



The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

Briefing Note

To: Council

File No.: 2240-20 SID

From: Director of Recreation, Culture and Community Services

Date: July 17, 2024

Subject: Sid Williams Theatre Capital Projects Update

PURPOSE: To inform Council of the upcoming Sid Williams Theatre Lighting Grid Upgrade project and other future capital projects being led by the Sid Williams Theatre Society.

BACKGROUND:

The Sid Williams Theatre Society (the Society) holds a five-year licence to occupy (the licence) and a management and operating grant fee for service agreement (the grant agreement) with the City. These agreements are up for renewal and currently carry over on a month to month basis. The Society is required, through the licence, to obtain prior written approval before carrying out improvements to the Sid Williams Theatre (the Theatre). In addition, the grant agreement identifies that the Society will undertake fundraising and apply for grants to make capital improvements or for the purchase of equipment for the Theatre.

The Theatre's overhead stage lighting grid has been of concern to the Society over the past several years. From a safety perspective, the existing fixed overhead stage lighting grid requires the Theatre's staff to navigate sixteen-foot ladders while carrying approximately 40 pounds of lighting instruments and work at these heights for extended periods of time. With increased theatre bookings, change over in rentals, and requests for complex theatre lighting plots, the Theatre's staff are spending a significant amount of time in changing over lighting fixtures.

The Society considered two options to provide safer access and an efficient process of changing stage lighting fixtures:

- 1) Purchase a hydraulic manlift; or
- 2) Upgrade the fixed lighting grid system to an automated computer-controlled mechanical system.

The Society has ultimately decided to pursue the second option as a hydraulic lift would not provide a more efficient method of lighting fixture changes and would require storage space that the Theatre does not have. In addition, a hydraulic lift not address the concerns related to the lack of information regarding the existing load bearing limits on the roof. A computerized lighting grid system would address the safety concerns, shorten the staff time required for lighting equipment changes, require an engineering study to confirm the load bearing requirements, and would improve the Society's artistic lighting capabilities. The estimated cost for an upgraded lighting grid system would be approximately \$600,000 which includes installation, equipment, structural works, and consultant fees.

DISCUSSION:

After a decision was made by the Society to pursue an upgrade to a mechanical lighting grid system, the Society applied for funding in 2023. The Society was successful in its application for \$250,000 from the BC Arts Council, BC Arts Infrastructure Grant. The Society will be contributing another \$250,000 from its reserves. The remaining \$100,000 would be funded through the Society's direct borrowing. The Society will also be contributing approximately \$20,000 of additional funding towards decommissioning the existing

fixed overhead stage lighting grid in preparation for the new installation, re-hanging lights, hazardous material assessment of the attic and roof area, obtaining project insurances and other project administrative costs.

The Society engaged an experienced theatre consultant, Schick Shiner and Associates to oversee the project. The consultant has assembled an experienced consultant team to act as the design professionals on record for the project. Included on the project team is the architectural firm who led the major Theatre renovation in 1999-2000 and also a structural engineer to be the professional engineer on record to confirm the theatre's roof load capacity, the structural design for the proposed mechanical lighting grid system, and letters of assurance for the building permit application.

This past May, the Society awarded the installation contract to a general contractor. Staff are working with the Society to ensure all risk management and insurance requirements are met for all consultants and contractors involved and are submitted to the City before a letter of approval to proceed is provided to the Society to proceed with the works. The project is scheduled to commence the end of July and be completed by mid-September.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Theatre Asset Management Planning

Staff are working with the Sid Williams Theatre Society to ensure the Society is actively involved in the Theatre's capital asset management plan to reduce the likelihood of a theatre asset failure that could affect the Theatre's ability to provide its services to the community. Through the upcoming Licence of Occupation renewal which will be presented at a Council meeting this fall, language will be added to the agreements in which the Society will be required to submit an annual updated five-year theatre capital budget. The Society's five-year theatre capital budget will identify the Society's short and medium term capital projects based on the Society's priorities as the operator of the Theatre and will identify the funding sources over and above what it requests from the.

Theatre capital projects are major capital improvements or upgrades to the Theatre that are required for the Theatre operations and provision of services as performing arts theatre. These capital projects are over and above the building's heat and ventilation capital equipment and building envelop capital management plans that are the City's cost responsibility.

