



## **The Corporation of the Town of LaSalle**

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council

**Prepared by:** Patti Funaro, Director of Culture and Recreation

**Department:** Culture and Recreation

**Date of Report:** November 17, 2023

**Report Number:** CR-2023-36

**Subject:** Event Centre Report on First Year of Operations

### **Recommendation**

That the report of the Director of Culture and Recreation dated November 17, 2023 (CR-2023-36) regarding the first year of operations at the Event Centre be received.

### **Report**

At the October 24, 2023 Parks, Recreation and Events Committee meeting, Mayor Meloche requested that an Administrative Report be prepared providing a summary of events held at LaSalle Landing in the first year of business including successes and lessons learned.

In preparing this report, administration reviewed report CR-2022-09 that was received at the April 26, 2022 meeting of Council. This report provided a three-to-five-year plan to manage festivals and events when the Event Centre opened. That plan focused on three goals:

1. Set and communicate clear priorities to event organizers.
2. Coordinate internal resources and ensure fiscal responsibility.
3. Create awareness and exposure for the Event Centre.

An update on each the goals is as follows:

#### **1. Set and communicate clear priorities to event organizers:**

- The Event Hosting Policy (approved in April 2022) and Policy for Waiving or Reducing Fees (approved in February 2022) has been in use since approved, and has provided clear guidance to staff and event organizers. Administration

continues to review the policy on an on-going basis and bring updates and adjustments to Council for approval as needed. The event hosting policy helped to guide the development of the “Event Centre Rental Guide”, which was created to give event organizers a quick overview and a more visual understanding of the features of and requirements for hosting an event at the Event Centre.

- The Expression of Interest (EOI) process was launched in December 2022 to determine the level of interest from the community. In total, the EOI had six (6) respondents. After the initial call for interest, the Culture and Recreation department communicated with each respondent and began the process of booking those who wished to proceed. As the first year of operation progressed it was determined by administration that a second EOI process was not required as there was enough variety in the requests received.

## **2. Coordinate internal resources and ensure fiscal responsibility:**

- The appropriate staffing structure was established by assigning responsibility for the programming of the event centre to the Supervisor of Recreation as the newly assigned duties were in alignment with the existing responsibilities of that position. The Supervisor of Recreation currently oversees all other rentals of Town owned facilities operated by Culture and Recreation, so the addition of bookings and events through the new event centre made operational sense. The Supervisor has been successful in integrating these new responsibilities for overseeing the event centre with their current portfolio. As planned, the Recreation Programmer – Events was hired in October of 2022 to directly support Town led and third-party event rentals. The Recreation Programmer of Events is the main contact for third-party bookings within the event centre, but also takes a lead role in planning, organizing and delivery of Town led events
- The Special Event Review Team (SERT) now meets monthly to review upcoming Town-led and third-party events. This team includes a representative from each municipal department including police and fire along with outside agencies such as the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO). The SERT Committee provides knowledge and guidance to event organizers to assist them with executing safe and successful events on Town property or under Town liability.
- A number of services have been digitized to provide greater convenience to event organizers and to be more efficient with staff time. This includes the creation of a virtual online tour of the event centre, allowing organizers the opportunity to tour the space online to determine suitability prior to booking a tour. The development of a digital event safety plan that organizers complete online, which provides the SERT committee with necessary event information in a clear and consistent format. As already mentioned, a digital Event Centre Rental Guide was created and is available as a resource to guide event organizers through the event process. A standardized digital internal work order

form was developed and is used across departments to ensure clear, accurate and consistent information is provided on event requirements. Culture and Recreation staff have also set up a scheduled automatic report that regularly communicates upcoming events to key Public Works staff. A digital shared list of events was also created for greater internal communication between Culture and Recreation and Public Works that provides real-time tracking of event details, timelines for work orders, and a complete list of upcoming events for the next 12 months. Lastly, a digital feedback form was created and is shared with third party event organizers to track successes and learn from events.

- Demand on town resources has been managed by establishing and communicating clear levels of service, and identifying Town and event organizer responsibilities. Administration provides support to third-party event organizers and suggestions on where to locate various rental supplies, equipment, and services.
- New fees were established and approved at the April 26, 2022 Council meeting. These fees have been charged consistently and in accordance with the fee waiving policy in an effort to recover costs associated with hosting the event. Fees are reviewed annually as part of the budgeting process and recommendations for increases are brought to Council for consideration.

### **3. Create awareness and exposure for the Event Centre:**

- Since opening the Event Centre in November of 2022, there have been twenty-eight (28) Town of LaSalle led or supported events. These include Town led events such as Night Markets, the Spring Fling and Santa Breakfast to name a few. Our signature event, Last Call Before Fall was hosted here and well received by the public. The Town also worked with various partners to host events that would create exposure to the Event Centre including the Tourism Windsor-Essex Pelee Island Annual General Meeting and the Windsor-Essex Chamber of Commerce After Business Networking Event for instance.
- There were seventeen (17) third party led events, with approximately half of those re-booking for 2024. Many other events have indicated that they plan to return, but had not officially confirmed at the time this report was written.
- Total rental revenue for event rentals is expected to meet or exceed the \$38,400.00 revenue target identified in the 2023 operational budget.
- In total, it is estimated that more than forty thousand (40,000) people have attended events at the Event Centre since opening.

- In addition to events, there were one-hundred and thirty-nine (139) drop in pickleball sessions held, with two-thousand, three hundred and thirteen (2313) paid attendees.
- There were fourteen internal meetings held at the Event Centre.
- Feedback from Event Organizers has been positive with many stating they were very satisfied with the facility cleanliness, Town staff, and the overall facility.

## **Successes and Lessons Learned**

Overall, the first year of operations has been very successful with a variety of public events for the community to enjoy and many opportunities for people to see possibilities of the Event Centre.

There has been some feedback that can be considered for future events such as more parking, signage for third-party event use and more in-house support for third party events such as tables and chairs.

As we have continued to offer events, the public is becoming more aware of the additional parking options along Laurier and at the Riverdance building, with just a short walk to the Event Centre. To address parking concerns for the Last Call Before Fall event, a transit shuttle was offered from the Vollmer Complex with approximately one hundred (100) people taking advantage of it. This is an option that can be further explored, and lessons learned shared with third party event organizers.

In this phase of the waterfront development, a digital sign has not been included as part of the plan or budgeted dollars. If requested, administration works with event organizers to coordinate onsite temporary signage to help with event promotions. In addition, third party event organizers are encouraged to share their event on the Town's Event Calendar and tag the Town in their social media promotions.

Providing event supplies and equipment such as tables and chairs could be challenging as each event operates differently with different equipment needs. The current practice of using a third-party event supplier is working well.

## **Consultations**

Scott Bisson, Manager of Culture and Recreation

Owen Stichhaller, Supervisor of Recreation

Dawn Hadre, Director of Strategy and Engagement

## **Financial Implications**

Total rental revenue for event rentals is expected to meet or exceed the \$38,400.00 2023 operating budget revenue target.

**Prepared By:**



Director of Culture & Recreation

Patti Funaro

**Link to Strategic Goals**

1. Enhancing organizational excellence - Yes
2. Strengthen the community's engagement with the Town - Yes
3. Grow and diversify the local economy - Yes
4. Build on our high-quality of life - Yes
5. Sustaining strong public services and infrastructure - Yes

**Communications**

n/a

**Notifications**

n/a

**Report Approval Details**

Document Title:	CR-2023-36 Event Centre Report on First Year of Operations.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Nov 27, 2023

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



Chief Administrative Officer

Joe Milicia