THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF COURTENAY

STAFF REPORT

To:	Council	**File No.:**	5460-01
From:	City Manager (CAO)	**Date:**	May 31, 2023
Subject:	**2023 Pride Parade Proposal**		

PURPOSE:

This report seeks Council approval for the 2023 Pride Parade Event. Options include the temporary closure of 5th Street and the 5th Street Bridge on Saturday August 26, 2023 from 11:00am to 1:30pm.

BACKGROUND:

Celebrating diversity is a long standing tradition in Courtenay and the Comox Valley. Pride Season is a term that refers to the wide range of Pride events that take place over the summer (June to September) when 2SLGBTQI+ communities and allies come together to spotlight the resilience, celebrate the talent, and recognize the contributions of 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

Events and activities in Courtenay take place in various locations and cluster around the local Pride Week, towards the end of August. Although some events were paused during the pandemic, many are expected to resume in 2023.

The local Queer Culture Weekend has taken place in Simms Park from 2017, organized and sponsored Queer Culture. Queer Culture is an organization based in the Comox Valley that produces events for the 2SLGBTQI+ community and the Queer Culture Weekend spans several days.

In support of local 2SLGBTQI+ students and allies who are continuing their educational studies, Queer Culture awards an annual Queer Culture Parnell Bursary. The Queer Culture Parnell Bursary has been awarded for 6 years consecutively, and has provided over $36,000 to date for education to well deserving recipients.

DISCUSSION:

The Queer Culture Weekend begins with Courtenay's first Pride Parade event, proposed to be scheduled on Saturday August 26, 2023. The Pride Parade is proposed to use 5th Street for the parade, led by Queer Culture, while Simms Park is booked by Comox Valley Pride for events following the parade event.

The event permit will require road closures from 11:00am to 1:30pm on 5th Street, from Harmston Avenue to Simms Park, including the 5th Street Bridge. A letter from Queer Culture is attached. The Downtown Business Improvement Association (DCBIA) has written to the City in support of the event.

The road closures for this event are proposed to extend beyond the 5th Street Bridge and Simms Park, up to Comox Road.

POLICY ANALYSIS:

Community access and participation in arts and culture is a policy priority for the City, as is seeking new partnership models that support providing more arts and cultural opportunities throughout the City. Closure of 5th Street for events with parades is part of the road permitting process at the City, supported by traffic management requirements. While closure of the 5th Street Bridge will increase traffic congestion around the

area and in the downtown core for the duration of this event, staff will proactively communicate with residents, businesses and the media to enable awareness of the road closures leading up to and on the day of the event.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Expenditures to deliver this event will include staff time for setup and teardown and contractor costs for traffic management. The cost to hire traffic control personnel for this event is approximately $2,000.
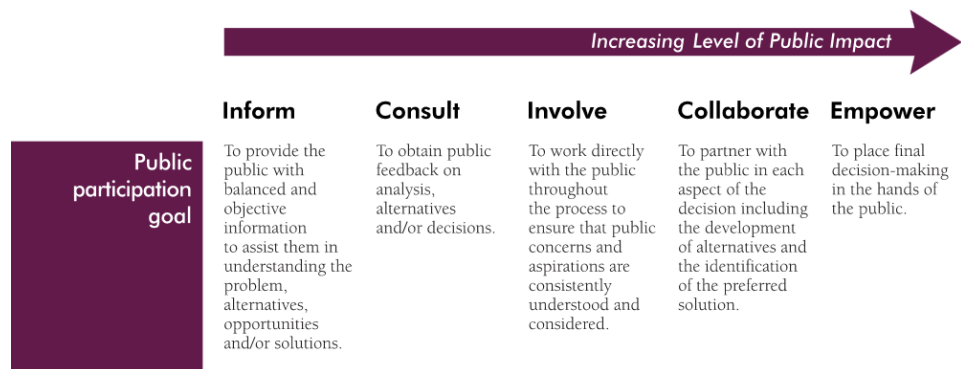
ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:

Public parking along the proposed parade route will be closed in advance of the parade, until the road is clear after the parade finishes. Public parking during the event will be available outside the perimeter of the road closure, while event volunteers will be provided access to the parking lot at Lewis Park by traffic control personnel.

Staff time from Public Works Services is required to set up and take down the road closures for this event, to permit the event, issue a traffic control plan and communicate with stakeholders including BC Transit. Staff time from Communications will share information to ensure the community is aware of road closures and traffic impacts.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Staff would inform the public based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:

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STRATEGIC PRIORITIES IMPLICATIONS:

The City Strategic Priorities 2023-2026 are reflective of the four Cardinal Directions from the City's Official Community Plan and is organized along 14 Priority Themes. Support for the temporary road closure for Courtenay's first Pride Parade is in alignment with the *Equity and Community Well-Being Directions* and reflects the *Priority Themes of: Streets and Transportation, Social Infrastructure, Arts Culture and Heritage and Local Economy*.

OPTIONS:

1. THAT Council approves the temporary road closure of 5th Street on Saturday August 26, 2023 from 11:00am to 1:30pm, including the 5th Street Bridge, for use by Queer Culture upon receipt of all applicable documents.
2. THAT Council approves the temporary road closure of 5th Street on Saturday August 26, 2023 from 11:00am to 1:30pm, but not of the 5th Street Bridge, for use by Queer Culture upon receipt of all applicable documents.

3. THAT Council recieves this report for information only.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Letter of Request, Queer Culture
2. Letter of Support, Downtown Courtenay Business Improvement Association

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