

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

TO: Shane Bourke, City Manager	DATE: April 7, 2025
FROM: Danielle Whiteway, Chief Financial Officer	MEETING: City Council
REPORT WRITER: Candace Bilodeau, Director, City Manager’s Office	
SUBJECT: Corporate Sponsorship Recommendation – Bear Creek Folk Fest	

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council direct Administration to negotiate and enter into a sponsorship agreement with the Bear Creek Folk Music Festival Society for the 2025 Bear Creek Folk Festival, containing terms and conditions satisfactory to the City Manager and City Solicitor, and with the following specification:

1. Provide a cash sponsorship in the amount of \$50,000, to be funded from Council’s Corporate Sponsorship Fund.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL / COMMITTEE DIRECTIONS

At the January 29, 2024 City Council meeting, Council rescinded Policy 112 – Corporate Sponsorship and Policy 111 – Souvenirs and approved Policy 129 – Corporate Sponsorship.

BACKGROUND

On January 29, 2024, Council passed an updated Corporate Sponsorship policy which governs the use of Council Sponsorship Funds. The Sponsorship Fund is intended to support events that enhance and enrich our community with preference given to: a) events with a strong alignment to Council’s strategic priorities; and b) established events (5 years+) that have proven to be well supported by the community; and c) unique events which are not similar to events offered by the City or other community groups.

The current Corporate Sponsorship Policy stipulates that any sponsorship valued at \$10,000 or above will require Council approval and that preference will be given to events with a strong alignment to Council’s strategic priorities. The Sponsorship Fund has a total annual budget of \$125,000.

ANALYSIS

Organized by the Bear Creek Folk Music Festival Society, the Bear Creek Folk Festival will return to Borstad Hill in Grande Prairie from August 15 to 17, 2025. Now entering its eighth year, the festival has become a cornerstone cultural event in the region, drawing audiences from across Alberta, Canada, and beyond.

Featuring an eclectic lineup of international, national, and local musicians performing on multiple stages over three days, the festival offers more than just live music. Attendees can enjoy a vibrant array of food vendors, artisan markets, and diverse community programming, all supported by a dedicated team of volunteers.

Since its inception, the festival has benefited from the consistent support of the City of Grande Prairie. Over the past eight years—including financial assistance during the 2021 “unfestival” due to COVID-19—the City’s contributions, both financial and in-kind, have played a vital role in the festival’s growth and continued success. This partnership has helped foster local tourism, stimulate economic activity, and strengthen community pride.

For 2025, festival organizers have requested \$80,000 in sponsorship. Administration is recommending a \$50,000 cash contribution, which represents the maximum allowable amount under the Corporate Sponsorship Fund. This recommendation reflects the City’s ongoing commitment to supporting the festival, while also acknowledging its increasing financial sustainability, as demonstrated by \$150,000 in revenue reported in 2024.

Pending Council’s approval, Administration will work with festival organizers to determine an appropriate level of recognition for the City’s sponsorship. Based on previous years and the proposed sponsorship level, potential recognition may include:

- Acknowledgement as the presenting sponsor of free admission for children under 12
- A full-page colour advertisement in a prominent location within the festival program
- Logo placement near the main festival gate and on sponsor signage
- Verbal recognition by emcees during festival programming
- Acknowledgement through social media, the festival website, and on-site signage
- Special guest passes and hospitality access for City representatives

These recognition opportunities offer substantial public visibility and community goodwill, aligning with Council’s strategic goals around quality of life, inclusive community engagement, and economic readiness.

Relationship to City Council's Areas of Focus / Strategic Priorities

The Bear Creek Folk Festival aligns with several key priorities of the City of Grande Prairie Council’s Strategic Plan:

- **Quality of Life:** Enhances community vibrancy through accessible, family-friendly cultural programming.
- **Inclusive & Caring Community:** Promotes inclusiveness through accessibility accommodations and youth engagement.
- **Economic Readiness:** Stimulates tourism and economic activity, positioning Grande Prairie as a cultural destination.
- **Engaging Relationships:** Strengthens partnerships among community groups, volunteers, businesses, and government.

Environmental Impact

There is no anticipated impact.

Economic Impact

Based on the 2024 Sponsor Impact Report, the 2024 festival attracted attendees and volunteers from 188 cities worldwide, with over one-third of ticket holders staying overnight—supporting local accommodations, restaurants, and retail businesses. With daily attendance ranging from 6,250 to 6,750, the festival generates substantial economic activity while enhancing the city’s profile as a destination for high-quality cultural events.

Social Impact

Through sponsorship of the Bear Creek Folk Festival, the City of Grande Prairie supports community-building initiatives that foster volunteerism, youth participation, and cultural engagement. The anticipated social impact includes strengthened civic pride, enhanced inclusivity, and a more connected, vibrant community.

Relevant Statutes / Master Plans / City Documents

[Council Policy 129 – Corporate Sponsorship](#)

Risk

There is minimal risk to the City in sponsoring these types of events.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

In alignment with Council Policy 129, consultation occurred between the Mayor and the City Manager’s Office to determine priorities for 2025 Corporate Sponsorship allocation and focus based on local needs, community vision, Council’s strategic priorities and available funds.

BUDGET / FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cash sponsorship will be funded through Council’s Corporate Sponsorship Fund. Should this recommendation be approved, the remaining balance in the 2025 Sponsorship Fund will be \$38,500.

SUMMARY / CONCLUSION

In consideration of the Bear Creek Folk Festival’s alignment with Council Policy 129 and Council’s Strategic Plan, its demonstrated community impact, and its role as a signature cultural event in Grande Prairie, Administration recommends a \$50,000 cash sponsorship for the 2025 event. This amount reflects the maximum allowable under the Corporate Sponsorship Fund and balances financial support with fiscal responsibility. Administration believes this contribution will help sustain a high-quality, inclusive festival that benefits the broader community.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: 2024 Bear Creek Folk Festival Sponsor Impact Report