

DATE OF MEETING July 21, 2021

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**SUBJECT UPDATE ON WELCOME POLE AT SWAY'A'LANA / MAFFEO  
SUTTON PARK AND REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDS**

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To provide an update on the project to raise a Welcome Pole at Sway'a'Lana/Maffeo Sutton Park, and to seek Council approval on the proposed location and for additional funds to complete the project in 2021.

### **Recommendation**

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council:

- a) approve the proposed location of the pole at Sway'a'Lana/Maffeo Sutton Park as identified on Attachment "C" to the staff report; and
- b) amend the 2021-2025 Financial Plan to include an additional \$50,000 for the installation of the Welcome Pole funded from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve.

## **BACKGROUND**

At the 2020-DEC-16 Finance & Audit meeting, Staff brought forward a report with letters of support on a proposal for a Welcome Pole at Maffeo Sutton Park, advancing discussions that began in 2018 with Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre, Snuneymuxw First Nation, and Staff. The following motion was approved by Council on 2020-DEC-21:

- a) *allocate the \$50,000 from the Public Art fund budgeted in the year 2020 and 2021 for a permanent artwork at Maffeo Sutton Park to the realization of a Welcome Pole in the park by Snuneymuxw artist Noel Brown;*
- b) *direct Staff to collaborate with the relevant parties, including Snuneymuxw First Nation and Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre, to see this project completed in a respectful way for the benefit of our communities; and*
- c) *direct Staff to report back to Council with final design and location prior to installation of the artwork.*

Snuneymuxw artist Noel Brown was identified as the lead carver for the Welcome Pole and an agreement was established between Mr. Brown and the Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre. Mr. Brown's design was reviewed by the Snuneymuxw Elders Advisory whose feedback and teachings were integrated, and in October 2020 the Elders Advisory approved the design (Attachment A). Since Council provided direction, Staff have been collaborating with all parties involved to further develop plans for raising the Welcome Pole.

## **DISCUSSION**

In December 2020, a prospective installation and celebration was targeted for 2021-JUN-21 to coincide with National Indigenous Peoples' Day. After the cedar log was secured and preliminary carving work began, further clarification of the technical aspects related to installation became clear, resulting in a longer project timeline. At the same time, the artist, and leaders from both Snuneymuxw First Nation and Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre Nation agreed about the importance of community outreach and public celebrations to mark the installation of the Welcome Pole in the park. Taking into account the time needed to complete production of the pole and make preparations for the fitting of its base and installation, as well as the opportunity presented by the easing of COVID restrictions, the new target timeline for completion is September 2021. This timeline will allow for a plan to involve children from local schools in celebrations related to the Welcome Pole.

### **Identification of Location**

On 2021-JUN-02 Staff convened a meeting on-site at Sway'a'Lana/Maffeo Sutton Park. Leaders including the Chief, a Councillor, and the Chief Administrative Officer were in attendance from Snuneymuxw First Nation, alongside the Interim Executive Director, and Director of Programs from Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre. Artist Noel Brown and his partner also participated, as well as technical and project leads on City Staff.

At that meeting, the group reviewed the location and agreed to the appropriateness of the space for the project. Chief Wyse confirmed his approval of the site in the Spirit Square where the *Breaching Orca* currently resides as the ideal location for the Welcome Pole (Attachment C). Guidance from Chief Wyse was also provided regarding the positioning of the pole, facing North East towards the water and rising sun, as well as instructions for any potential location lighting. The Chief also indicated that SFN Staff, CAO Joan Brown, is designated to work with Staff, and the Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre, to continue to develop the plan for installation and celebration of the pole in September 2021.

The sculpture called *Breaching Orca*, by artist Carl Sean McMahon, is in the public art collection of the City and will be relocated to another suitable location. A site near the parking lot and main entrance to Neck Point Park is currently being explored as one possible location.

This project and the request for funding aligns with the goals and principles articulated in existing City plans, including the *Official Community Plan*, the *Community Plan for Public Art (2010)*, *A Cultural Plan for a Creative Nanaimo (2014)*.

## **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

As the initiator of the project, Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre secured a grant for the project through Canadian Heritage in the amount of \$38,500, as well as in-kind service and material contributions from Herold Engineering and Mosaic Forest Management (Attachment B). At the 2020-DEC-21 meeting of Council, \$50,000 was committed by the City, including unspent monies in the public art budget from the 2020 budget, after an unsuccessful RFP for a permanent public artwork for Maffeo Sutton Park.

The City's existing financial contribution is directed to a portion of the artist fee, costs related to site preparation, and site finishing work, such as lighting and signage. Once all details about the

site installation became known, and engineering drawings based on the log size were revised, Staff sought quotes on construction. Based on pricing from local construction firms and the finalized plans, a further allocation of funding in the amount of \$50,000 is required to undertake the custom construction of the pole's base, and the raising and installation of the pole at the park.

The total value of the project is estimated at \$160,000, with the bulk of costs associated to the production of the pole and its safe installation. The request for an additional \$50,000 will directly support construction costs and provide for contingency items.

There is currently no remaining funds in the 2021 Public Art budget. Additional funds to support this project would come from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve.

## **OPTIONS**

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council:
  - a) approve the proposed location of the pole at Sway'a'Lana/Maffeo Sutton Park as identified on Attachment "C" to the staff report; and
  - b) amend the 2021-2025 Financial Plan to include an additional \$50,000 for the installation of the Welcome Pole funded from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve.
  - The advantages of this option: The Welcome Pole project, undertaken in collaboration with Snuneymuxw First Nation and Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre will be on track for installation in September 2021.
  - The disadvantages of this option: Further funds are required to complete the construction component of the project at the park. This funding will not be available to fund other projects.
  - Financial Implications: An allocation of \$50,000 from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve will be required to complete the project.
  
2. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council provide alternate direction in terms of location for the Welcome Pole.
  - The advantages of this option: Council may wish to select a different location.
  - The disadvantages of this option: Further research will need to be undertaken to explore the feasibility of other sites and agreement on the part of Snuneymuxw First Nation and Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre will need to be sought.
  - Financial Implications: Additional costs may be incurred if another site is selected.
  
3. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council choose not to proceed with the project at this time.
  - The advantages of this option: No further funds will be committed.
  - The disadvantages of this option: A partnership has been developed between Snuneymuxw First Nation, the City of Nanaimo, and Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre, with artist Noel Brown. A change in plan will impact the City's relationships.
  - Financial Implications: Funds already allocated to the Welcome Pole can be redirected.

### **SUMMARY POINTS**

- The City of Nanaimo, Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre and Snuneymuxw First Nation are collaborating on a project to raise a Welcome Pole, carved by Noel Brown at Sway'a'Lana/Maffeo Sutton Park.
- The project is supported by in-kind contributions, a grant from Canadian Heritage, and by City of Nanaimo.
- Installation and celebration is being planned for September 2021.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

ATTACHMENT A: Working drawing by artist Noel Brown  
ATTACHMENT B: Letter from Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre  
ATTACHMENT C: Correspondence from Joan Brown re: Snuneymuxw approval; and park map with proposed installation location

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