



Subject: *Proposed Dairy Heritage Museum in Shubenacadie*
To: Parks, Recreation & Culture Committee
Date Prepared: April 28, 2023
Related Motions: N/A
Prepared by: Aurora Douthwright, Tourism & Events Supervisor
Approved by: Alana Tapper, Director, Parks, Recreation & Culture

Summary

This report brings forward a request from a group of local residents who are proposing the addition of a Dairy Heritage Museum to the existing Watson Smith & Sons Tinsmith Shop Museum in Shubenacadie. The property in question is currently owned by the Municipality of East Hants.

Financial Impact Statement

Should Council wish to proceed with this project as proposed, an immediate impact would be the cost of a facility condition assessment to determine if the building addition is feasible. Future financial impact could result in partial funding toward the project, as well as building maintenance costs and related capital expenditures over time.

Recommendation

If Council is interested in pursuing this proposal in principle, staff recommend that the Municipality pursue a facility condition assessment at a cost of approximately \$20,000 plus HST (funded from GTR) for the Watson Smith & Sons Tinsmith Shop property to determine if moving forward with this plan would be feasible given the historic condition of the building.

Based on the results of the facility condition assessment, and support from other levels of government and additional funding streams, staff would aim to bring back an updated report for Council at a later date.

Recommended Motion

None - direction is being sought from Executive Committee.

Background

In early 2023, Planning & Development and Parks, Recreation & Culture staff were approached by a group to discuss a proposal for a Provincial Dairy Heritage Museum to be built in Shubenacadie as an addition to the Tinsmith Shop Museum. The committee is comprised of six individuals with backgrounds in the dairy industry, as well as representatives from the Tinsmith Shop Museum (East Hants Museum Society).

The Municipality of East Hants owns the property in question, and has an existing 10-year lease to the East Hants Museum Society to operate a seasonal tourist attraction. The Municipality also provides funding to this group in the amount of \$3,000 for staffing and \$13,000 for operations and maintenance via the annual operating budget.

If the Dairy Heritage Museum is to become a reality, the proposition is for day-to-day operations to fall to the East Hants Museum Society and other volunteers from the organizing group. Most likely, the same team of staff/summer students would be shared for the entire property, and the attractions (Tinsmith Shop and Dairy Heritage Museum) could operate in tandem with shared hours, washrooms, parking, etc.

Discussion

PROPOSED BUILDING DETAILS

For additional preliminary site plan and drawings, see Appendix A.



- 30 x 40 standalone building (1200 sq ft) to be attached by a covered walkway.
- The addition must be 6m from the property boundary. Based on the group's estimations, there is a ditch that would need to be moved for drainage purposes.
- The main floor level matches the main floor of the existing museum, and the group has met with Planning & Development to ensure that the annex would meet floodplain zoning requirements.
- There is room at the back of the property to provide necessary parking (see site plan).

FUNDING AND OPERATIONS

Based on the preliminary site plan attached to this report, the group has provided an estimated building cost of \$250,000. With many unknown factors, especially the potential cost of preparing the current building to accommodate the addition, municipal staff expect this figure may be a significant underestimation of what final building costs could be.

To cover the cost of construction, the group intends to request contributions from multiple levels of government (Municipal, Provincial and Federal). The group's initial conversation with Kings-Hants Member of Parliament Kody Blois indicated that funding for Heritage and Cultural projects would be suitable, although no specific figures have been promised by any level of government at this time. There is also an intent to receive sponsorship/funding from the dairy industry including manufacturers and producers, as well as local businesses.

While the group plans to fundraise for initial construction costs, long-term maintenance, insurance, and liability of the facility would presumably fall to the Municipality as owners of the property and operators of the current lease. Due to the Municipal ownership of this property, it should be noted that this project as proposed would draw significant Municipal resources aside from the potential funding/assessment costs such as: staff hours to coordinate with the group, preparation of future reports and status updates to Council, administration within Planning & Development on permitting and inspections, etc. The project is not part of any current departmental work plan, so staff time and duties would need to be re-prioritized accordingly.

If this project were to move forward, East Hants would explore options in sharing operation costs of the facility; for example, the Municipality may consider turning ownership over to the volunteer group. The group may also choose to secure annual funding from industry partners or other levels of government, given the Provincial/regional nature of the museum.