Stage Elevator Replacement

The replacement of the stage elevator is another project planned for 2025 that is contingent on the Society's successful grant application to Canadian Heritage for \$500,000. The total estimated project budget is approximately \$700,000. The existing stage elevator is over 30 years old and is approaching the end of its lifecycle. Recent elevator code changes have resulted in significant safety upgrades in order for the stage elevator to remain code compliant and retain its operating permit under the jurisdiction of Technical Safety BC. Replacement parts for the current system are no longer manufactured and would require custom fabrication. The Society is looking to upgrade the stage elevator to a spiral lift stage elevator system that can accommodate heavier stage loads.

The Society has been in communication with the potential funder and will be working towards an application this year. The Society is requesting the City contribute approximately \$100,000 to the project and the remaining \$100,000 will be funded by the Society's fundraising initiatives. Staff will review the request and its alignment with City cost responsibilities and outcomes of the Cultural Strategic Plan, will include this for Council's consideration in the financial plan.

Digital Marquee

The Society would like to replace the existing box letter theatre marquee sign with a digital marquee sign in 2025. The Sid is seeking full project funding through BC Gaming of approximately \$70,000. A sign permit and a variance application will be required for this project.

Auditorium Seating

The existing auditorium seating was installed in the 1999-2000 renovation. Seats have been well maintained but are aging. The Society is looking to replace with removable models that allow for a flexibility in the set-up of the theatre auditorium. This project has been deferred to 2026 - 2027. The total project cost is approximately \$200,000 and the Sid would be looking to leverage a portion of their own funding to apply for third party grant funds in addition to City funding which amount is to be determined.

The above is just a summary of currently identified capital projects which the Society has or is actively seeking funding. An updated five-year capital request will be presented to Council in the fall as part of the Society's agreement renewal staff report.

POLICY ANALYSIS:

Cultural Service Review, 2019

- Support the Sid Williams Theatre in an application to the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund for support, and/or other grant sources
- Continue to maintain to a high standard all cultural infrastructure and City-owned or leased cultural assets.

OCP, 2022

Arts and Culture Chapters

- ACH 7: Continue to support the downtown as the region's arts, culture, and heritage hub by ensuring key cultural partners such as the Comox Valley Art Gallery, the Courtenay and District Museum, the Sid Williams Civic Theatre, and the Comox Valley Community Arts Council continue to be located downtown, and promoting and investing in public art and cultural opportunities downtown.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Through these three planned theatre capital projects, the Society's contributed assets are estimated to be approximately \$1,570,000. These capital assets, once affixed to the Theatre, will become the City's property.

Capital Project Description	Timeline	Estimated Project Budget
Theatrical Lighting Grid System Upgrade	Summer 2024	\$600,000
Stage Elevator Replacement	2025	\$700,000
Digital Marquee	2025	\$70,000
Auditorium Seat Replacement	2026-2027	\$200,000
<i>Total Estimated Contributed Capital Assets</i>		<i>\$1,570,000</i>

The Society's request for the City's financial contribution will be included in the proposed 2025-2029 capital budget financial plan.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:

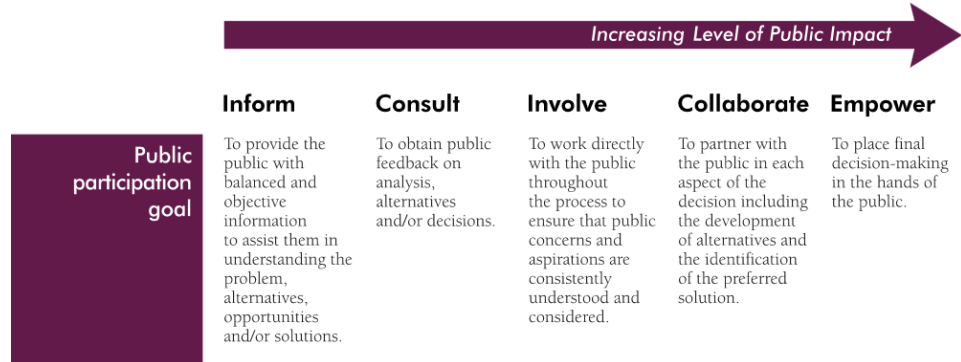
The Recreation, Culture and Community Services Department will ensure the City’s risk management and insurance requirements are met before approvals are provided as per the licence to occupy and management and operating grant fee for service agreements.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:

N/A

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

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



© International Association for Public Participation www.iap2.org

RECOMMENDATION: THAT Council receive the “Sid Williams Theatre Capital Projects Update” briefing note.

Prepared by: Joy Chan, Manager of Business Administration

Reviewed by: Susie Saunders, Director of Recreation, Culture and Community Services

Concurrence: Geoff Garbutt, M.PI., MCIP, RPP, City Manager (CAO)