

Museum could be under Town Square manager in new governance model

The Aurora Museum & Archives, which has been without a curator since the departure of Shawna White last fall, could soon come under the management of the Aurora Town Square project manager.

This is just one change suggested by staff in a new governance model proposed to Council.

At last week's Committee meeting, staff were asked to sign off on transforming the current contract position of Aurora Town Square's project manager to a permanent position, along with the conversion of Town Square's Marketing Creative Specialist to a permanent role as well.

Both positions have been instrumental in supporting the Aurora Town Square project to date and it is expected that they will be needed on a permanent basis once the facility is open, said Robin McDougall, Aurora's Director of Community Services, in her report to Council. The [Manager's Role] has been critical in ensuring the facility hits the ground running and is well prepared for success upon opening. This role has been responsible for engaging the community, partners, and artists along with confirming the staffing needs in preparation for opening the facility.

The position will transition from project start up to the day-to-day management of Aurora Town Square and will evolve to oversee a Cultural Services Division. To make the best use of the resources and to meet deliverables, we will be restructuring the staffing model for the Aurora Museum & Archives, integrating them into a cultural services division. The division will oversee the management and operation of the Aurora Town Square, Aurora Museum & Archives, and support for Aurora's cultural community through partnerships, cultural experiences, and the creation of new programs.

I am trying to streamline the number of management roles and subsequently the management duties would be coming to this position, added Ms. McDougall at the Council table. They're in that site, it makes sense to me to oversee that area of the responsibilities as well as expand as noted not only Town Square as an entity, but the Cultural Services provisions. Subsequently they're overseeing the cultural partners relationships, the development of our cultural partners in the community and overseeing the implementation of the Cultural Master Plan and the Public Art Master Plan. It is a much broader scope than just that building and putting bums in seats at the Centre.

A permanent marketing role would include overseeing Town Square's grand opening celebration, continued brand development, maintaining Town Square's website and social media channels, and create marketing campaigns supporting cultural tourism.

If Council approves the change to both of those roles, they would be up for open application rather than simply continue with the individuals currently filling those roles.

Until that time, however, Council questioned whether these conversions were needed.

I think that is the correct approach, said Councillor John Gallo on staff's decision to make the jobs a competitive process. An obvious perspective [is] that when we post these things as a contract position, we may be eliminating a certain bunch of people who might be qualified and are looking for a full-time position. In that case, we did quite well in the contract positions that we have filled, but when we're transitioning and I am glad to hear it is not a simple transition, not that I have an issue with the individuals, but the process, that there may be many people who now would be interested because it is a full-time position as opposed to the contract.

On the marketing position, however, Councillor Gallo questioned why this isn't a role that couldn't be fulfilled within the Town's existing communications department.

Ms. McDougall said that through consultations with Carley Smith, the Town's recently-hired Manager of Corporate

Communications, it was determined that the job should be a full-time one.

"We see this centre continuing to grow," said Ms. McDougall. "It is certainly not going to go backwards and less busy."

"The Town will have very specific programming that that space, notwithstanding that we have excellent staff already that do community events," replied Councillor Gallo. "I am going to have to wrap my head around how efficient it is to isolate this space and, at the same time, we have staff that do events across the whole Town."

Similarly, Councillor Michael Thompson said he was concerned a standalone marketing position might result in communication taking place in silos.

"While I understand the position is really focused on Town Square, I have always been of the belief that communications should house everybody and should be under roof," he said. "There should be no silos."

Councillor Gaertner also questioned the marketing position, stating the Town's Communications Department was running well. Pressing for a business case, she asked whether there was capacity for the new manager to take on this role "at least initially until we see how much work is required."

"We should have an idea of what we're going to bring in before [we decide] what to spend," she said of revenues. "The first part of the process has to be done before we open [and then the second] a year or two after opening."

But a different view was offered by Councillor Rachel Gilliland, who said, "I feel both of these positions are important."

"We are going back to market for these positions because the roles and responsibilities are a lot more and the marketing position is crucial at this point, in my opinion," she said. "If we are planning on opening sometime soon, we have to have our ducks in a row and our plan in place to have a successful opening and move forward."

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