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Library Board Report

To: Newmarket Public Library Board

From: Todd Kyle, C.E.O.

Date: November 18, 2020

RE: **Strategic Planning Options**

Background:

The Library's current Strategic Plan expired at the end of 2016 but has continued to guide strategic and operational decisions and contribute to the ongoing evolution of the Library. However, in order to prepare the Library for its next phase of development, as well as to position it for future growth, the Board has requested a report detailing options and costs for a renewed Strategic Plan. (This was originally on the agenda for the March 2020 meeting which was cancelled due to COVID).

At the same time, the Board, understanding that the pandemic has delayed a planned joint Library Facility Needs Study with the Town, has expressed interest in exploring how a Strategic Plan might include alternate service delivery considerations that would allow the Library to expand its reach into the community in the absence of a full new facility.

Discussion:

There are two options available for this process at either end of the cost spectrum. The first is using the facilitation services of Ontario Library Service (the amalgamated agency that has resulted from the merger of SOLS and OLS-North). These half-day or full-day planning sessions would likely involve staff and Board members and typically include any combination of the following:

- Discussion aimed at coming to a collective understanding of the library's current reality, including making sense of any information gathered about the library and the community, and the opportunities and challenges the library is facing
- A revisiting/revisioning of the mission statement to ensure that it captures the library's unique value proposition and continues to inspire
- Envisioning and articulating a successful future for the library

- Identifying the 3-5 strategic directions that will form the framework for the plan.

In this option, the Library would be responsible all other tasks related to the plan, including gathering user feedback; creating a community profile based on demographics, market trends, etc; and performing an environmental scan to identify trends and advances in library service. As well, OLS would not be prepared to explore options for a service delivery philosophy or strategy, which would entail peer library comparisons as well as an analysis of gaps in library service in the community and of the opportunities to fill those gaps.

The cost would be in the range of \$2000-\$3000, according to OLS' typical hourly rate. This could be covered by the operating budget or the strategic reserve. However, the cost in staff time would be considerable, especially as the Library emerges from the effects of the pandemic. Particularly challenging would be market research and community consultation, which is beyond the capacity of staff; the addition of an exploration of service delivery strategy would be insurmountable.

For that reason, we are recommending the option to engage a full-service consultant. Staff would prepare a request for quotation and invite proponents to prepare a proposal, the shortlist of which would be provided to the Board for their consideration on a final decision. A full-service consultant would manage and execute all of the above tasks, including community consultation and market research, allowing staff and the Board to concentrate on the strategy itself in a fully facilitated environment.

An estimated cost for this process could be \$30,000-\$50,000 depending on the extent of consultation. This cost could be paid from reserves. As of the 2019 financial statements, the Strategic Plan Implementation Fund has a balance of roughly \$167,000, to which roughly \$12,000 is likely to be added by Board motion on an unrelated matter at this meeting. Much of this reserve has been dedicated to the Strategic Projects Officer position, but it would still be able to accommodate at least \$30,000 of this cost, and the rest could be taken from the Operating Reserve.

At this point only the Board's authorization to seek consultant services is being sought. The decision to engage a consultant, the choice of specific consultant, and the final expenditure will be brought to the Board in the first quarter of 2021.

Conclusion:

The following motion is recommended:

THAT the Library Board receive the report on Strategic Planning Options;

AND THAT the Library Board authorize the release of a request for quotation for a Strategic Planning consultant.