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# Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan – Permanent Festival Venue/Amphitheatre Project

## Recommendation

That the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services recommend to City Council:

1. That the request by the Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan Festival Inc. to pursue plans to fundraise for and construct a permanent festival venue/amphitheatre at the current location, be approved, in principle;
2. That the City Solicitor be requested to prepare the appropriate Memorandum of Understanding, based on the details set out in this report; and
3. That His Worship the Mayor and the City Clerk be authorized to execute the Memorandum of Understanding under the Corporate Seal.

## Topic and Purpose

This report summarizes the request submitted by the Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan Festival Inc. to further pursue its plans to construct, manage, and operate a permanent festival venue/amphitheatre at the current location, along the South Saskatchewan River.

## Report Highlights

1. Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan Festival Inc. (Shakespeare) has submitted a planning document for modifications to the current business model of temporary structures and plans for a permanent festival venue/amphitheatre (festival site).
2. Subject to certain conditions being met, the Administration has reviewed and supports, in principle, Shakespeare's plans to pursue a permanent festival site.

## Strategic Goal

Under the Strategic Goal of Quality of Life, this report supports the long-term strategy to ensure existing and future recreational facilities are accessible, physically and financially, and meet the community needs.

## Background

Shakespeare, founded in 1985, performs annual summer Shakespeare performances in the park along the South Saskatchewan River. In 1991, Shakespeare (formerly Nightcap Productions) began leasing the former snow dump site between the Mendel Building and 25<sup>th</sup> Street, which provided a suitable location for outdoor staging. Shakespeare operates beneath two temporary tents; a mainstage tent and an additional tent for accompanying activities, such as medieval feasts, workshops, tours, art displays, and a free community stage. Under the mainstage tent, two Shakespeare productions are performed annually, between July and mid-August.

At its February 27, 2017 meeting, City Council approved a report from the General Manager, Community Services Department, recommending approval of the license agreement between the City of Saskatoon (City) and Shakespeare. The City agreed to allow Shakespeare to use the site from May 1 to August 31 each year, for five years, with the option of an additional five-year renewal, for the purpose of producing a live theatre program and related activities.

The Administration received a planning document from Shakespeare on May 30, 2017, regarding the planning process of Shakespeare's riverbank location, which is leading towards a permanent festival site.

At its September 20, 2017 meeting, the Governance and Priorities Committee (Committee) received a report from the General Manager, Community Services Department, recommending that the Committee refer the partnership projects and business plans to the Administration to further assess the connection to the Recreation and Parks Master Plan – Facilities Game Plan – Funding Plan (Game Plan) and report back on specific priorities within these. Shakespeare presented its vision of a permanent festival site during this meeting.

## **Report**

### **Shakespeare's Permanent Festival Site**

Over the past year, the Administration has been working with Shakespeare in the development and review of its plans for modifications to the current business model of temporary structures and plans for a permanent festival site. Shakespeare's plans also include consideration for outside of the performance season, where the festival site would be available for year-round use and community access.

Shakespeare is proposing that the permanent festival site include plans to:

- 1) install a permanent concrete base for the main stage (amphitheatre), including permanent tiers for seasonal seating, and a seasonal tent;
- 2) install two permanent pavilions, one for dressing rooms and one for box office, gift shop, and concession/bar;
- 3) install secondary pathways for increased public access;
- 4) upgrade the electrical, sewer, and water service to the site;
- 5) integrate upgrades to the site for efficiency and accessibility; and
- 6) upgrade to permanent landscaping.

### **The Administration's Review of the Planning Document**

During the preliminary review of the proposal, the following items were identified:

1. The proposed development site is located in the Flood-Plain Overlay District under Bylaw No. 8770, the Zoning Bylaw and, as such, development of permanent structures would be prohibited; and

2. The current municipal park in which the Shakespeare site is located is zoned M3 – General Institutional Service District under the City’s Zoning Bylaw. The permanent facility proposed by Shakespeare, under the current description, would be considered a theatre under the Zoning Bylaw, and theatres are not permitted in the M3 District.

