

Report

City of Merritt
REGULAR Council Meeting
October 27, 2020

File Number: 0340-50

To: Sean Smith, Chief Administrative Officer
From: Greg Lowis, Director of Corporate Services
Date: October 22, 2020
Subject: Letter of Support Policy

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council adopt the attached Letter of Support Policy

Background:

Grant funding is a key source of money for both the City of Merritt and local community organizations. Organizations often seek local government support, either because it is a requirement of the grant application, or simply seeking to demonstrate to the decision-maker that there is buy-in beyond their organization. There is a letter of support request attached to this meeting, and there have been other recent requests considered by Council.

At the moment, all requests that are received are considered by Council if there is a meeting before the application deadline.

Grant applications are often worked on and filed close to the grant deadline. The City is not unaware of this, having recently considered a staff request to file a completed application barely 48 hours before a Provincial deadline. Unfortunately, when outside organizations request our support late, it can be very difficult to organize the necessary meeting in time. Merritt's meeting schedule of two Council meetings in most months, and one meeting per month in the height of summer and around Christmas, can result in organizations making requests when there is no meeting of Council between the request being received, and the application needing to be filed.

Staff propose adopting a policy where staff would be authorized to write some letters of support, which would then be signed by the Mayor and issued. All such letters would be reported to Council as information items at the next meeting so that Council and the public knew which letters had been issued. Staff believe that this would increase efficiency, improve the use of meeting time, as well as benefit organizations which would get their letters of support sooner in many cases.

The attached Policy sets out the proposed authorizations to staff. Any request for resources (financial or in-kind) would need to be considered by Council, as would any request that went against established Council policy (for example a group advancing political or social goals that were not in line with adopted policy). Furthermore, if the City were looking to apply for the same grant stream and would be in competition with the applicant, the letter would come to Council to be considered. In all other cases, staff would have the discretion to being able to write the letter or send it to Council to be considered.

Any request for a letter that staff could not authorize would come to Council for consideration, unless there was no Regular Council meeting scheduled before any applicable application deadline.

Options / discussion

1. Council could adopt the attached Policy as proposed
2. Council could amend the attached Policy as they see fit, and adopt that
3. Council could receive this report for information

Financial / Risk Implications:

There would be no financial implications, as any request for resources of any kind would come to Council for consideration.

Staff believe that adopting this policy will improve the ability of the City to issue non-controversial letters of support for Merritt organizations, making these requests faster and more efficient, which could improve the reputation of the City.

Attachments:

Schedule "A": Proposed Letter of Support Policy

Respectfully submitted,

Greg Lowis
Director of Corporate Services