

DATE OF MEETING FEBRUARY 21, 2024
AUTHORED BY LAARA CLARKSON, MANAGER OF RECREATION SERVICES
SUBJECT FUNDING FOR ASSISTIVE HEARING DEVICES

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To determine the funding source for the Assistive Hearing Devices pilot project previously approved by Council.

Recommendation

That the Finance & Audit Committee recommend that Council approve the Assistive Hearing Devices pilot project to be funded up to \$10,000 from the Parks/Facility Accessibility and Inclusivity project budget.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting on 2023-JUN-07, the Advisory Committee on Accessibility & Inclusiveness (ACAI) discussed and identified the need for, and the benefits of, installing hearing assistive technology at City facilities in order to assist individuals with hearing impairments. The City assembled a staff sub-committee with representatives from several departments to research, review and discuss various technologies available.

Through the ACAI committee, a pilot project for Assistive Hearing Devices was recommended to Council and subsequently at the 2023-NOV-20 Regular Council Meeting, a motion was made:

That Council approve the implementation of the following pilot project subject to funding:

- *Installation of a hearing loop at the front counter at two City facilities, and an adaptive soundfield system in the Service and Resource Centre Boardroom; and,*
- *Direct Staff to return to a Finance and Audit Committee Meeting to determine funding options for the pilot project.*

DISCUSSION

In response to Council's direction to implement the Assistive Hearing Devices pilot project, staff are prepared for the installation of a hearing loop at the front counter at the Bowen Recreation Complex, and the Nanaimo Aquatic Centre. Additionally, a soundfield system will be installed in the boardroom at the Service and Resource Centre (SARC) building.

In 2024, the Parks/Facility Accessibility & Inclusivity project budget has \$75,000 available to fund initiatives that will assist in reducing barriers in Parks/Facilities. The Assistive Hearing Devices

pilot project was referred by ACAI and the goals of the initiative align with the purpose of the funding.

This pilot project also aligns with City Plan and Integrated Action Plan C4.3.3:

“To explore and implement existing and emerging technologies to improve access to City services online, via phone, and in person for citizens with audio-visual accessibility needs”.

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance & Audit Committee recommend that Council approve the Assistive Hearing Devices pilot project to be funded up to \$10,000 from the Parks/Facility Accessibility and Inclusivity project budget.
 - The advantages of this option: This funding is already in place for projects and upgrades related to accessibility and inclusion.
 - The disadvantages of this option: none
 - Financial Implications: The Parks/Facility Accessibility & Inclusivity project budget has a total of \$75,000 for the fiscal year of 2024. If \$10,000 is allocated towards the Assistive Hearing Devices pilot project, there will be \$65,000 remaining in the budget for future 2024 projects that relate to accessibility & inclusion.

2. That the Finance & Audit Committee recommend that Council provide an alternate source of funding for the Assistive Hearing Devices pilot project.
 - The advantages of this option: This would leave the full \$75,000 in the Parks/Facility Accessibility & Inclusivity project budget to be available for other opportunities that arise throughout the year.
 - Financial Implications: Would depend on the alternate funding source selected by the Finance & Audit Committee.

SUMMARY POINTS

- At the 2023-NOV-20 Regular Council meeting, Council approved funding up to \$10,000 for the implementation of an Assistive Hearing Devices pilot project.
- This pilot project is a positive step toward reducing barriers and increasing access for all, in alignment with the Integrated Action Plan C4.3.3
- Funding is available in the Parks/Facility Accessibility & Inclusivity project budget.

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