



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
Committee

From: Marie Fenwick
Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services

Re: **Steveston Heritage Sites Governance**

Date: December 20, 2022




File: 11-7000-01/2022-Vol
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Staff Recommendation

That the staff report titled "Steveston Heritage Sites Governance," dated December 20, 2022, from the Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services be received for information.

CM Fenwick

Marie Fenwick
Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services
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REPORT CONCURRENCE	
CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER	
	
SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW	INITIALS:
	
APPROVED BY CAO	
	

Staff Report

Origin

At the Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Committee meeting held on March 26, 2019, staff received the following referral:

That governance of Steveston Heritage sites be reviewed to consider: (1) the establishment of an overall Steveston Heritage Sites Board including London Farm, Britannia Shipyard, Steveston Museum, and Gulf of Georgia Cannery Societies, with possible representation from the Heritage Commission; (2) the responsibility of the Steveston Historical Society be expanded to include the Steveston Tram and Branscombe House; and (3) the responsibility of the Britannia Heritage Shipyard Society be expanded to include the Phoenix Net Loft and new moorage float, Imperial Landing Float, Garry Point Pilings, and Scotch Pond.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #3 One Community Together:

Vibrant and diverse arts and cultural activities and opportunities for community engagement and connection.

3.2 Enhance arts and cultural programs and activities.

3.4 Celebrate Richmond's unique and diverse history and heritage.

The purpose of this report is respond to the referral from March 26, 2019 described above.

Analysis

Background

Steveston is home to four non-profit societies who have mandates dedicated to the preservation and presentation of different heritage sites in the area. These include the Steveston Historical Society, the Gulf of Georgia Cannery Society, the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Society, and the London Heritage Farm Society. Each of these groups is dedicated to their unique mandate and passionate about the history and heritage of the site they are connected to. This is shown by the many volunteer hours contributed toward the activation of and care of these places, as well as the funding, each group contributes to the site through grants, donations and fee-based activities.

At this time, the governance of these groups is generally strong with groups engaging in strategic planning, new board members joining each year, and maintaining or growing memberships. These groups have open conversation with each other and the Chairs share information on a regular basis through formal meetings, such as the Steveston 20/20 group, and through informal gatherings, emails and regular conversations. Staff continue to work with the groups collectively and will look for opportunities to further encourage cross-organization connections.

Between 2020 and 2022, Council approved new agreements with the London Heritage Farm Society, the Steveston Historical Society and the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Society. Through the development of these agreements, the relationship between each society and the City regarding the governance of the sites was further clarified and the commitment of each group to supporting their associated site was renewed.

For the London Heritage Farm Society, there is a strong connection to the park spaces, including caring for the heritage and allotment gardens, the chickens, and bees. They continue to be committed to offering farm-related public programming and running the gift shop in the London Farmhouse.

For the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Society, there is a strong interest in the waterside activities and moorage opportunities. They also remain interested in the presentation and preservation of heritage vessels across the site.

The Steveston Historical Society has gained momentum with cultural programming in recent years with the introduction of a new pop-up art shop in the Steveston Museum, the delivery of a Steveston heritage walking tour, and a variety of events in the adjacent Town Square Park such as the summer vintage markets and holiday Songs in the Snow. In addition, with the completion of the most recent agreement, the Steveston Historical Society has renewed its commitment to running the Post Office and maintaining open hours for the Steveston Museum and are working to maximize the opportunities associated with this program.

The Gulf of Georgia Cannery Society operates independently of the City and continues to have a strong governance board with a number of new members joining in 2022. They have recently completed significant infrastructure upgrades and over the past year, have had success rebuilding their visitation from pandemic lows. City staff maintain regular connections to the staff and board of the Gulf of Georgia Cannery and are working to integrate this site into new promotional initiatives for Steveston's heritage and collaborate on programming where possible.

Consideration of an Overall Steveston Heritage Sites Board

In addition to conversations with each board at the time of the development of their agreements with the City, in November 2022, the Board Chair of each group was contacted by City staff and asked to comment on the possibility of restructuring the governance of the heritage sites in Steveston. The outcome of these discussions was that, at this time, the four societies do not have a desire to change the governance structure of their organizations or to create an umbrella board for Steveston heritage sites. Board members are currently operating at their capacity doing work directly relevant to the sites they are passionate about and there is currently no interest in adding another formal level of administration.

In consideration of the feedback from the societies, staff do not recommend forming a new governance board for the Steveston heritage sites. Staff will continue to play a leadership role in encouraging communication and connection between these groups. This includes the recent development of a new umbrella Steveston Heritage Sites website as well as exploring future opportunities for an annual gathering of Richmond's active heritage groups.

Expanding Responsibility of the Steveston Historical Society

In June 2022, the Steveston Historical Society renewed its agreement with the City. Through this process, the Steveston Historical Society re-established its commitment to programming the Steveston Museum and Post Office. In addition to the main Steveston Museum building, the premises outlined in the agreement includes the Town Square Park and Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Society building. The Society has taken an active interest in programming Town Square Park and is contributing to planning for the future renewal of displays and programs in the Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Society building.

In recent discussions with the Steveston Historical Society, the Board expressed that they do not currently have the capacity to deliver programming at the Steveston Tram. However, they would be welcome and permitted to do so under the terms of their current agreement with the City. As new opportunities arise at the Tram, staff will involve the Steveston Historical Society and explore possibilities for the Society to support the delivery of future programming in this location.

Branscombe House is currently programmed as an artist-in-residence space. While the Steveston Historical Society has not expressed interest in delivering programming at Branscombe House, they would be welcome to do so when not actively used by the artist-in-residence and permitted to do so under the terms of their current agreement with the City.

Expanding the Responsibility of the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Society

In October 2022, Council approved the renewal of the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site agreement with the City. Through this process, the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Society worked with the City to expand its area of involvement to include the docks at Imperial Landing. The Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Society remains interested in the future reconstruction and programming of the Phoenix Net Loft. The potential for the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Society to play a role in its operation will be explored through the process of establishing a program for this space.

The pilings at Garry Point Park are used on occasion for major waterfront events. When the opportunity arises to activate the floats at these pilings again, staff will reach out to the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Society to offer an opportunity to play a role in this work.

The Scotch Pond Heritage Cooperative currently has an agreement to manage moorage and upkeep the facilities at Scotch Pond. The Scotch Pond site will be the subject of a future report to Council and opportunities to explore a stronger connection to Britannia Shipyards and the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Society can be explored then. At this time, the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Society has not expressed an interest in being involved in the operation of this facility.

Financial Impact

None.

Conclusion

Currently, the four societies associated with the heritage sites in Steveston; Gulf of Georgia Cannery Society, London Heritage Farm Society, Steveston Historical Society, Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Society are doing well and satisfied with their current mandates. At this time, staff do not recommend a change to the governance structure of the Steveston heritage sites, nor to further expand the scope of the Steveston Historical Society and Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Society's responsibilities. Staff can accommodate changes to organizations' governance or mandates in the future if needed.



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