

# Grant to forgive gallery taxes OK'd as 'one-off'

GIBSONS



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Gibsons council voted in committee Tuesday to approve a grant of assistance for \$3,400 to the Gibsons Public Art Gallery (GPAG) as reimbursement for the gallery's municipal property tax bill.

The request sparked a lengthy discussion Sept. 24, as GPAG had received \$2,000 in March during the first round of grant applications and the program is not aimed at providing tax forgiveness.

"Grants of assistance are not intended to address that issue, in my opinion," Coun. Gerry Tretick said.

Appearing before the committee, GPAG board member Murray Drope confirmed the request would be made annually.

"We are simply asking for a refund on the municipal taxes that we paid as a non-profit society. It's that pure and simple," Drope said, adding that he was led to believe by Town staff that as a non-profit society, the gallery could receive relief for the municipal portion of the tax bill.

While agreeing that a grant of assistance was not the appropriate funding source, Coun. Lee Ann Johnson argued strongly in favour of the application.

"The art gallery has requested for years to be a line item in our budget, and I think that's where this would fall," Johnson said, recommending council provide the grant for this year only.

"I think it's important that we support them," she said. "I would like to see us address this in our budgeting in a way that's more appropriate next year."

Mayor Wayne Rowe agreed council could allocate the grant "as a one-off event," since the funds were available and "it appears there were discussions that created expectations."

CAO Mani Machado said the Town has started discussions at the staff level with the Sunshine Coast Regional District to have GPAG designated a regional function.

In his application letter to the Town, Drope said a secondary reason for the grant request was "the use of our parking space by a large number of Landing businesses and their customers. Even though there is frequently no space for gallery visitors and staff, GPAG has decided not to enforce its ownership of the parking site."

Other grants of assistance approved by committee of the whole include \$1,062 for the ANCA Foundation (supporter of the International Naturally Autistic People Awards), \$950 for the Sunshine Coast Arts Council, and \$600 for Special Olympics Sunshine Coast.

The grant approvals, which are still to be ratified by council, would consume the remaining budget for the \$20,000 program. Ten organizations received a total of \$14,000 in March.