

Staff Report to Council

Title: Secord Monument Proposed Process

Report Number: Strategic Initiatives-2024-02

Director: Chief Administrative Officer

Manager: Strategic Initiatives

Meeting Date:
Wednesday, January 24, 2024

Date to be considered by Council:
Wednesday, January 24, 2024

Recommendation:

That Council direct staff to hire an external consultant to host a public engagement process to identify recommendations for Council's consideration on the future location of the Secord Monument.

Executive Summary:

Due to the Queen St Reconstruction (Downtown Dig) and complete infrastructure replacement of the downtown core, the Secord Monument located in front of the Kincardine Public Library was removed. With the new layout of the downtown, the Secord Monument, cannot be returned to its exact previous location. On Wednesday, September 13, 2023, staff were directed by Council to prepare a report with recommendations related to possible options for public engagement regarding the future location of the Secord Monument. In order to manage this process in a positive manner, staff are recommending that Council direct staff to hire an external facilitator to provide advice, guidance and facilitation of the process.

Strategic Priorities:

C.11-Create improvements in inclusion, diversity, equity and access

Financial Considerations:

\$15,000 has been proposed in the 2024 annual budget as an Additional Item for Consideration, in order to support the public engagement process for the future location of the Secord Monument.

Context and Background Information:

A monument was installed outside the Kincardine Public library for Dr. Solomon Secord very shortly after his death in 1910. Dr. Secord was a doctor in Kincardine and the monument was put up in his honor by his patients and friends. The monument is in the form of a sundial and the inscription on the monument reads:

To Solomon Secord, 1834-1910. Our family physician for 50 years. This memorial was erected by his loving friends. Served as surgeon with the Southern Army during the American Civil War. All that lived he loved, and without regard for fee or reward, he did his work for love of his fellows."

Due to the Queen Street Reconstruction (Downtown Dig) and complete infrastructure replacement of the downtown core, the Dr. Secord Monument located in front of the Kincardine Public Library was removed. With the new layout of the downtown, the Secord Monument cannot be returned to its previous location.

Over the years there have been requests to consider the removal of the monument due to the reference to Secord's service to the Southern Army during the American Civil War. According to the Canadian Encyclopedia, the American Civil War took place between 1861–1865 and was between the northern (Union) states and the southern (Confederate) states. Many factors led to the outbreak of war, but the most significant was slavery.

On Wednesday, September 13, 2023, staff were directed by Council to prepare a report with recommendations for Council's consideration related to the Secord Monument including possible options for public engagement. Public engagement about what to do with a monument that references a troublesome history is not straightforward and needs to be kept in the context of what kind of community and public spaces we want as a community.

In order to develop recommendations on the public engagement process for Council, staff have consulted with some municipalities that have commemoration monuments that pay tribute to a time or a person in history that was troublesome. The purpose of the meetings was to learn about their public engagement process, their outcomes, their lessons learned and obtain advice on how to manage the process successfully.

Amongst other advice, the choice of a facilitator was noted as most critical to the success of the process. They suggested factors to consider when choosing a facilitator which included:

- Hire an external facilitator without ties to the local community in order to remain neutral.
- Previous experience facilitating community conversations about monuments/and or the commemoration of people.
- Strong facilitation experience and presentation skills.
- Positive track record in teaching inclusion and equity work.
- Strong understanding about the changing nature of the commemoration of people.

Based on initial research staff are recommending that an external consultant be hired to provide the structure and advise on the process to make this a positive community building process rather than a divisive one.

Timelines

The public engagement process would begin in February and would conclude by July 2024.

Consultation Overview:

Public conversations and the gathering of input will be integral to this process. Different methods for gathering this input will be implemented to ensure that all voices are heard on this matter. Methods to gather this input could include community conversations, key informant interviews, a public survey etc. and will be planned based on advice from the facilitator.

Origin:

Request from the Public & Council Resolution # 09/13/23 – 17; That staff be directed to prepare a report with recommendations for Council’s consideration related to the Second Monument including possible options for public engagement.

Implementation Considerations:

In order to implement this consultation funding to hire the consultant as well as staff time will be needed to manage the overall process.

Risk Analysis:

Community consultations on the past and current methods to commemorate people in other communities have sparked controversy and ill will amongst community members. A very sensitive and thoughtful approach to this work is needed in order to build a vision of the community we want to live in rather than create division.

Attachments: None

Prepared by: Jessica Catto, Executive Assistant, CAO
Lorie Fioze, Manager of Strategic Initiatives

Submitted by: Lorie Fioze, Manager of Strategic Initiatives