

DATE OF MEETING APRIL 16, 2025

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AREAS

SUBJECT 7 POTATOES PROJECT UPDATE AND FUNDING REQUEST

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To update the Finance and Audit Committee on the Central Vancouver Island Japanese Canadian Society (7 Potatoes) grant applications to the Japanese Canadian Legacies Society (JCLS) and to request additional funding for the Japanese-Canadian Memorial Garden and Beban Park Outdoor Performance and Gathering Space projects.

Recommendation

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council:

1. Increase the budget for the Japanese-Canadian Memorial Garden project by \$341,000 funded from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund; and
2. Increase the budget for the Beban Park Outdoor Performance and Gathering Space project by \$400,000 funded from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund.

BACKGROUND

The Central Vancouver Island Japanese Canadian Society (7 Potatoes) is a non profit organization dedicated to celebrating and promoting a better understanding and appreciation of Japanese heritage and culture on Central Vancouver Island. The City of Nanaimo (the City) works with 7 Potatoes on a number of projects including the Cherry Blossom Project which saw 7 Potatoes raise over \$40,000, which was donated to the City for a collaborative program to plant Japanese cherry blossom trees in Nanaimo parks and open spaces.

7 Potatoes and the City have worked collaboratively to apply for a number of grants from the JCLS. The JCLS provides support to key projects that preserve and honour the legacy of Japanese Canadians from BC who were impacted by the historic events before, during and after WWII.

To date 7 Potatoes and the City have been successful in securing funding for three projects:

1. The Renovation of Room Six at Beban Social Centre for the purposes of Japanese programming and cultural activities including Taiko drumming. \$250,000 was awarded to 7 Potatoes from the JCLS (7 Potatoes allocated the funding to the City who executed the project on their behalf). The renovation of room six is proceeding well with work expected to be complete in May 2025.

2. The creation of a Japanese-Canadian Memorial Garden and BC Heritage Site along Nanaimo's waterfront. \$400,000 was awarded to the City from the JCLS in June 2024. Since this time, some work has been undertaken to scope-out this project more fully and determine a functional project budget. The project must be completed by March 2027.
3. The creation of a Beban Park Outdoor Performing Space to be constructed on City owned land at Beban Park. In February 2025, 7 Potatoes was advised that their application for \$1 million had been approved for \$700,000. 7 Potatoes intends to allocate the funding to the City to execute the project on their behalf. Some project scoping and budgeting work has been undertaken since the grant was awarded. The project must be completed by March 2027.

An additional application through the Legacy Community Projects stream for funding of up to \$500,000 to create interpretive landscape and signage features in Nanaimo's public space was unsuccessful.

The total value of JCLS grants secured for the three projects is \$1.35M. The resulting projects will be of benefit to the whole community and help the City fulfill some of our strategic goals including the Integrated Action Plan (IAP #140), which identifies working with the Japanese Canadian Community to create interpretive landscape features in Nanaimo's public space.

DISCUSSION

Staff have undertaken further project-scoping work and have identified that the below projects require additional funding beyond that provided by the JCLS grants. There are presently no City funds in the 2025 - 2029 Financial Plan for either of these projects.

Japanese-Canadian Memorial Garden and BC Heritage Site

On 2024-FEB-21 City staff stated that they would return with a report to Council regarding the Japanese-Canadian Memorial Garden requesting approval to proceed and identifying next steps and the project process.

At the time of applying for the grant, the City was unable to identify any match funding for the project (as requested by the JCLS) other than the value of staff time and investigation work as no City funds were allocated to the project in the Financial Plan. It was expressed by the JCLS that it would be preferred that the City provide some kind of match funding for the project at a later date though this was not a formal requisite of the grant application. Since the grant was awarded, work has been undertaken to identify potential locations and some additional project scoping work has been undertaken in order to develop a comprehensive project budget. A very high-level concept was developed that saw the garden telling the story of Nanaimo as the Herring Capital of the World pre WWII.

Staff have identified that an additional \$341,000 in funding is required to construct an impactful Japanese-Canadian Memorial Garden and BC Heritage Site along Nanaimo's waterfront. This would bring the total project budget to \$741,000 including 15% project contingency. Once the project has a final agreed budget, staff will work to select a contractor to move forward with on the design and construction phases of the project.

The Beban Park Outdoor Performance and Gathering Space

The Beban Park Outdoor Performance and Gathering Space project was scoped out and the initial concept was valued at \$1,000,000; 7 Potatoes applied for the full amount from the JCLS. The JCLS awarded \$700,000 to 7 Potatoes who will provide the funds to the City to execute the project on their behalf. At the time of the award, the JCLS notified the 7 Potatoes that the grant funds could cover the construction of the performance space, seating and signage but not the landscaping portion of the project. An early concept for the project depicts a Japanese Style pagoda and tiered seating area with complimentary landscaping, lighting and signage commemorating Japanese-Canadians who lived in Nanaimo prior to 1942.

Staff have undertaken some budgeting work, and it is estimated that \$400,000 is required in order to be able to deliver the project as originally scoped and in order to be able to cover the costs of appropriate landscaping work that is required as part of the project (this includes 15% project contingency). This would bring the total project budget to \$1,100,000.

The City is undertaking the work on both of these projects with cultural advice and community project management services provided by 7 Potatoes.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The projects are currently funded exclusively by grant funding with the City responsible for any cost overruns. The 2025 – 2029 Financial Plan would be amended to include \$148,200 in 2025 and \$592,800 in 2026 allocated as follows:

Japanese-Canadian Memorial Garden - \$68,200 in 2025, \$272,800 in 2026
Beban Park Outdoor Performance and Gathering Space - \$80,000 in 2025, \$320,000 in 2026

Funding would be from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve and the revised projected closing balances of the reserve if funding is approved are \$3,558,427 in 2025 and \$2,090,181 in 2026 with a minimum balance requirement in 2025 of \$351,780. |

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council:
 1. Increase the budget for the Japanese-Canadian Memorial Garden project by \$341,000 funded from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund; and
 2. Increase the budget for the Beban Park Outdoor Performance and Gathering Space project by \$400,000 funded from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund.
 - The advantages of this option: The projects are able to proceed and will have appropriate budgets in order to make sure that they can be successfully implemented.
 - The disadvantages of this option: \$741,000 is required to be allocated from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve which could be used to fund other Council projects or initiatives.
 - Financial Implications: The 2025 – 2029 Financial Plan will be amended for final to include the additional funding.

2. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council not support increasing for the Japanese-Canadian Memorial Garden project by and the Beban Park Outdoor Performance and Gathering Space project.
 - The advantages of this option: The Strategic Infrastructure Reserve would not be impacted and funding would remain for other projects.
 - The disadvantages of this option: The scope of both projects would need to be reduced, this would reduce their value and impact to the community. The deliverability of the Beban Park Outdoor Performance and Gathering Space project may be jeopardized as there would be no funds available to carry out the landscaping portion of the work. This could result in a need to hand the funds back to the JCLS.
3. That Finance and Audit Committee provide alternative direction to staff. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- The total value of JCLS grants secured by 7 Potatoes in partnership with the City is \$1.35M.
- There are presently no City funds in the 2025-2029 Capital Plan allocated to any of the Japanese-Canadian partnership projects.
- Allocating \$741,000 from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve would allow for successful delivery of the Japanese-Canadian Memorial Garden and Beban Park Outdoor Performance and Gathering Space projects with no reduction in scope.
- These projects are required to be completed by March 2027.

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