For the City to permit Shakespeare’s proposed development of a permanent festival site, Shakespeare would have to identify options and/or locations to facilitate development outside of the Flood-Plain Overlay District.

The Planning and Development Division will also be reviewing an option to amend the Zoning Bylaw to provide for festival sites in appropriate locations in the City. Subject to these amendments, the proposed development by Shakespeare would potentially be identified as a festival site. The reference to a festival site is consistent with the category of festivals within the Culture Grant program that Shakespeare receives funding under. This review will be a separate process, and the Administration will report back to City Council at the appropriate time.

The Administration reviewed Shakespeare’s plans for a permanent festival site, and recommends that a Memorandum of Understanding could be entered into, which would permit Shakespeare to proceed with its planning and fundraising campaign, subject to the following conditions:

- 1) the City receiving and approving Shakespeare’s business plan that would address both construction and long-term maintenance;
- 2) the City and Meewasin approving the final detail design for the site;
- 3) policy and bylaw amendments allowing the proposed festival site to be a permitted use in the location selected; and
- 4) other regulatory approvals, as required.

The Memorandum of Understanding is not intended to be a binding agreement with respect to the construction of a final facility. The key terms in the Memorandum of Understanding would be the following:

1. The Agreement would expire at the end of 2019; this would afford the parties sufficient time to engage and determine whether the project can proceed;
2. Shakespeare would provide the City with a suitable business plan that would address construction budget and be able to address long-term maintenance and/or dismantling costs for any facilities;
3. Shakespeare would recognize and address the various regulatory items identified, and the City would cooperate with respect to its regulatory processes. Any changes would need the appropriate public notice and/or public hearing;
4. Shakespeare would outline, in broad terms, its fundraising program or proposal that would ensure both the viability of the current festival

program and the long-term sustainability of the permanent festival site and program; and

5. Both parties would acknowledge and agree that in entering into this Memorandum of Understanding and cooperating in this endeavour, the City is not agreeing to amend any bylaw or grant any approvals so as to permit construction on this site. This would be part of the next steps in the process.

### **Options to the Recommendation**

City Council could choose to not approve the request by Shakespeare to construct a permanent festival site at the current location and direct the Administration to work with Shakespeare to identify other potential options.

### **Public and/or Stakeholder Involvement**

The Administration will continue to assist Shakespeare to inform internal and external user groups, including Meewasin, of its development plans for the permanent festival site.

### **Communication Plan**

Communication with existing patrons has already occurred through feedback surveys and will continue as the project moves into the capital fundraising phase.

### **Financial Implications**

Shakespeare is responsible for capital project funding, estimated at \$3 million, and will oversee all aspects of construction of the permanent festival site, including pavilions and support amenities.

Shakespeare has initially requested that the City partner in the upgrades to this location by being responsible for replacing the existing seasonal washroom with a permanent year-round washroom. The Administration has identified this capital project in the Game Plan as a 2020 unfunded capital priority. Further review and discussion will occur once Shakespeare submits its business plan and final detail design.

### **Safety/Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)**

Shakespeare will be responsible for submitting a detail design to the CPTED Committee. All recommendations from the CPTED Committee will be considered and addressed prior to beginning construction.

### **Other Considerations/Implications**

There are no policy, environmental, or privacy implications or considerations.

**Due Date for Follow-up and/or Project Completion**

Subject to City Council approving the recommendation in this report, the Administration will:

- 1) begin the process of reviewing the Zoning Bylaw to allow festival sites to be a permitted use in identified locations throughout the city; and
- 2) begin formal discussions with Shakespeare and report back to Committee on the key terms and conditions of a new license agreement.

It is anticipated that both follow-up reports will be completed in fall of 2019.

**Public Notice**

Public notice pursuant to Section 3 of Policy No. C01-021, Public Notice Policy, is not required.

**Report Approval**

Written by: Brad Babyak, Open Space Programming and Development Section  
Manager, Recreation and Community Development  
Reviewed by: Lynne Lacroix, Director of Recreation and Community Development  
Approved by: Randy Grauer, General Manager, Community Services Department

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