



**Council Member Motion
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of March 14th, 2024**

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** March 14th, 2024
From: Councillor Jeremy Caradonna and Councillor Matt Dell
Subject: Support for Community Cultural Spaces in Victoria

BACKGROUND

One of the commitments in the 2023-2026 “Strategic Plan” is to “accelerate investment in community centres and seniors’ centres.”

In Fernwood, the Fernwood Community Association (FCA) has decided to rebrand and become an arts-based community organization called the Neighbourhood Arts Society and Collective (NASC), pending approval from the CRA and a formal vote at their next AGM. The idea is to leverage their leased (city-owned) building at 1923 Fernwood Road into a more publicly accessible community asset that would serve the entire city, and not solely the Fernwood neighbourhood. (See **Appendix A** for more information.) The building currently includes a gallery and a theatre, as well as office space. The office space would be repurposed as low-cost community drop-in spaces for arts and culture. The NASC would continue to oversee the Fernwood land-use committee (CALUC) as an arm’s-length entity. The gallery and the theatre would remain the community assets that they currently are, although both would benefit from some capital upgrades, and new arts-based community programming would be added.

The NASC is requesting \$40,000/year in operating funding. The request notes that the programming at the NASC building would complement, without duplicating, the programming at the Fernwood Community Centre, which is run by the Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group (Fernwood NRG), and would meet the needs of a growing community – 400 people are moving to the new Caledonia CRHC building next year – as well as demand across the city for low-cost and accessible arts-based community space and programming.

The NASC board also notes that it is requesting to sign an operating agreement with the City, to align with the standards and practices of community centres, while ensuring a unique focus on arts and culture and the continued operations of the CALUC. The Board is also interested in renewing the building lease so that it more closely aligns with this new vision.

Finally, the Victoria Events Centre (VEC), located at 1415 Broad Street, is the premier small-scale performance arts space in downtown Victoria. It is a well-known venue for cabarets, community theatre, music performances, multimedia presentations, gender-inclusive activities and performances, and a wide array of other community events. The non-profit operator of the VEC – the Victoria Multicultural Society – unfortunately went into debt during the pandemic and has had difficulty staying afloat, despite frequent bookings at the Centre and high demand. (See **Appendix B** for more information.) A \$20,000/year operating grant from 2024-2026 would allow the VEC to

remain an essential, affordable, accessible arts asset in Victoria, while permitting the non-profit operator to expand into daytime programming.

This motion would **not** affect the 2024 property tax rate.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council direct staff to use \$55k from 2024 contingency funds for the following:

- A \$35,000 grant to the new Neighbourhood Arts Society and Collective (NASC), subject to the creation of an operating agreement and renewed lease between the organization and the City, to the satisfaction of the City Manager;
- A \$20,000 grant to the Victoria Multicultural Society (VMS) to operate the Victoria Events Centre as a non-profit arts centre.

And that staff recommend to Council, as part of the Budget 2025 process, where operating funds might come from in the future for the NASC to receive ongoing funding, and where grant funds might come from for VMS to receive funding in 2025 and 2026.

Respectfully submitted,



Coun. Jeremy Caradonna



Coun. Matt Dell