From early discussions with the group, their expectation is to have the building envelope maintained by the Municipality in a similar fashion to the Tinsmith Shop. While no request has been made, it is reasonable to anticipate that the annual maintenance and staffing grants to the East Hants Museum Society may increase if they begin to operate both attractions.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The addition of the Dairy Heritage Museum may bolster visitation of the Tinsmith Shop Museum and enhance the village core of Shubenacadie. This fits within the East Hants Strategic Plan Strong Community objective by supporting tourism, heritage, and the arts, enriching the quality of life for residents and attracting visitors.

In the East Hants Tourism Strategy, one objective is to support development of niche tourism experiences which align with East Hants assets. Another key strategy of this document is to invest in facilities & infrastructure, ensuring appropriate infrastructure and facilities are in place at municipally-owned tourism assets to meet the needs of visitors.

Although there is alignment to the strategies listed above, it is worth noting that the Tin Smith Museum property is not explicitly mentioned as a priority in any Municipal strategy at present.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Planning & Development staff have reviewed this proposal in terms of alignment with the Community Plan, zoning, and Heritage Property regulations. Staff have deemed the proposed structure to be a legal non-conforming use. A non-conforming structure, or structure containing a non-conforming use, may be extended, enlarged, or altered up to 25% of its original gross floor area provided all other applicable provisions under this Bylaw are met, including size limits as prescribed under the applicable zone. The proposed 1200-square-foot addition could be built as-of right, subject to site plan approval.

As well, significant alteration of topography means cutting or filling of more than 10% of the lot area zoned HF or in excess of 93 m² of HF zoned land, whichever is more stringent. If this is applicable, an Environmental Study could be required.

The Tin Smith Museum is also a Heritage Property. Reviewing the draft site plan provided by the group, East Hants' Manager of Planning determined that the addition as proposed is not considered a substantial alteration as defined in the Heritage Property Act, with no specific heritage property approval required.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

If Council wishes to explore this proposal further, staff recommend undertaking a facility condition assessment for the property. The assessment would need to outline current facility condition with a report on the viability of the proposed addition in terms of building code, ventilation, electrical, etc. The estimated cost of this study is approximately \$20,000 plus HST, which could be funded from the GTR.

The construction of a 1200-square-foot addition to this Municipally-owned building will have impacts on the annual operating budget over time, with capital improvements and repairs required in the future. There is no specific funding request attached to this report, but the upfront building cost of \$250,000 is proposed to be shared with multiple levels of government as well as industry partners. Staff also feel the initial building cost as presented by the group is underestimated based on current market conditions, supply chains and finishing details required as part of a museum attraction. If a further report is to be prepared after a facility condition assessment, staff would request a more detailed budget and funding request from the group at that time.

Given the long-term costs and responsibility that will fall to the Municipality, Council should consider both the potential benefits of the project outlined in this report as well as the impacts it would have financially and operationally.

