
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report CDP-12-2022 Commemorative Program Update

For Consideration by Council in Committee on August 23, 2022



OBJECTIVE:

To obtain approval for a County-wide Commemorative Program—intended to address community requests for memorial benches, trees and other markers—including a new policy, procedures and associated fees.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report CDP-12-2022 Commemorative Program Update be received;
2. AND THAT the draft Commemorative Program Policy included as Attachment 1 to Report CDP-12-2022 be approved.

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Approved: Craig Manley, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Haldimand County has—for decades—accepted community requests for memorial benches, trees and other markers on County property. The process has been administered on an ad hoc basis by various Divisions (Community Development & Partnerships, Facilities, Parks, Cemeteries & Forestry Operations), community groups (BIAs, Chambers, service clubs) and County partners (Community Halls and Fields & Parks Management groups).

Recognizing the need to have a clear policy and process regarding these requests, staff from multiple Divisions have collaborated to develop a Commemorative Program which addresses the capital and operating obligations of the County and provides a fair, clear and consistent process for individuals and groups wishing to install a commemorative item on County property. This process has also included engagement with community groups/partners to accommodate their perspectives and lessons learned from their experiences.

The draft Commemorative Policy (Attachment 1) outlines the parameters of the new program, which will be administered in keeping with the principles and processes of the County's existing Community Partnership Program (CPP), with the exception that 100% of the costs for all commemorative requests will be the responsibility of the applicant.

BACKGROUND:

Historically, memorial bench and tree requests—as well as other commemorative installations—have been assessed and installed on an ad hoc basis by Haldimand County and many of its community partners. Typically, there have been about ten requests per year; however, that number is increasing annually.

With the creation of the Community Development & Partnerships (CDP) Division in 2010, the County introduced stronger administrative processes to address community requests. The Divisions' mandate includes balancing the need to meet County standards with flexibility and respect for the role of residents and volunteers in creating a vibrant community.

For many years, staff from multiple Divisions have expressed concern about the lack of policy/process associated with commemorative requests, especially in light of the increased interest in these items. Among the challenges and limitations identified with the current approach:

- There has been no application that outlines the various opportunities for a public, memorial marker. (With the introduction of the Community Partnership Program and the Forestry Operations staff group, there is now a process—which will be incorporated into the proposed Commemorative Program—to address requests for memorial trees and other items);
- There are no clear guidelines about:
 - What type of request is eligible (e.g. who/what can be recognized);
 - The length of time a person/activity/accomplishment can/will be recognized (e.g. the lifespan of the asset or forever);
 - How these requests are assessed and by whom;
 - How potential locations are identified;
 - Who is responsible for the installation, maintenance and replacement of a memorial asset (e.g. in cases of vandalism, damage, end of lifespan, etc.); or
 - How are these assets tracked by the County for asset management purposes;
- The County's approach to commemorative requests is 100% cost-recovery; however, in some cases, community groups processing requests for memorial benches had received County Community Beautification grants to purchase downtown benches and then 'sold' them as memorial benches at a cost less than what the County charges. This has created confusion, inconsistencies and a situation where the County is subsidizing some memorial assets;
- There have been inconsistencies with the standard of bench and concrete pad specifications, in some cases associated with changing accessibility legislation, resulting in various styles and levels of quality throughout the County; and
- There have been challenges with developing a comprehensive asset management inventory, including tracking the location and condition of each memorial bench, tree and other commemorative item (whether it was installed by the County or a community group/partner).

The subject report seeks to address these challenges and limitations with the introduction of a clear policy, establishment of roles and responsibilities, and creation of an administrative process that will provide consistency and fairness.

ANALYSIS:

Staff from Community Development & Partnerships, Facilities Capital & Asset Management, Facilities, Parks, Cemeteries & Forestry Operations, Finance and GIS have worked together to develop the proposed Commemorative Program. The details have also been discussed with community groups/partners which have installed these types of amenities in the past.

The proposed program is based on the following:

- Recognition of the civic importance of a Commemorative Program as a means to honour the memory of an individual, celebrate a special occasion or recognize an accomplishment and enhance sense of community;
- Implementation of a policy, process and application/agreement that is fair, clear and consistent across Haldimand County; and
- Ensuring County capital and operating standards related to accessibility, asset management, finance, and installation and maintenance are incorporated.

