

Staff Report to Council

Title: Proposed Ad-hoc Pier Safety Committee

Report Number: Emergency Services-2023-05

Director: Community Services

Manager: Manager.

Meeting Date:
Wednesday, September 13, 2023

Date to be considered by Council:
Wednesday, September 13, 2023

Recommendation:

That Council approve the establishment of an Ad-hoc Committee for the purposes of seeking recommendations for pier safety at the Kincardine Waterfront.

Executive Summary:

The piers located at the Kincardine main beach have long been associated with summer enjoyment but at times hazardous conditions that raise serious safety concerns. With the most recent tragic event this summer, staff is recommending that Council approve an Ad-hoc Committee of key stakeholders and subject experts to provide recommendations for safety improvements.

Strategic Priorities:

C.9-Enhance the experience at the lakefront

C.13-Protect people, property and the environment from the effects of dangerous conditions caused by people and nature

Financial Considerations:

Establishing an ad hoc committee involves financial considerations, including those related to human resources. Designating staff to support the committee's work will be required to schedule meetings and assist with meeting preparation, as well as staff resources to provide input to the committee. Staff do not anticipate meeting expenses, as the meetings can be hosted in existing municipal facilities. If the committee conducts public consultations or outreach, there may be expenses related to advertising, hosting public meetings, and gathering public input. No new expenses for technology, software, and communication tools

to facilitate the committee's work and collaboration are anticipated at this time. The longer the committee operates and the more frequently it meets, the higher the cumulative costs will be, which is why a timeline and frequency of meetings needs to be carefully considered.

The recommendations of the committee may have budget implications.

Policy:

N/A

Context and Background Information:

The Kincardine north and south piers have long been a fascination of residents, holidayers, thrill seekers, recreationists and for those wishing to capture the most beautiful sunsets in the world.

Piers, break walls or breakwaters, are found across the Great Lake shorelines, and these cement structures have long played a role in the makeup of our Lake Huron communities.

The latest incident on August 12, 2023, has certainly enhanced the awareness of the dangers associated with strong wave action and currents related with piers and fluctuating water levels.

Staff is recommending Council approve an Ad-hoc Committee to discuss opportunities that could limit the risk related with activities at the piers. The mandate of the committee will be "to provide Council with practical recommendations to be presented to Council in reducing the hazards associated with usage of the north and south piers located at the Kincardine Waterfront."

The composition of the Pier Safety Ad-hoc Committee will be comprised of one council member who will chair the committee as well as:

- 1) Kincardine Emergency and Fire Services
- 2) Bruce County Ambulance
- 3) Ontario Provincial Police
- 4) Marina Staff
- 5) BIA member
- 6) Smart Beach Representative
- 6) Two members at large

The attached Terms of Reference emphasize the following:

- 1) Mandate
- 2) Goals and Objectives
- 3) Strategic Plan Priorities
- 4) Key Success Factors and Performance
- 5) Membership
- 6) Reporting Structure

7) Public Communications

Since 2016, the Kincardine Fire Services has attended 15 calls involving water emergencies. For various circumstances, four of these call outs were fatal.

Consultation Overview:

Staff closed the south pier out of respect immediately after the incident on August 12th and it has remained closed since that date.

On Friday, August 18th our region experienced extraordinary winds, and in discussions with the Fire Chief, both piers were closed.

The action produced considerable number of supportive responses on municipal social medial platforms, as well as comments from those who feel that the piers should remain open for the enjoyment of all.

Staff intend to open the piers on Friday, September 15th unless for some reason they are required to be closed again.

It is recognized that the piers are certainly an area that has nostalgia and happy memories of past summers and adventures. It is staff's goal to ensure that all users of the piers return home after their visit to the Kincardine waterfront.

Origin:

Several incidents that have resulted in death has occurred in the vicinity of the north and south piers over the last number of years. This report is in response to those incidents and recommends action steps be presented to Council at a later date.

Implementation Considerations:

An approved Pier Safety Ad-hoc Committee would commence October 1, 2023, and conclude February 1, 2024. A report on conclusions and recommendations shall be presented to Council at the end of the term. If for some reason the Ad-hoc Committee feels additional time is required to complete the required objectives, then staff may request through Council an extension of the term.

Risk Analysis:

The lack of providing a comprehensive goal to Council, does not protect the users of the pier and can potentially have a negative impact on the image and branding of the Municipality of Kincardine.

The acceptance and approval of solid recommendations articulates to the public that the Council is in cohesion when it comes to advancing and improving the experience that users have while at Station Beach.

Attachments: Draft Terms of Reference

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