

Report

City of Merritt
REGULAR Council Meeting
January 14, 2020

File Number: 0382

To: Scott Hildebrand, Chief Administrative Officer
From: Will George, Economic Development & Tourism Manager
Date: January 8, 2020
Subject: Gold Country Communities Society Membership

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council direct staff to inform the Gold Country Communities Society that Merritt will not be continuing membership with the Society past January 2020.

Background:

The Gold Country Communities Society was incorporated in 1991 and currently includes the municipalities of Ashcroft, Cache Creek, Clinton, Lillooet, Lytton, Merritt and the TNRD electoral areas of E, I, J, M and N. Gold Country assists small communities and regional electoral areas to provide tourism coverage and marketing.

Regional Gold Country projects include: updating the Gold Country website and social media channels, a regional Visitor Guide, trail guides and maps, the Geocaching program, tourism symposium events and image bank/videography inventories. The City of Merritt currently spends \$8,400 for an annual membership fee to the Gold Country Communities Society. This is in addition to funding that the City of Merritt provides to Gold Country on special projects such as advertising and regional collaboration (i.e. Tourism Symposium).

At the Regular Council Meeting of November 24, 2015, Council passed a resolution to enter into a 3-year tourism marketing and development partnership with the Gold Country Communities Society for \$8,400 per year. This membership agreement expires January 2020. The agreement contains a renewal clause, whereby the agreement can be extended for a further three-year term by mutual consent of the parties.

In additional Gold Country, the City of Merritt currently has a membership with the Destination Development Association and works with other tourism bodies on a per project basis, such as the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association and Destination BC.

Since 2015, there has been an increase of tourism material being developed within the City of Merritt Tourism Department.

While staff greatly respects Gold Country and its long history of providing service for the City of Merritt, staff feels that Merritt is well positioned to leverage the annual \$8,400 by expanding existing relationships, exploring new partnerships with neighboring municipalities, and developing more material in house and in conjunction with other community partners.

Unfortunately, since Merritt is the largest community represented in the Gold Country Communities Society, not to renewing membership would likely have a negative impact on Gold Country operations.

Options / discussion

1. THAT Council direct staff to inform the Gold Country Communities Society that Merritt will not be continuing membership with the Society past January 2020.
2. Council could direct staff to renew the existing agreement for a three-year term.
3. Council could direct staff to execute a new agreement, but for a one-year or a two-year term.

Financial / Risk Implications:

The City currently spends staff time and \$8,400 on the Gold Country membership fees. Potential negative financial implications include a loss of grant leveraged funds through Gold Country, though this may be offset if the City is able to grant leverage the \$8,400.

Strategic Plan Reference:

The below tourism related tactics are identified in the following Council Strategic Priorities:

- Economic Development Strategy: Review / Direction
- Communication Strategic Plan: Framework
- Marketing Strategy: Review

Respectfully submitted,

Will George
Economic Development, Communications and Tourism Manager