



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MR# 2022021

DATE: 4 May 2022

RE: Consultant hired to conduct feasibility study into new community centre

AMHERST, Nova Scotia – A major step towards building a new recreation and community centre has been taken.

The town, in partnership with the Municipality of the County of Cumberland, awarded a contract to conduct a community centre needs and feasibility study to Sierra Planning and Management of Toronto.

“Council feels this community centre project could be a game changer, both for the quality of life of our existing residents and our economic development efforts for the greater area,” Amherst Mayor David Kogon said. “Having top-notch facilities like this is now considered basic infrastructure for growing, prosperous communities.”

“The Municipality of Cumberland council decided to partner in this feasibility study to ensure we get the best evidence available on the potential costs and benefits such a facility would have for our region,” Cumberland Mayor Murray Scott said. “We look forward to seeing how a potential new facility can work with our Dr. Carson and Marion Murray Community Centre in Springhill to attract larger events, events that one facility alone could not do.”

Under the partnership, the town will cover 80 per cent of the cost of the feasibility study, estimated to be just over \$83,000, while the Municipality of Cumberland will pick up 20 per cent.

Both councils recognize a new community centre could be used by residents throughout the region and could be used in conjunction with other facilities, like the community centre in Springhill, to attract large events that require multiple facilities.





The development of a community centre is also a strategic priority of the Amherst town council, which recognizes a thriving community must have quality recreation, leisure and community facilities in addition to quality schools and hospitals.

Guiding principles have been developed for the project. They include:

- Treating all groups and individuals with the same respect we expect for ourselves.
- Promoting inclusivity through engagement and equal access to services.
- Leveraging the community's strengths through effective collaboration.
- Acting with integrity by exhibiting honesty, transparency and consistency.
- Being accountable to the citizens for council decisions and actions.
- Providing services in a socially, environmentally and economically sustainable way.
- Seeking the best empirical information available in order to reach evidence-based decisions.

Following these guiding principles, it was recognized a consultant was needed to conduct a needs and feasibility study that would enable **the councils** to make an informed decision based on addressing the region's needs and financial feasibility.

Such a study would provide:

- Reliable and defensible information related to community interests, willingness and financial capacity to support a new community centre.
- An accurate description of the community context, including socio-economic and demographic trends and a review of the existing infrastructure.
- Clear financial implications based on realistic operating costs and an assessment of funding opportunities.
- Recommendations regarding the elements to be included in the facility, scale, funding and operation model.
- A high-level capital cost estimate and preliminary space program for recommended facility elements.

Community consultation will be a major part of the study. It will include reaching out to potential partners, significant stakeholders and user groups as well as the broader community through surveys and public meetings.





The Amherst and Cumberland councils are pleased to have an experienced consultant like Sierra Planning and Management conducting the study. Sierra has conducted similar studies throughout Canada, including Nova Scotia projects in New Glasgow, Halifax, Cape Breton and Kentville, as well as projects in Riverview and Sackville, N.B., and Charlottetown, P.E.I.

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