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DEVELOPING A PUBLIC ART POLICY (Part 2)

By Mayor Bill Beamish

Public Art is defined as original artwork selected, commissioned, created or donated for location in the public domain, and created by an artist. Artworks may be permanent or transitory, functional, integrated or discrete to the site. Artwork created or initiated by the community for the public realm is also considered public art. (City of Victoria-Art in Public Places Policy 2018)

For most of us, art is a very personal thing. We know what we like, and we know what we don't like, even if we don't always know why. Additionally, we often feel compelled to express how we feel about art we don't like, but simply accept art that we do like without comment. It does not challenge us, so we are comfortable with it.

Public art, however, must be approached entirely differently, as the public will often question an item's cost or value in the context that it is paid for, or assumed to be paid for, by our taxes. To some, this is a fine use of our community funds. Others view public art as wasteful and an inappropriate use of our parks or other public spaces.

One thing's certain - public art will spark debate in the community! Last month's article (Part 1 of our public art discussion) generated several responses, which ranged from negative opinions about public art to positive ideas as to how and where art could be displayed in Gibsons.

The Town's Public Art Committee strongly believes that public art enriches our community experience, by extending the opportunity for many artists and forms of art to be seen and appreciated. But, identifying venues, inviting submissions and choosing art to be displayed in a public space is as challenging as finding the funds to pay for it.

We also believe that it is important to respect the art and the artist, and that public art (just like art you may buy for your home) must be paid for and not solicited as a donation from the artist.

Currently, Gibsons has a small reserve fund for public art which has been established through donations. To expand opportunities to fund our public art projects, without increasing our taxes, the Public Art Committee has proposed the following options to increase this fund and grow our public art inventory:

- Sponsorships of specific projects;
- Financial donations or donations of works of art from art patrons;
- Sale of donated works of art (with the knowledge of and written agreement of the donor);
- Encourage developers to incorporate artistic elements or design features in their projects, particularly by local artists; and,
- Adopt a Council policy of designating 2.5% of Community Amenity Funds and/or 2.5% of annual building permit fees for public art acquisition and maintenance.

What do you think? Your views on these options and others are appreciated. Please send me your comments by email at mayor@gibsons.ca or by phone at 604.989.2364.



Bill Beamish
Mayor of Gibsons

