



100 John West Way  
Aurora, Ontario  
L4G 6J1  
(905) 727-3123  
aurora.ca

Town of Aurora  
**Information Report**  
No. CMS21-021

---

**Subject:** Arts Help Update

**Prepared by:** Phil Rose, Manager of Library Square

**Department:** Community Services

**Date:** June 1, 2021

---

**In accordance with the Procedure By-law, any Member of Council may request that this Information Report be placed on an upcoming General Committee or Council meeting agenda for discussion.**

## **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of Town staff's meeting with Arts Help.

- Town staff met with Arts Help on April 14, 2021 to better understand the nature of their organization and the type of support and expertise they might be able to offer the Town.
- There are several internal initiatives that might influence how the Town works with Arts Help and therefore staff recommend that conversations with Arts Help pause until further progress is made on these projects.

## **Background**

In January 2021, Arts Help Co-founder, Mo Ghoneim, presented a Proposal Brief to Council that highlighted opportunities for Arts Help to develop "an interactive Art platform" at Library Square that would include "indoor interactive digital screens" combined with "a local and grassroots online community." According to Mr. Ghoneim, the objective of this project is to allow "residents to contribute to the creative process of an artwork" while at the same time implementing "a robust and long-term PR & communications strategy...to create awareness and position the Town of Aurora as a progressive and innovative town."

Subsequently, on March 30, 2021, Council passed a resolution directing Town staff “to understand both cultural and economic benefits of having a large Multi-Media Multi-Digital company to increase awareness and growth of the new Library Square and that Town staff report back to Council by June 2021.”

During the discussion on March 30, Council and staff discussed in detail how to approach the meeting with Arts Help to avoid any potential conflicts with ongoing policy development and future procurement processes related to public art. It was agreed that discussion should take place at the macro-level and avoid details that could be viewed as providing one organization preference over others.

## **Analysis**

### **Town staff met with Arts Help on April 14, 2021 to better understand the nature of their organization and the type of support and expertise they might be able to offer the Town.**

The Director of Community Services, Manager of Economic Development & Policy, Interim Manager of Communications, and Manager of Library Square met with Arts Help staff to discuss the nature of Arts Help’s Proposal Brief and to determine how best to define the work of their organization (i.e., public art facilitator, digital communication strategist, etc.)

Arts Help provided an overview of the types of programs and services they provide, highlighting the following:

- Art publisher that creates editorial content on various channels
- Audience of 4 million consisting of artists of all disciplines
- Partner with the United Nations on their Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Action Campaign
- Program provider that offers diverse programming such as:
  - Art Education
  - Mini-Masterclasses
  - Virtual Workshops
  - Local and National Art Competitions
  - Interactive Events and Art Exhibitions

Given the broad scope of Arts Help’s mandate and reach, staff believe their work crosses disciplines and can be classified in several ways, including arts publisher, media content creator, arts educator, public art facilitator, arts program provider,

advocacy organization, and more. Furthermore, staff believe the project they are proposing for Library Square can be viewed both as digital public art curation and a public relations initiative that merges physical and virtual space. Given the flexible nature of their work and the proposal for Library Square, Arts Help has the potential to assist the Town in different ways, including broadening cultural and economic impact and increasing awareness of Library Square.

**There are several internal initiatives that might influence how the Town works with Arts Help and therefore staff recommend that conversations with Arts Help pause until further progress is made on these projects.**

During Town staff discussions regarding the connection between Arts Help and cultural and economic impacts, it became evident that Arts Help's proposal could support a variety of Town reports, policies and plans that are currently in the works. These policies and plans are set to be presented to Council in the coming months and could shape any working relationship the Town might have with Arts Help in the future. Although it may not be necessary to wait until each plan and policy listed below is complete before re-engaging Arts Help, staff believe they should be advanced enough to provide guidance for future conversations with Arts Help and similar organizations.

- **Official Plan Review:** anticipated final report completion date is June 2022.
- **Promenade Plan update:** secondary plan update; starting soon and will run concurrently with the Official Plan review.
- **Streetscape Plan update:** forthcoming report in June to begin a review and re-engagement of stakeholders intended to incorporate new policies and technologies into the Downtown area.
- **Community Improvement Plan update** (two parts): Part I (June) will review the past program that expired in 2019, with recommendations for next steps. Part II – the next steps taken in line with the Official Plan, Promenade and Streetscape Plan with a tentative completion date of June 2022.
- **Culture Master Plan update:** Town staff are working with community partners to update the CMP by 2022. Once complete, the CMP will provide a roadmap for nurturing culture locally and will speak to various themes that support how cultural planning decisions are made.
- **Public Art Master Plan and Policy:** with an anticipated completion date near the end of 2021, the Plan and Policy will provide the Town with a framework for

developing and maintaining public art within a municipal context in support of branding and tourism development, neighbourhood design, and cultural expression. It will develop consistent standards for funding, selecting, acquiring, managing, and conserving public art for community benefit.

- **Communications Strategic Plan:** with the sunseting of the Communications and Community Engagement Strategy, the Communications Division is developing a new plan by the end of 2021.

## **Advisory Committee Review**

Not applicable

## **Legal Considerations**

The Town's Procurement By-law requires that acquisition of any goods or services from any party be subject to the policies and requirements of the By-law. Generally, negotiation with vendors is not to be undertaken, unless such negotiation is part of carrying out the procurement and otherwise permitted under the By-law, or it is otherwise directed by Council. At this time, no further discussions or negotiations should be undertaken with Arts Help without specific Council direction, as that could conflict with the requirements and principles outlined in the Procurement By-law. Should Council wish to continue discussion with Arts Help about their goods and services, the Procurement By-law does provide that Council may direct staff to engage vendors through a Single Source process where a purchase is "...determined by Council to be fair and reasonable and is made from a non-profit corporation for the purpose of achieving Town objectives". Arts Help is a non-profit organization and Council may direct staff to enter into negotiations with respect to their services pursuant to a potential Single Source procurement.

## **Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **Communications Considerations**

There are no communications considerations arising from this report.

## Link to Strategic Plan

The proposed project with Arts Helps supports the following Strategic Plan goals and key objectives:

***Supporting an exceptional quality of life for all*** in its accomplishment in satisfying requirements in the following key objectives within these goal statements:

- **Celebrating and promoting our culture**
- **Strengthening the fabric of our community**

## Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. Council can provide further direction.

## Conclusions

Arts Help provides various programs and services that might complement ongoing Town initiatives; however, staff believe it is too premature to work with them on any given project until various internal initiatives can progress further. This will allow the Town to better define the policy framework for engaging with organizations like Arts Help and avoid potential conflicts with any future procurement processes related to public art, digital communication, and economic development.

## Attachments

None

## Previous Reports

None

## Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on May 13, 2021

## Approvals

**Approved by Robin McDougall, Director, Community Services Department**

**Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer**