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## **Recent Filming and Film Policy Review Staff Report to Council**

Report Number: 2022-38

Department(s): Legislative Services

Author(s): John Comeau, Supervisor of Licensing and Property Standards and Jacob Brewer, Municipal Licensing and Property Standards Officer

Meeting Date: May 30, 2022

### **Recommendations**

1. That the report entitled Recent Filming and Film Policy Review Staff Report dated May 30, 2022, be received; and,
2. That Council provide direction to Staff to review Film Permit Policy CORP 1-04 and report back with proposed updates; and,
3. That Council provide direction to Staff regarding the two options presented in this report and identify a preferred option; and,
4. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the success of the recent film permit issued in the Main Street area, and to seek Council direction to review the Town's existing [Film Permit Policy CORP 1-04](#).

### **Background**

In March of 2022, the Recreation and Culture Department received a rental request for the Town's Old Town Hall facility from a large production company, Gilead 5 Productions Inc. Filming was proposed both within and around the Old Town Hall facility.

On March 15, 2022, the Town's Licensing Division received a large film permit application. As part of the application process, the Manager of Regulatory Services is responsible for ensuring the Town's Corporate Film Policy has been adhered to prior to any approvals. The application received did not meet the requirements established by policy and on [March 21, 2022](#), Town staff were directed by Council to waive the Town's Corporate Film Policy so that approval of the application could be granted.

Following the application's approval, a film permit was issued to Gilead 5 Productions Inc. to conduct site preparation and filming from March 21 until April 3. Overall, recent filming by Gilead 5 Productions went smoothly. However, the size and magnitude of the application identified the need to conduct a further review of the Town's corporate film policy for future filming.

## **Discussion**

As part of Gilead 5 Productions Inc.'s film permit application, the production company was authorized to utilize the following locations:

- Old Town Hall facility for interior and exterior filming;
- Community Centre as a crew and talent preparation site;
- Market Square lane for intermittent closures and filming;
- Market Square parking lot for intermittent closures and filming;
- Botsford and Timothy Streets for intermittent closures and site set up;
- Lion's Park (Gorham Pool) parking lot for parking purposes; and
- Ray Twinney south parking lot for parking purposes (full closure).

## **Community Engagement**

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, Regulatory Services began a community engagement and awareness campaign as outlined in the Town's film policy. This involved extensive outreach involving 454 hand delivered notices to residents and businesses in the BIA, 454 mailed notices to residents and businesses in the BIA, and 25 parking relocation notices to vehicles parked within Market Square Parking lot. An additional 32 notices were distributed to residents surrounding Ray Twinney – South parking lot to advise of potential impacts.

Notices provided details of the film permit, what closures to expect, and where alternative parking could be found. Additionally, a telephone hotline was established and shared on all forms of communication to allow Regulatory Services to address issues and receive comments or concerns in a timely manner.

Staff distributing notices reported an overwhelming amount of positive feedback and excitement for the film permit. In reviewing comments received by the Town's Customer Services Department, the film hotline, and resident correspondence, residents and businesses alike were supportive with no formal complaints raised.

## **Roadways and Parking Lots**

Working closely with the production team, Town staff balanced community impacts to parking by using multiple site locations (including private property parking lots).

From March 21 to April 3, public on-street parking along Timothy and Botsford Streets (approximately 8 parking spots) were closed to the public. The production team contracted a security guard to intermittently open and close these spaces as needed, in an effort to further mitigate public parking impacts in this area.

From March 29 until April 2, the Market Square parking lot was closed to the public, however, the production team did not require the full space and the Town was able to continue to offer public parking availability throughout the west portion of the lot.

From March 29 to April 3, the production company rented Ray Twinney's south parking lot to accommodate large talent trailers and for staff parking purposes. A shuttle was operated from Ray Twinney Complex to Old Town Hall throughout the duration of the permit as a means of transporting for talent and crew to the filming location. No issues were reported by Staff or residents within this area.

