

# **THE CORPORATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF MISSISSIPPI MILLS**

## **STAFF REPORT**

**DATE:** March 23, 2021

**TO:** Committee of the Whole

**FROM:** Ken T. Kelly, Chief Administrative Officer

**SUBJECT: Status of Cost Sharing Discussions**

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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT Committee of the Whole recommend to Council to accept this report for information.**

### **BACKGROUND:**

Over the last year Council has had considerable discussion on the original 1987 agreement between Mississippi Mills (formerly Almonte and Ramsay), the Township of Beckwith and Town of Carleton Place for access, usage and cost sharing of an arena, ballfield, pool and library services and facilities.

There have been periodic reviews completed of the agreement by the three parties to the agreement and by Mississippi Mills itself. See Appendix B for a timeline of previous reviews and milestones.

On February 21, 2020, the Mayor and CAO attended the Mississippi Mills Public Library Board meeting and notified the Board that their February 5, 2020 letter was included in Information Items for Council on February 18, 2021. At the request of the MMPLB the Mayor and CAO agreed that the cost associated with the Howard Allan Agreement for library services would not be depicted in the 2021 MMPLB budget and would be shown separately in the Municipal Budget document moving forward.

In response to the MMPLB letter of February 5, 2020 Council passed motion 081-20 on March 3, 2020 inviting Howard Allan to a meeting to review the cost sharing agreement with Council and the Library Board. Due to COVID-19 constraints this presentation took place on September 22, 2020. See Appendix A for a list of notable items and motions over the last year that have been tabled and debated with regards to the Cost Sharing Agreement.

On October 20, 2020, the Mississippi Mills Public Library Board presented to Council and advised that they were discussing the agreement with the Ministry.

On November 3, 2020 Council had a detailed discussion with regards to the Joint Recreation Cost Sharing Agreement and provided direction to the Mayor and CAO to meet with Carleton Place and Beckwith to raise Council's concerns. Council approved the agenda for this meeting with the other communities.

On November 16, 2020, a meeting was conducted between the Mayors and CAOs of our partners to the Joint Cost Sharing Recreation Agreement – Carleton Place (CP) and Beckwith. The agenda for the meeting included a discussion of Governance, the Financial Methodology, data sharing, and next steps.

Council received a staff report on December 1, 2020 that provided the outcome of the first meeting of the Mayors and CAOs of Beckwith, Carleton Place and Mississippi Mills.

On January 29, 2021, a second meeting was conducted with the Mayors and Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) of Beckwith and Carleton Place. The meeting included a review of several items and agreement was reached to bring these back to each respective Council to seek direction. See Appendix D for staff report on the meeting. There were three main items for discussion:

- 1) Terms of Reference (TOR) Joint Cost Sharing Recreation Committee
- 2) Review of Financial Allocation Options
- 3) Review of Library Services Inclusion in the Agreement

There has been a concern raised that the inclusion of library services within the agreement is not authorized within the *Public Libraries Act*. Mississippi Mills suggested that the arrangement could be reviewed to determine if the current method of sharing the cost and provision of services is allowable. A solicitor could be engaged to review this component of the agreement and the *Act*. It was discussed that this cost should be shared between Carleton Place and Mississippi Mills. Both municipalities offered to facilitate the engagement of a solicitor at the Mayors/CAOs meeting.

February 9, 2021 a special meeting of Committee of the Whole was held to discuss the three items that came out of the Jan 29, 2021 Mayors/CAOs meeting. See Appendix E for staff report on the meeting. Council provided comments on the TOR that were to be brought back to the Mayors/CAOs and then the Joint Recreation Cost Sharing Committee. Council did not support a financial review or the hiring of a solicitor to review the inclusion of the Library in the Cost Sharing Agreement.

March 16, 2021 Mayors/CAOs met to discuss the comments on the TOR, the outcome of the Mississippi Mills Council meeting of February 9, 2021 and next steps in the process.

## **DISCUSSION:**

There have been two processes taking place to review and understand the services and costs associated with the Howard Allan Agreement or Joint Recreation Cost Sharing Agreement. The first process includes the Mississippi Mills Council discussions and meetings with the other communities to raise concerns with regards to governance, costs of the services, available information, budgeting and the inclusion of library services in the agreement.

The other two communities have shown a willingness to work with Mississippi Mills Council to address the concerns that have been raised. As can be seen in the meeting of January 29, 2021 where the other two communities agree to cost share portions of the financial and legal review.

Following further debate at Mississippi Mills Committee of the Whole a motion was tabled that will be voted on at the April 6, 2021 Council meeting to support termination of the Library portion of the agreement. The agreement includes more than library services.

The second process includes the Mississippi Mills Public Library Board activities to manage all library services offered to Mississippi Mills residents. We understand that the Carleton Place Public Library Board reached out to the Mississippi Mills Public Library Board to meet and discuss issues with the agreement. On March 15, 2021 the Carleton Place Public Library Board issued a statement that it cannot consider offers of reciprocal borrowing at this time. See Appendix C for statement.

These two processes have not been coordinated and information has not flowed seamlessly between the two processes (Council and Library Board).

There are a number of concerns with the current situation including:

1. There is no agreement with the other two communities on the removal of library services.
2. There is no agreement that the other components of the agreement (access, usage and cost sharing of an arena, ballfield, and pool facilities) will continue if the library services are removed.
3. There is no plan to service the Mississippi Mills users of the Carleton Place arena, ballfield, and pool if the agreement does not exist. Non-resident user fees may be imposed.
4. Alternative service delivery approaches or facilities have not been discussed with the residents that will be affected by the changes in services. There has been no public consultation on this matter.
5. The Carleton Place Public Library Board has stated that it cannot consider offers of reciprocal borrowing at this time.
6. Unknown legal implications or costs associated with unilateral termination of the agreement.

These unanswered issues could result in a gap in services or additional costs for those residents of Mississippi Mills that have traditionally used the services in the Howard Allan Agreement or Joint Recreation Cost Sharing Agreement.

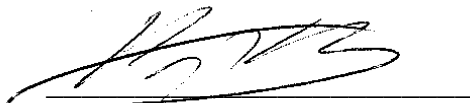
**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

There are no financial implications for Council to receive this information.

**SUMMARY:**

This staff report summarizes the discussions that have taken place and the actions that have been completed by Council and staff to review and determine if changes to the agreement between Beckwith, Carlton Place and Mississippi Mills are warranted.

Respectfully submitted by,

  
Ken Kelly,  
CAO

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Appendix A – Motions of Committee of the Whole and Council
2. Appendix B – Agenda for September 22, 2021 Council meeting including Howard Allan presentation and 1987 Agreement.
3. Appendix C – Statement from the Carleton Place Public Library Board March 15, 2021
4. Appendix D - Staff Report December 1, 2020 – Summary of Mayors/CAOs meeting
5. Appendix E - Staff Report February 9, 2021 - Summary of Mayors/CAOs meeting