

CORPORATE REPORT

To: Recreation, Culture & Airpark Services Commission
From: Stacey Barker, Director of Regional Services

Date: 2020-05-19
File No: 7710-21

Subject: Recreation, Culture & Airpark Services – School District 78 Fraser-Cascade Bursaries

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Recreation, Culture and Airpark Services Commission recommend that the Fraser Valley Regional District Board adopt the policy titled "Recreation, Culture & Airpark Services – Bursary Policy".

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Foster a Strong & Diverse Economy

Support Healthy & Sustainable Community

BACKGROUND

The Recreation, Culture and Airpark Services (RCAS) Commission provides a \$1,000 bursary to a grade 12 student at Hope Secondary School and to a grade 12 student at Boston Bar Elementary-Secondary School on an annual basis. In 2019, the Commission appointed a Bursary Committee to formalize the criteria, receive and rate applications, and provide an award recommendation to be considered by the Commission.

The criteria developed by the Committee included the following:

- Preference given to a student entering a recreation or health related field (i.e. kinesiology, physiotherapy, nursing, psychology);
- Demonstration of community involvement outside of school programming; and
- Preference given to students attending post-secondary school within BC.

The applicants compete based on the submission of a general letter explaining their intent to pursue post-secondary education, their chosen field of study, their community involvement, and an

explanation of how the funding award would help them pursue their educational plan. Accompanying the letter, the students also submit a transcript of their grades and any letters of recommendation.

Although the quality of grades is included in the comparison between students, it is not weighted as heavily as the relevance of their chosen field of study (i.e. recreation or health) or their community impact through volunteerism. The individual rankings of the members of the Bursary Committee are averaged and both a winner and an alternate is determined.

The evaluation criteria and application process provides a way of adjudicating multiple applications, however it is not meant to be restrictive if there is a limited number of graduating students from a particular school. For example, if there is only one graduate in a particular year and they are pursuing a non-recreation or non-health related field, then the Commission can still consider their application.

The annual RCAS bursaries have been well received in the community and have helped many deserving local students pursue their post-secondary endeavours and obtain training and education that is needed within the local community.

DISCUSSION

The criteria formalized by the Bursary Committee in 2019 was a positive step forward in an effort to clearly define eligibility, evaluation measures and ensure fairness. The additional step of adopting a formal policy (see attached) is recommended that builds on the 2019 Bursary Committee's work with clear guidelines to avoid any perceived conflict of interest, meet local government financial expectation, and protect the Commission's interests in the event that an award is disputed.

The attached draft policy is provided for the Commission's review. Additions from the work that the Bursary Committee completed last year include:

- Referring to the financial award as a bursary, not a scholarship. A scholarship refers to an annual award that a student would receive in each year of their degree, whereas a bursary refers to a one-time award.
- The draft policy states that applicants that are directly related to members of the Commission, FVRD Board, or Bursary Committee are not eligible for the bursary. As this bursary is funded through general tax requisition, this clause is a requirement to avoid any conflict of interest as it would be regarded as a benefit to the personal interest of that member and could be challenged legally. In this particular case it is not sufficient that the member simply recuse themselves from the award recommendation.
- The student recipients must redeem the bursary certificate in the first semester following graduation (before December 31 of the year it is awarded) due to Regional District financial accounting practices.
- The policy provides guidelines should an opportunity exist to publicly present a bursary certificate.
- The student must be a Canadian Citizen, permanent resident, or have refugee status.

COST

Yearly funding for the bursaries is subject to approval of the annual financial plan. Funding for the 2020 bursaries was approved in this year's financial plan.

CONCLUSION

A formal policy which sets out guidelines for the annual RCAS bursaries is being proposed. Due to social distancing and logistical issues amid COVID-19, a Bursary Committee will not be struck until 2021. This year, the school administration teams will forward student recommendations directly. We expect to have both names by the end of May, somewhat delayed due to COVID-19 implications.

COMMENTS BY:

Kristy Hodson, Acting Director of Financial Services: Reviewed and supported.

Jennifer Kinneman, Chief Administrative Officer: Reviewed and supported.