

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE JUNE 18, 2007

REQUEST FROM THE SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC THORNHILL FOR THE USE OF THE ARMSTRONG HOUSE 42 OLD YONGE STREET, THORNHILL

Recommendation

Councillor Shefman recommends:

1. That the City of Vaughan enter into a 3-year lease agreement with the Society for the Preservation of Historic Thornhill (SPOHT) for the use of the second storey of the Armstrong House, 42 Old Yonge Street, Thornhill, for SPOHT's use to house and make accessible to the public its archival collection; and,
2. That Recreation and Culture staff work with SPOHT to investigate possible funding opportunities to support its organization and its archives; and
3. That the Legal Department prepare the agreement based on the terms and conditions, including rental charges outlined in this report.

Economic Impact

The City will gain an ongoing rental income for the use of the second storey of the Armstrong House.

Communications Plan

None required.

Purpose

To facilitate the use of the second storey of the Armstrong House by the Society for the Preservation of Historic Thornhill in order to maintain, hold and provide public access to its archival collection.

Background - Analysis and Option

The City of Vaughan has created the newly established *Guidelines for the Use of City-Owned Heritage Buildings*. A goal of the guidelines is to increase the use of City-owned heritage buildings and establish programs, services and fees that provide affordable access to heritage buildings.

A request has been submitted to Ward 5 Councillor and the City for the Society for the Preservation of Historic Thornhill (SPOHT) for the use of the second storey of the Armstrong House at 42 Old Yonge Street, Thornhill. The house is one of a number of City-owned heritage buildings and is located in the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District as designated under the Ontario Heritage Act in 1989. The house and an adjacent studio was restored by the City in 2004. The building is a cultural landmark in the community and has great historical significance.

SPOHT is a Vaughan Community Service Organization that was formed in 1974 for the purpose of advocating for the preservation of Thornhill's built and natural heritage by promoting an awareness of the past and present community. It facilitates a number of workshops, community walking tours, and published a number of local history books and school educational kits. Perhaps most importantly, it organizes the annual Thornhill Village Festival on the 3rd Saturday in September. SPOHT has organized the Festival since 1977 and has helped bring thousands of

visitors to Thornhill for the event. In doing so, it has helped give the community an appreciation and understanding of its early history.

For a number of years, the Society has collected a number of historic photographs, maps, letters, posters, architectural drawings, videos and oral histories related to the rich history of Thornhill. SPOHT's archival collection has grown considerably over the years. SPOHT has requested the use of the second storey of the Armstrong House for a 3-year period (renewable) for its use as an archives and office. This space will be accessed by the public to do research and view the collection.

The archives is a significant collection that represents over 30 years of collecting activity by the Society. In particular, its Weaver Collection provides a photographic history of the community, its buildings and people from the 1930s to present time. It is a valuable record of the community's history and is preserved using contemporary archival-quality storage units and a portable environmental control unit.

The terms and conditions of the proposed lease agreement will allow for SPOHT to use the top storey of the Armstrong House. The term of the agreement will be for three years on or about August 1st 2007 to August 1, 2010. The agreement may be renewable upon the expiration of the three year period unless S.P.O.H.T cannot meet the conditions of the agreement.

S.P.O.H.T. shall pay the City under the terms of the lease agreement, the use of the second floor office, and shall be charged for this use the following monthly rental rates Year 1: Monthly charge of \$50 per month + GST; Year 2: Monthly charge of \$100 per month + GST; Year 3: Monthly charge of \$150 per month + GST. SPOHT is a not-for-profit organization that has very few avenues to generate revenue to support their archival collection. The group will be undertaking strategies to further develop their financial viability over the next few years and will be actively preparing grant proposals and looking at other forms of revenue generating.

Under the terms and conditions of the proposed agreement, the cost of any improvement or changes to the leased space will be the responsibility of S.P.O.H.T. and changes must first be approved by the City of Vaughan, Buildings & Facilities Department. The City shall pay all costs related to the building i.e. HVAC, hydro, etc. with the exception of the following:

1. Costs relating to S.P.O.H.T.'s telephone and internet use.
2. Cost relating to the cleaning and repair of the leased space, unless otherwise noted in this agreement.
3. Cost relating to the Archives and Special Collection program.
4. Cost of using the main floor space unless for monthly meetings

S.P.O.H.T. has acknowledged in discussions with the City, that other user groups or individuals will be permitted by the City to occupy the main floor of the building which may include but not be limited to city operated programs such as summer children camps, adult courses, training, small private permitted functions or any other uses through a permit or lease arrangements.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

The Vaughan Vision encourages the preservation and enhancement of the natural and built heritage environment and encourages the preservation of significant historical structures and communities.

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved.

Regional Implications

None

Conclusion

The use of SPOHT for its archives is a beneficial addition to the Thornhill community in Vaughan and provides an accessible facility for the public to conduct research activities and learn about the history of the community. The Society has been a long-standing organization in Thornhill and has assisted in the advocacy of the preservation of the historic village core and its landmarks. The relocation of SPOHT's archival collection to the Armstrong House would be a valuable addition to the Vaughan community and will help make available the history of Thornhill to the local residents.

Attachments

None.

Report prepared by:

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Ward 5, Councillor

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor Alan Shefman
Ward 5 Councillor