The production team had both York Regional Police as well as their own security staff to promote safety as well as direction for the general public. Additionally, Town Municipal Enforcement Officers were regularly present and patrolling the downtown core, providing both education and direction to the public.

Only one vehicle required relocation throughout the duration of the film permit.

## **Overall Success of the Film Permit**

The execution of this film permit was successful, with minimal impacts to surrounding residents and businesses. The issuance of this film permit resulted in a positive economic benefit to businesses in the area, and significant excitement amongst our residents.

Recognizing the benefits that the film permit has had on the community, Staff have identified the need for our current film policy to be reviewed in order to update processes to be better prepared for any future large scale productions looking to film in Newmarket.

## **Next Steps (policy review)**

Despite the overall success of Gilead 5 Productions' recent filming in Town, gaps were identified in the existing corporate film policy when receiving an application of a larger size and magnitude. In order to streamline our processes for proposed future filming, Town Staff recommends an overall review of the Town's Corporate Film Policy. For Council's reference, the Town's Corporate Film Policy was adopted in 2008 and most recently amended in July of 2016. The film policy requires amendments to improve processes and ensure the policy aligns with Council priorities. Town Staff is seeking

Council direction to review the Corporate Film Policy and report back with recommended updates. A fulsome review will include:

- researching best practices in other municipalities;
- public engagement with the BIA, residents, and any film companies located in Town; and
- drafting and presenting proposed amendments for Council's consideration.

## **Options for Council Consideration**

In addition to seeking Council direction to review the Town's existing film policy, Town Staff is also requesting Council's consideration on two potential options to explore further during the proposed review.

### **Option 1: Create a film policy with tiered classifications (recommended)**

Under this option, Town Staff will research models for establishing tiered classifications within the film policy. This option will allow staff to propose a framework and fee structure which supports varying sizes of production requests. Should Town Council be in favor of creating a film policy that encourages large film permits like the one discussed in this report, a tiered option would be most beneficial to streamline the overall process. This option could also benefit smaller or local film companies, as requirements and fees would be different and steps away from the 'one size fits all' model that our current policy utilizes.

Should Council support recommended Option 1, staff will explore:

- varying fee structures
- opportunities to reduce administrative burden on smaller, local filming companies
- Streamlined public notification and application circulation requirements
- any additional considerations encompassed in other municipalities that support larger filming productions

### **Option 2: Update the film policy but continue using one standardized approach for all applications (status quo)**

Under this option, Town staff will explore maintaining a uniform standard for all film permit applications received. This option would result in a film policy similar to the existing one, with minor amendments to improve processes based on feedback received through public consultation.

This option would not allow staff flexibility in assessing unique requirements for different types of production, however, it would provide consistency in that all applicants would be required to meet the same set of standards.

Should Council support Option 2, staff will:

- Review the existing fee structure;

- Provide recommendations for minor amendments and revisions of existing requirements, including:
  - parking;
  - on-street usage; and

public notice requirements

## **Conclusion**

Regulatory Services is seeking direction from Council to review the current Film Policy and further explore one of the two options presented. Town Staff will initiate public consultation with key stakeholders to ensure the policy best captures comments made by the community.

## **Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages**

This report aligns with the strategic vision of the Town of Newmarket, being Well Beyond the Ordinary.

## **Consultation**

Customer Service, businesses within the BIA and residents were consulted in preparation of this report.

## **Human Resource Considerations**

None.

## **Budget Impact**

The recent Film Permit brought in over \$150,000 to Newmarket, including:

- Approximately \$100,000 in facility rental fees
- \$5,000 donation to the Main Street District Business Improvement Area
- \$50,000 in rental and other fees

The Town has reinvested \$50,000 from the film production revenue back into the Business Improvement Area to support economic development initiatives. Random Acts of Downtown Shopping was the first initiative supported by revenue from the Film Permit.

## **Attachments**

None.

## **Approval**

Flynn Scott, Manager of Regulatory Services, Legislative Services

Lisay Lyons, Director, Legislative Services/Town Clerk  
Esther Armchuck, Commissioner, Corporate Services

## **Contact**

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