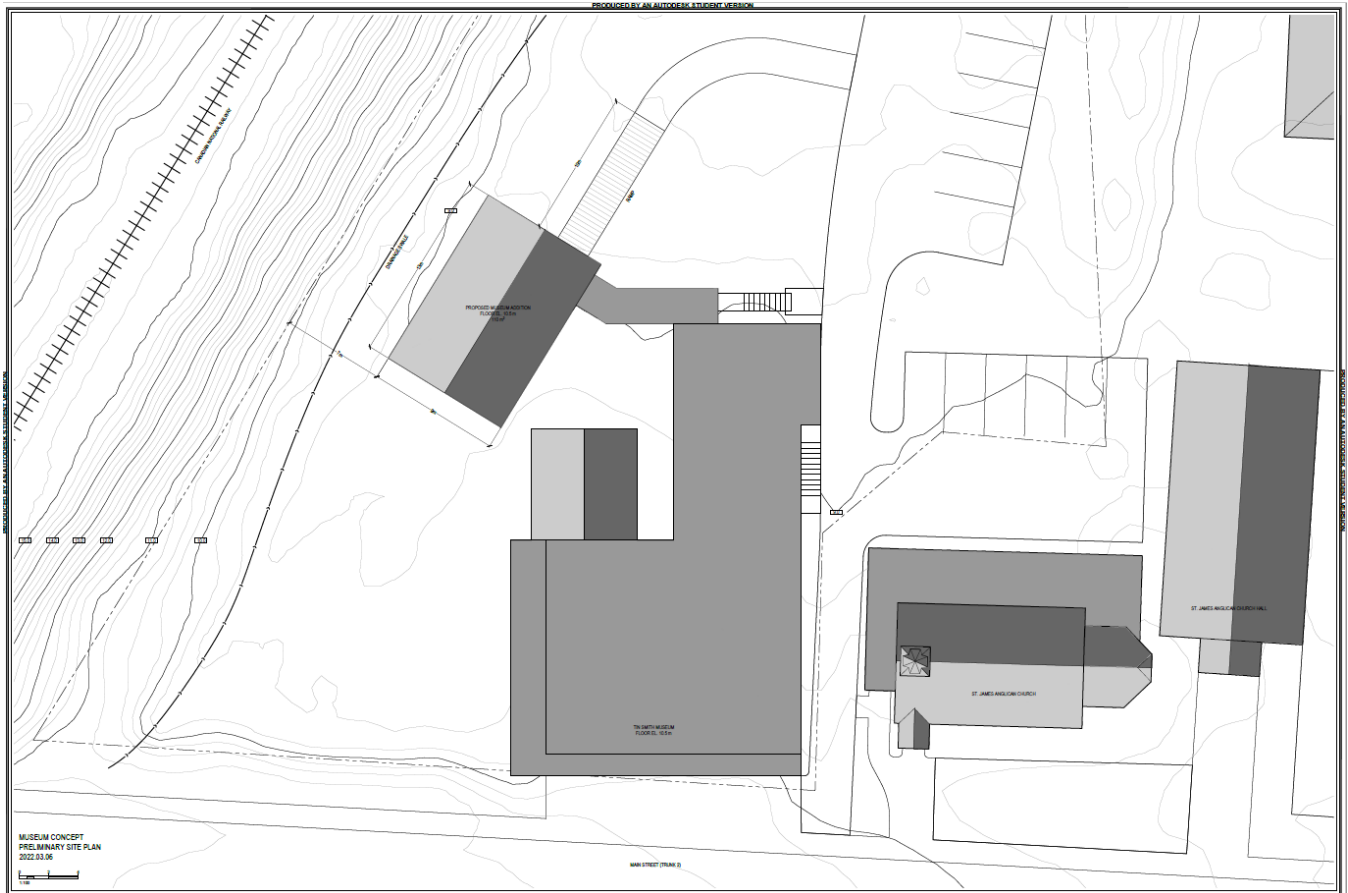
Alternatives

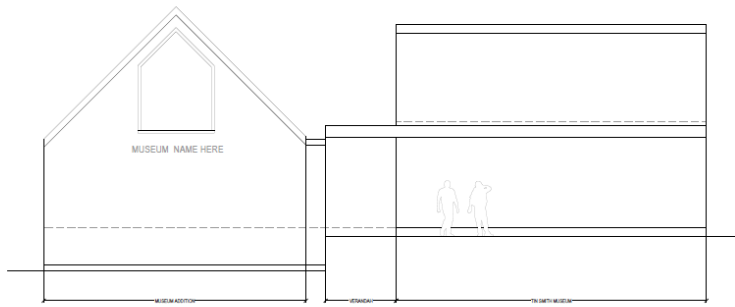
1. That the Parks, Recreation and Culture Committee direct Council not to proceed with any further efforts related to the proposed Dairy Heritage Museum as proposed at this time.
2. That the Parks, Recreation and Culture Committee direct Council to provide alternate direction to staff.

3. That the Parks, Recreation and Culture Committee direct Council to allow staff to conduct a facility condition assessment with the estimated \$20,000 cost funded by reserves. Contingent on the results of such assessment, staff should prepare a further report for Council on the viability of the proposed Dairy Heritage Museum based on building condition and additional funding streams.

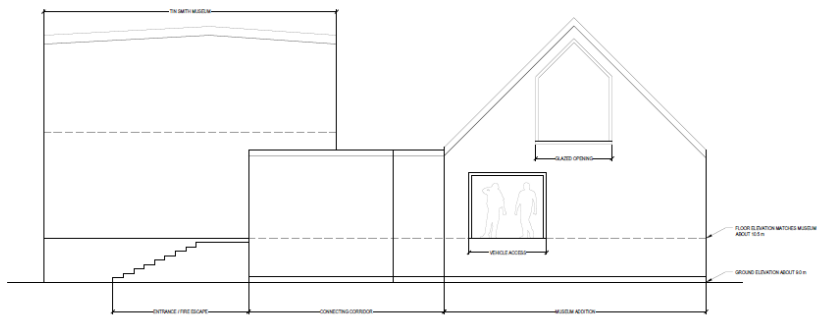
Attachments

Appendix A: Preliminary Site Plan provided to staff by the Dairy Heritage Museum group





2 STREET SIDE ELEVATION
SCALE: 1/8"



1 REAR ELEVATION
SCALE: 1/8"

MUSEUM CONCEPT
SKETCH ELEVATIONS
2022.03.06





