

Headwaters Arts requests more funding for community arts organizations

Councillor suggests creation of ?Arts Council?

By ZACHARY ROMAN

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A local non-profit arts group would like to see more funding for groups like it in Caledon.

At Caledon Council's November 26 meeting, Headwaters Arts president Margi Taylor made a presentation to Council on the matter.

Taylor explained that Headwaters Arts formed in 2008 and began renting space in the Alton Mill Arts Centre. Its mission is to promote the development, appreciation and enjoyment of the arts through monthly art shows, fundraising events, and a youth scholarship program. The group has over 150 members, most of whom are from Caledon.

It's well known for its many art shows and events it hosts throughout the year.

Being a non-profit, Headwaters Arts faces financial and operating challenges. It has one part-time staff member and depends on volunteers for most of its work; it also has no stable source of funding.

Currently, Headwaters Arts is funded through sponsorships, art sale commissions, annual membership fees, and grant applications.

With the Town of Caledon investing in arts and culture in other ways, such as through its Culture Days event and support of the Peel Art Gallery, Museum, and Archives, Taylor said Caledon should also invest in arts and culture through its own community organizations.

Taylor presented three requests to the town on behalf of Headwaters Arts: that it set up a grant program specific to arts and culture organizations; that it increase its arts and culture program budget; and that it fund a full-time gallery coordinator for Headwaters Arts at a cost of \$45,000.

Taylor said arts unify communities, improve individual well-being and mental health, have a social impact, and drive tourism to Caledon and therefore revenue to local businesses.

Ward 4 Councillor Nick de Boer said Headwaters Arts' requests are not unrealistic and asked that Town staff review them for Caledon's 2025 budget. He said he doesn't want Taylor's requests to get lost and suggested he could make a motion in support of it.

Town staff notified de Boer he could bring a motion forward as an amendment at Caledon's budget meetings to support the requests.

Regional Councillor Mario Russo said he liked that Taylor's presentation highlighted that arts grant applications and other grant applications shouldn't need to compete with each other and that he looks forward to the upcoming discussions at budget time.

Ward 5 Councillor Tony Rosa said having an active arts community is so important and that providing more financial support to arts groups is also very important. He said Caledon should look into starting a ?Caledon Arts Council? to bring all of Caledon's arts groups together.

Regional Councillor Christina Early said creating a dedicated grant program for the arts is a good idea and something Caledon should look into.