



Report

City of Merritt
COW Meeting
November 19, 2019

File Number: 8400

To: Scott Hildebrand, Chief Administrative Officer
From: Will George, Economic Development & Tourism Manager
Date: November 7, 2019
Subject: Merritt Airport 100 Year Anniversary Event

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Committee of the Whole recommend to Council that Council direct staff to budget for an annual Merritt Airport Celebration event;

AND THAT the Committee recommend that staff explore avenues for hiring an event coordinator.

Background:

On June 29th, 2019 the City of Merritt celebrated the 100 Year Anniversary of the First Airplane to Land in Merritt. This event was held from 10:00 – 2:00 at the Merritt Airport featuring an airplane fly-in, car show and community BBQ. Event attendance was estimated between 850 – 1,000 people throughout the day. Throughout the day a variety of activities took place such as a car show, airplane fly-in features from both local and out of town, food vendors and games.

The timing of the airport celebration worked well to have it on the Canada Day long weekend as there was an increase of traffic with a variety of events. This event would not have been possible without the support of the Merritt Airport Celebration Committee and the many volunteer hours spent hosting this event. Special thanks to the Nicola Valley Museum, Nicola Valley Vintage Car Club, Nicola Valley Cruisers, City of Merritt Community Policing Office, Rae Robinson and Geoffrey Scholten who helped organize and make this event possible.

During the event, the City of Merritt Mobile Visitor Info Kiosk was on site to provide visitor info and welcome packages. Throughout the day there were 135 people who stopped by and engaged with staff at the City tourism kiosk. Many people mentioned they had not been to the Merritt airport before and were curious of the site and opportunities looking forward. Following the Merritt Airport Celebration there has been an increase of interest for future development at the Merritt Airport. This has focused on both private and City owned land near the Merritt Airport and the desire for City built hangars. There is currently grant funding available to explore hangar options.

City events such as the Merritt Airport Celebration and the Mayor's Gala are important community events and staff sees the opportunity for these to be continued as annual events. In order for these City events and others to continue to grow, it will either require significant volunteer input, which cannot be guaranteed, or current staff capacity would need to be increased. Staff recommends that grants be reviewed and applied for to build the staff capacity for a special event coordinator to work with the Economic, Communications and Tourism Department to meet this need.

Options / discussion

1. THAT the Committee of the Whole recommend to Council that Council direct staff to budget for an annual Merritt Airport Celebration event;

AND THAT the Committee recommend that staff explore avenues for hiring an event coordinator.

2. THAT the Committee receive this report for information.

Financial / Risk Implications:

Financial considerations for Council include staff time, use of airport facilities and equipment rental charges (i.e. washrooms). The potential financial benefit may include increased traffic at the Merritt Airport and visitor spending. Additional financial benefits may include increased development of City owned land at the Merritt Airport and additional businesses building towards the best use for the Airport Commercial Land (Zoned C5).

Strategic Plan Reference:

The below airport related tactics are identified in the NOW section of Council's Strategic Priorities:

- #3. Economic Development Strategy: Review / Direction
- #4. Airport Master Plan: Review / Direction

The following tourism related items are listed in the NEXT section of Council's Strategic Priorities:

- Official Community Plan Review: Terms of Ref.
- Marketing Strategy: Review

City of Merritt Strategic Plans relating to Tourism includes:

- Tourism Plan for Merritt/Nicola Valley, BC - 2013/14
- City of Merritt Economic Development Action Plan- 2014/2015
- City of Merritt Official Community Plan
- Merritt Tourism Inventory Asset Inventory - 2018

Others Consulted:

N/A

Attachments:

- 100th Anniversary of the First Airplane to Land in Merritt Event Poster

Respectfully submitted,

Will George

Economic Development, Communications and Tourism Manager