

<p style="text-align: center;">Joint Request for Decision</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Municipalities of Argyle and Yarmouth</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Town of Yarmouth</p>	<p>Item: Joint committee request – aquatics and community center</p> <p>Date: July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020</p>
<p>Submitted to: District of Yarmouth Council</p>	<p>Submitted by: Victoria Brooks, CAO</p>

**Background:**

In the winter of 2018/19, a joint working committee of the Councils of the District of Argyle, District of Yarmouth and Town of Yarmouth submitted a proposal to government depicting a vision for improvements to recreation infrastructure at the Mariners Center site. The adhoc working group leveraged work previously completed by dMA Planning & Management Services. The Councils approved, in principal, commitments to a project which would see new aquatics spaces, community gather spaces, walking track and multi-purpose filed house.

The Provincial government responded to the proposal indicating infrastructure funding was fully allocated. In addition, indications were given that the project was too large to compete with more modest proposals on the table. Essentially, the message was to scale back the “ask” based on the highest need within the community.

The work at that time did include some discussion around the role of other community partners in the new vision. However, given the work was in the very early stages of the project process, no relationships were formalized. However, the Yarmouth YMCA very clearly indicated a strong desire to operate the aquatics and possibly community spaces being proposed. Given the aging infrastructure at the YMCA facility on Main Street, this project was viewed as the logical next iteration of those services within the county.

With the pandemic related closure of the Yarmouth YMCA facility comes uncertainty with the future delivery of aquatics, fitness, and community support services that the YMCA has traditionally delivered.

While much of the feedback councils have received relate primarily to the aquatic facility, the YMCA delivered many additional services at that location, including gym and fitness, community outreach, immigrant support, space for Kidsact Dance etc. The closure of the YMCA location is expected for the short term as the pandemic unfolds and raises the issue of the larger project that all three councils have considered around a new aquatic and fitness center located at Mariners Center.

**What we know:**

We know that the three units appear to be committed to a new aquatic facility, fitness center and multiuse space at the Mariners Center. We have been informed that the original application submitted to the Province is not going to fall into the provincial range of affordability, so we know the project needs to be smaller. All three units must come to some agreement in that respect. That work will require coordination, and likely a third-party firm to guide us in these revisions. The coordination should be regional if funds are to be sought from the three units. Furthermore, issues such as future ownership etc. are yet to be finalized.

We know that all three units are still willing to consider a bridge to providing services to our community if it **does not risk the success of a future new facility**. This idea of a bridge may look different amongst the three units. Provincial elected officials have indicated there is no capital funding for the existing facility – work is being done by senior provincial staff to ensure no possible capital stream is being missed. We have been advised that there are potential program funding avenues that could assist with re-opening at the current site and providing specific services. We do not have adequate information to inform an appropriate bridging solution. Again, there are many good ideas that must be explored to determine if they are viable; therefore, this work too, requires coordination at a regional level if funds are to be sought from the three units.

We have heard from our constituents that the pool **and** related services are important services for our community - for swimming lessons, for health rehabilitation, for our children at risk, and for recruitment and retention of our population. In addition, we have heard that creating a sense of community, in space, is also desired by residents. Any solution would not only have to contemplate pool use, but also other uses needed for our region. Regardless of where our children at risk live, their access to a positive and safe place is a societal priority that municipal units have directly and indirectly supported through the YMCA funding.

### **Request for Council's consideration:**

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The three municipal councils are being asked, first and foremost to officially bring the work of the Mariner Center Expansion Steering Committee, or “group of nine” committee to an end. Simultaneously, the ask is to support the creation of a new regional subcommittee, which we could name the **“YARGYLE 2024”**. The name is significant, as it gives us a goal, one that aligns with a major event to be held in the same year – Congres Mondiale 2024 – the name is usable in both languages, and it indicates a strong realignment of partnership and purpose in the County.

The committee would be comprised of the following members:

John Cunningham (Chair), Daniel Allen, Danny Muise, Guy Surette, Pam Mood, Phil Mooney, with all three CAO's as non-voting support.

The committee would be charged with two responsibilities. One would be to refresh the existing capital request for a new aquatic facility at the Mariners Center, with a revised budget. This group would also have to consider how many services could be provided at the new location, the community and corporate fund raising component to the project, and be

responsible for the joint communication to the community, as well as communication to the municipal units.

The second responsibility would be to work with the Provincial government to access programming and other funding that would support a bridged service. This service may use existing community facilities for all or part of that bridge. The bridge is defined as offering a service to community while we work to secure a new facility. This group would actively examine and include/eliminate optional service provision for the major services that the YMCA was offering. Their goal would be to restore a service to the community that was fiscally responsible but also conscious of maintaining the services most in demand/need by the community.

