November 12, 2001 meeting:

1. That the City of Vaughan investigate the possibility of utilizing Vellore Hall and School as a City of Vaughan Heritage Centre; and,
2. That staff bring a report to a Committee of the Whole in January 2002 regarding the feasibility and cost implications of developing the Vellore Hall/School as a Heritage Centre; and,
3. That Heritage Vaughan Committee be requested to comment on this initiative.

Heritage Vaughan reviewed the concept of establishing a cultural/heritage centre at its January 16, 2002 meeting. In summary, Heritage Vaughan fully endorsed the concept of a heritage centre for this site. The Committee's vision for this heritage/cultural centre included displays, exhibits, (photographic, artistic, artifacts-historic and cultural in nature), programmes for children, creating a cultural research centre, and a site for lectures/speakers on heritage/cultural topics.

The position of a part-time Cultural Interpretive Technician (22-week contract position) was approved by Council on June 24, 2002 to support the Cultural Services function in assisting with the planning, and development of a Cultural Centre at Vellore and an Italian Interpretive Centre in Vaughan, a programme spearheaded by the A.M.I.C.I. Committee (Association for the Memory of Italo-Canadian Immigrants). The position was filled in September 2002 and the contract will end in February 2003.

To date, the Cultural Interpretive Technician has assisted Cultural Services staff in the development of draft policies: acquisition; collection development; collection management; and exhibition. The Technician has also initiated preliminary outreach activities to assess community

interest, and identify and network with perspective donors of artifacts (through media ads and personal contact).

In assessing the City-owned facilities at Vellore, the Township Hall has been identified by staff as an appropriate venue for a "Vaughan Cultural Interpretive Centre" due to the historical significance, size and amenities of the site. The Vellore School, however, is not a barrier-free structure (handicapped accessible) at this time and therefore would not be a suitable location for an interpretive program unless made accessible.

Taking into account Heritage Vaughan's vision for the Centre and staff's additional analysis of similar interpretive programmes, it was determined that the most appropriate role for the Cultural Interpretive Centre would be to explore life in Vaughan from the early pioneer period (1790s) to today's multicultural mosaic. The Centre will be a multi-purpose facility dedicated to preserving, collecting and making accessible cultural objects related to the experience of the Vaughan community. The Centre would also be a vibrant place that would host traveling exhibits and offer tours, art shows, children's programmes and other cultural services. But more than that, with Vellore Hall being the original seat of local government (est. 1849), it will serve as a focal point where all Vaughan residents can make a personal connection with their community.

Initially, the Centre may be staffed on a part-time basis by the Cultural Interpretive Technician with the assistance of community volunteers. The eventual need for the establishment of an advisory committee to Council to assist with the development of the Centre's programme has been identified by staff.

A request for funds has been included in the 2003 Capital Budget in the amount of \$35,000 to finance the purchase of necessary equipment such as display cases & other museum supplies, lighting units, a security system and to undertake minor building upgrades to convert the Vellore Hall facility to a Cultural Interpretive Centre.

Conclusion

The prospective Vaughan Cultural Interpretive Centre programme provides an excellent opportunity to enhance community life by preserving and making accessible Vaughan's material culture and history to residents. A part-time programme is envisioned for the Centre in its initial phase, until such time as public need and interest warrants review of this arrangement.

Attachments

None.

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Respectfully submitted,

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Commissioner of Community Services