Research & Staff Considerations:

Along with identifying challenges within the County's existing commemorative activities, staff initiated a review of similar programs in other rural and urban municipalities. In total, seven programs were reviewed to identify best practices, potential impacts and other considerations. Key factors were identified to include in a proposed Commemorative Program and Policy:

- Creating one application for review/installation of all commemorative benches, trees or other items. This application would also serve as the agreement between the County and the applicant and would ensure:
 - A clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each partner (County and applicant);
 - Clear understanding on the part of the applicant as to the limitations of the program;
 - Appropriate tracking for asset management (installation, inspections, maintenance, repairs, replacement); and
 - Tracking and response times when processing a community request;
- Ensuring all requests for commemorative items on municipal property are reviewed, approved and managed by the County. Community partners/groups will no longer be able to install commemorative items within communities, but will be able to apply to the new process;
- The program and policy should be consistent with recommendations in the County's draft Parks & Recreation Service Plan (in terms of appropriate locations, consistent standards, etc.);
- Implementing a consistent, County-wide bench and concrete pad standard (to meet accessibility requirements). Any requests for a unique style of bench—e.g. Lions Club, Pride, etc.—will be assessed through the Community Partnership Program, as would any other unique commemorative item;
- Requests for a memorial tree will be overseen by Forestry Operations staff through the Community Partnership Program; and
- Consistent costing and term of recognition:
 - For new benches and trees the asset will be in place for ten (10) years—including installation, inspections, maintenance, repair, replacement—with an option to extend for another five years before the recognition is removed. (The average lifespan of a bench is 10-15 years.) Any other commemorative item would be in place for the lifespan of the asset.

Implementation Plan:

In keeping with the proposed policy, the Commemorative Program will be administered through the Community Development & Partnerships Division in collaboration with other Divisions participating in the Community Partnership Program. Applications will be accepted throughout the year (although installation may be dependent upon supply of materials and weather) and can be found online on the County's website or are available in paper copy at the Haldimand County Administration Building or community hubs.

FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Applications received through the Commemorative Program will be reviewed by the Community Partnership Program's Staff Review Team. The proposed Commemorative Program Policy identifies that all commemorative assets will be 100% funded by the applicant (full cost recovery), which is consistent with current practices.

The cost for a bench and concrete pad will be updated annually based on supplier pricing.

The cost for a commemorative tree will be updated annually by Forestry Operations staff and published in the User Fee Schedule R of the Tax-Supported Operating Budget.

Requests for an alternate commemorative item (not a bench or tree) will be 100% funded by the applicant and in keeping with the County's Community Partnership Program process, including review by a multi-disciplinary staff team and possible presentation to Council (if the project budget is greater than \$10,000).

New applications for benches/trees will have an initial term of ten (10) years for maintenance and recognition with the option for an additional five (5) year renewal term at the end of the initial term. Commemorative items will be in place for the lifespan of the asset.

Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) reporting standards require the County to record the fair market value of contributed assets. Commemorative installations—which become a County-owned asset—will be amortized over the estimated life of the asset for accounting purposes. Maintenance of the assets will become part of ongoing operations of the Facilities, Parks, Cemeteries & Forestry Operations Division.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:

This report was developed in collaboration with the following Divisions: Community Development & Partnerships; Facilities Capital & Asset Management; Facilities, Parks, Cemeteries & Forestry Operations; Finance; and GIS. Legal & Support Services staff reviewed and assisted with the development of the policy.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: No

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: No

Policy: Yes

REFERENCES:

1. [Haldimand County Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy \(no. 2009-02\)](#).
2. [Haldimand County Accountability and Transparency Policy \(No. 2007-05\)](#).
3. [Haldimand County Asset Management Policy \(No. 2019-03\)](#).
4. [Haldimand County Community Partnership Program Policy \(No. 2011-01\)](#).
5. [Haldimand County Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy \(No. 2013-04\)](#).
6. [Haldimand County's Festival & Events Policy \(No. 2015-02\)](#)

7. [Public Relations & Media Events Protocol \(Policy No. 2018-02\)](#)

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Commemorative Program Policy.