
City Council

Notice of Motion

MM21.13	ACTION			Ward:28
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Authorization to Release Section 37 Funds to the George Brown College Foundation for the Creation of a Commemorative Mural of Lucie and Thornton Blackburn - by Councillor Pam McConnell, seconded by Councillor Gary Crawford

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Executive Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Pam McConnell, seconded by Councillor Gary Crawford, recommends that:

1. City Council increase the approved 2016 Operating Budget for Non-Program by \$50,000 gross, \$0 net, fully funded by Section 37 benefits obtained in the development at 424 - 460 Adelaide Street East, (source account: XR3026- 3700712), for the purpose of funding a commemorative mural of Lucie and Thornton Blackburn at the new George Brown College Student Residence at 80 Cooperage Street in the West Don Lands (Operating Cost Centre NP2161).
2. City Council direct that the funds be transferred to the George Brown College Foundation once the George Brown College Foundation has signed an Undertaking governing the use of the funds and the financial reporting requirements.

Summary

This Motion seeks the authorization to release of \$50,000 in Section 37 monies to the George Brown College Foundation to fund the creation of a commemorative mural of Lucie and Thornton Blackburn at the new George Brown College Student Residence at 80 Cooperage Street in the West Don Lands.

Lucie and Thornton Blackburn are designated Persons of National Historic Significance by the Department of Canadian Heritage. Escaping slavery in Kentucky in 1831, the Blackburns were

captured in Detroit. The court ordered return to their owners sparked the “Blackburn Riots of 1833” and a dramatic escape to Canada was arranged. Jailed upon arrival, their case established a legal precedent in Upper Canada that made the province a safe haven for former African-American refugees.

Settling in Toronto in 1824 (eventually residing at Sackville Street and Eastern Avenue), the Blackburns established the first cab business in Upper Canada. The red and yellow colours of the horse drawn cab are reflected to this day in the Toronto Transit Commission’s branding. As prominent business persons, the Blackburns used their growing affluence to support other fugitive slaves arriving in Toronto, constructing and offering low rent housing in St. John’s Ward (present day City Hall). Thornton Blackburn had a leadership role with George Brown in the Canadian Mill and Mercantile Association, established to provide economic opportunities for black settlers at Buxton, south of Chatham. Thornton Blackburn and George Brown were also associates in the anti-slavery movement.

In 2016, George Brown College opened its new student residence in the West Don Lands. In recognition of the importance of the Blackburns, the proximity of the residence to the site of their household, and the links to the school’s namesake, George Brown, the College designated the conference centre at the building the Lucie and Thornton Blackburn Conference Centre.

A commemorative mural of the story of the Blackburns was proposed to honour their significant contributions and act as an educational tool. The Heritage Interpretation Master Plan for the Old Town (2013, revised) recommends the creation of an interpretive feature for the Blackburns, in the vicinity of the site of their household.

George Brown College is commissioning a public art display to be located in the foyer of the Conference Centre. The site is publically accessible and will be visible to visitors as well as those who use the centre. The mural will heighten the awareness of the Blackburns, and provide recognition to under represented communities in Toronto.

Funds have been secured through Section 37 benefits from the development at 424 - 460 Adelaide Street East that included \$100,000.00 for the purpose of implementing the Heritage Interpretation Master Plan for Old Town Toronto and/or the Heritage Lighting Master Plan for Old Town Toronto. These funds have been received by the City and have accrued interest. Of the original contribution and accrued interest there remains approximately \$100,206.25 that has not been spent or remains uncommitted.

City Planning staff advises that the proposed purposes of the funds as set out in the recommendations of this Motion and are in compliance with the respective Section 37 Agreement and are in accordance with Council approved guidelines and protocols.