The group had an initial meeting to discuss how some of this work would be led. Without a mandate from the three Councils, conversation was limited. The group recommended that there be two subgroups created to facilitate the two pieces of work required. The Deputy Wardens/Deputy Mayor would work on the bridge component, championed by CAO Gushue. The Wardens and Mayor would work on the new capital project, led by CAO Brooks. CAO Muise would leverage additional skills/resources to fully support pieces in both subcommittees.

Both pieces of work would report to the whole committee – YARGYLE 2024-, and the committee chair would be responsible to ensure all three municipal units are informed.

Also, part of the mandate of this committee is to engage, at their discretion, the inclusion of fundraising groups, community stakeholders and other resources. An initial budget of \$30,000 would be part of this request and revisited in the new fiscal year. This amount would be broken down equally for the initial investment, with discussions on how best to allocate funds (uniform assessment, population, other) to occur after this fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

These meetings would be open to councilors as observers only and minutes shall be taken and brought to the Councils for endorsement.

### **Foundational principles:**

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The fundamental principles of this committee are as follows:

- Act as an official subcommittee of three councils, with effective communication to all three units, minute taking and proper meeting procedures, either via Zoom or in person.
- Non-member councilors are welcome to participate as observers, except for the in-camera portion of the meetings. Councilors will be informed of the result of those discussions, but not the content.
- The committee will be authorized to engage the community – either through organized communication, or through direct engagement with key stakeholders – such as the Mariners Center Board, the coordination of fund raising efforts, the Yarmouth Area Chamber of Commerce or other similar organizations with the purpose to inform the group in its efforts.
- Media will be informed through press releases and other forms of communication.

- Financial requirements exceeding \$27,000 shall be brought to Councils for decision. CAO's typically have authority to spend \$9,000 within their own budgets, provided there is budget room.
- A vice chair will be selected, and it is the role of the chair and vice-chair to speak on behalf of the region on this project. Individual requests to councilors, even if they are deputy warden/mayor or warden/mayor must be handled by the chair or his designate.
- Individual councilors with issues shall raise them through their committee representative(s), so they can be effectively understood and resolved by those focusing their time and energy towards a positive project for the entire region.
- Communication with Members of Parliament or Members of the Legislative Assembly shall be communicated with all members as quickly as practically possible. Ideally, meetings are pre-planned, documented, and the Chair and/or the Vice chair are in attendance. Informal conversation is not discouraged, simply that they must be shared with other members of the committee asap.
- CAO's shall have discretion to add human resources to this committee, as they see fit to include – that includes engineers, PW directors, support staff, recreation staff etc..
- This committee will respect the needs and wants of all three municipal councils, represented by their members. The chair shall encourage all members to speak equally on the topics and expect that both the elected and non-elected advisors either provide or obtain information three days before a scheduled meeting.
- That councilors from the three units respect the decisions made by this regional group, as they would individually respect a decision made by the majority of its council, notwithstanding the financial decisions that must be made independently by councils.

### **Key Deliverables (to be confirmed):**

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#### **Bridge Team:**

- Coordinate and apply for provincial, community and municipal funding to support a reopening of aquatic and community services similar to those delivered by the YMCA prior to closure.
- Assess and evaluate potential alternative methods to deliver these services in an effort to reduce cost duplication, and perhaps support other organizations offering potential similar service, provided that the services are not significantly dissimilar.
- Coordinate the promotion, marketing and funding of services delivered alternatively in another facility, if applicable.
- If the current location is to be co-owned, coordinate the reopening plan at that facility.
- If the current location is solely owned, offer support for coordination.

#### **Capital team:**

- Engage third party consultants to revise existing expansion plan submitted to the Provincial Government, with the goal of building a project in the 18-20 million dollar range and seek funding to aid in expenses for this step.
- Engage and liaise with Federal and Provincial governments to seek funding opportunities as they become available.
- Create a fundraising plan for the community component of the project – this may result in hiring a third party to assist the team.

- Obtain a revised commitment from the three municipalities on the municipal funding model and commitment for an expansion.
- Recommend suitable ownership and funding scenario for the future Mariner's Center.

**CAOs' Recommendation:**

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Approve the creation of the YARGYLE2024 committee, with the objectives, principles and mandate described above.

**Suggested motion:**

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That the YARGYLE2024 committee be approved as a subcommittee of Council, and with the mandate, principles and objectives described as attached.