

Future Use of the Dempsey Store (Ward 10 - North York Centre)

(City Council on April 11, 12 and 13, 2000, deferred consideration of this Clause to the next regular meeting of City Council scheduled to be held on May 9, 2000; and Council directed that, in the interim, a Committee, consisting of Councillors Feldman, Fillion, Flint, Gardner and Jakobek, be established to assess the merit of utilizing Dempsey House as a facility for Autistic children, in addition to the purposes for which it is used currently, and to report thereon directly to City Council.)

The Administration Committee recommends the adoption of the joint report (March 9, 2000) from the Commissioner of Corporate Services and the City Clerk, subject to amending Recommendation No. (2) by deleting the words “enter into” and inserting in lieu thereof the words “to approve”, so that such Recommendation shall now read as follows:

- “(2) the Commissioner of Corporate Services or the Executive Director, Facilities and Real Estate, be authorized, subject to Corporate policy, to approve occupancy agreements with the Archives Association of Ontario and the North York Historical Society for use of the Dempsey Store in the manner set out in this report;”.**

The Administration Committee submits the following joint report (March 9, 2000) from the Commissioner of Corporate Services and the City Clerk:

Purpose:

To report on a plan for the future use of the Dempsey Store in order to enhance public access to exhibits and historical records of local significance.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement :

No new costs will be incurred. The ongoing costs associated with operating the Dempsey Store in terms of utilities, building security, and archival exhibits and educational programming have been included in the 2000 Operating Budget submission of the City Clerk. The proposals in this report will result in revenue of \$7,000.00 which covers the utilities and security costs of the entire building.

Recommendations :

It is recommended that:

- (1) the plan for the future use of the Dempsey Store, as set out in the body of this report, be approved;

- (2) the Commissioner of Corporate Services or the Executive Director, Facilities and Real Estate, be authorized to, subject to Corporate policy, enter into occupancy agreements with the Archives Association of Ontario and the North York Historical Society for use of the Dempsey Store in the manner set out in this report; and
- (3) the appropriate City officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

The Dempsey Store was built in 1860 on the north-west corner of Yonge Street and Sheppard Avenue, and was relocated to 250 Beecroft Road in 1996. It was renovated by the Parks and Recreation Department, and under the terms of an operating agreement with the then North York Clerk's Department, it was opened in 1997 as North York's archival facility to store historical records and to provide public programming.

The Dempsey Store is currently operated by the City Clerk's Division as an archival outreach facility. During the 1999 Operating Budget review, the division proposed that responsibility for the building be returned to the Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Department as part of its museum operations. In response to concerns regarding the need to maintain the Dempsey Store for archival exhibits, the Commissioner of Corporate Services was requested to keep the building in good repair and to report back on the display of archival material and the future use of the building. Pursuant to Council's direction, staff discussed opportunities for cooperative archival programming with external organizations.

Comments:

Discussions with individuals and organizations interested in the Dempsey Store identified two key objectives for its future use: maintain public access to exhibits and educational programming based on archival records, and carry on the role intended for the renovated Dempsey Store as an archival repository for documents that pertain to the community's history. In order to achieve these objectives, it is proposed that the building continue to be under the jurisdiction of the City Clerk's and utilized as follows:

- (1) City Clerk's Division:

Staff of Corporate Records and Archives will continue to utilize the majority of the main floor and meeting rooms on the second floor to provide educational programming at the Dempsey Store for primary school classes studying social studies or local history. Visits begin with a review of the exhibits on the ground floor to explore the history of the Dempsey Store and its renovations, as well as selected themes in the development of North York. Classes later move to the second floor, where students work with kits containing facsimiles of archival documents to discuss issues involving urban planning and the role of municipal government in the lives of its citizens, as well as the importance of using archival records to interpret and understand changes in our City. Reservations

for class tours are often booked by teachers in conjunction with visits to the nearby Gibson House, which is operated by the Culture, Arts and Heritage Division.

Staff are also responsible for preparing exhibit elements for the building. During the past two years staff have focused on using the City's archival holdings, but it is proposed that they work on a cooperative basis with the North York Historical Society to develop presentations that reflect local interests and make use of both local collections and municipal records. The cost of exhibit and educational programming at the Dempsey Store, as well as utilities and building security, are included in the operating budget of the Corporate Records and Archives program.

(2) Culture, Arts and Heritage Division:

In addition to cooperating with the City Clerk's Division in the promotion and scheduling of educational programming, staff of the Gibson House would continue to make use of the basement of the Dempsey Store to store artifacts in a secure area. This use addresses the lack of storage space at the Gibson House.

(3) North York Historical Society:

This non-profit organization has expressed interest in using the Dempsey Store to consolidate its archival collections, which are currently located in members' basements and in the North York Central Library. There is currently no public access to the collections. In exchange for the use of one room on the ground floor to store and process its collections, the Society will work with City Clerk's staff on a cooperative basis to develop presentations that reflect local interests and make use of both local collections and municipal records and will provide access to the public to their collection during regularly scheduled hours, one day a week. This function facilitates the City use of the building and is in keeping with the intended use of the building, and the presence of a community-based archival program should promote the donation of letters, diaries, photographs and other documents by local citizens who wish to see their contributions remain in the area. Efforts will also be made to link the archival descriptions of the Society and the City of Toronto Archives, so that researchers visiting either the Dempsey Store or the Archives are aware of the North York-related material that is available elsewhere.

The Society does not receive grants or other funding from the City. It is prepared to pay for costs associated with telephone lines.

(4) Archives Association of Ontario:

The Archives Association of Ontario is a non-profit organization that represents the interests of archivists and archival programs throughout the province. It provides free consultative services through its Archives Advisor and Conservation Advisor programs that benefit many archival repositories in Toronto, as well as throughout the province. As a result of a recent administrative restructuring, it requires office space for three members

of its staff, and to carry out related functions such as meetings. These requirements can be accommodated in three rooms on the second floor of the Dempsey Store.

The Association is able to pay \$7,000.00 per annum, which will recover the utility and security costs of the entire building. Its President has also agreed that the Administrative Assistant would occupy the front counter on the ground floor for half the working day. This presence facilitate the City use of the building as it permits public access to the exhibit areas on a part-time basis, five days a week.

Use of the Dempsey Store on the foregoing basis would allow the building to be programmed in a manner consistent with the goals that led to its restoration, recover the operating costs for utilities and security, increase public access to the exhibit area in an economic manner, and provide access to significant historical collections that are not currently available to the public. In view of the very good fit between the organizations and the use of the Dempsey Store desired by the local community, it is recommended that City Council give authority for staff to enter into occupancy agreements with the North York Historical Society and the Archives Association of Ontario.

Conclusions:

In response to concerns regarding the future use of the Dempsey Store, this report proposes a partnership among the City Clerk's Division, the Culture, Arts and Heritage Division, the Archives Association of Ontario and the North York Historical Society that is designed to extend access to exhibits, provide access to local history collections, and recover the building's operating costs.

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(A copy of the map attached to the foregoing report was forwarded to all Members of Council with the March 21, 2000, agenda of the Administration Committee and a copy thereof is also on file in the office of the City Clerk.)