



RPT 20-401

TITLE: York Boat Update
DATE: September 17, 2020
TO: Executive Committee
PUBLIC: X **INCAMERA:**

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and File

TOPIC & PURPOSE:

To provide Council with an update regarding the York Boat that sits in Rotary Park near the Visitor Information Center.

BACKGROUND:

In the early morning hours of April 18, 2020, there was a single vehicle accident at the Rotary Park located just off Highway 2 South near the entrance to the Visitor Information Center. Damage to the Rotary Park Signage (sign and stand were knocked over with debris spread over a large area) and damage to the York boat and the pillars that support the boat.

The Rotary Park sign was, saved and being stored at the City Cemetery for safekeeping all the while the pillars that once held the sign in place damaged beyond pair and the debris hauled off to the landfill.

The York boat was, hit as well by the vehicle and flying debris causing the boat to fall to the side with some visible damage from the impact noted.

REPORT:

Information taken from the Historical signage on site:

The York boat built at the Saskatchewan Penitentiary from original plans. Members of the Rotary Club of Prince Albert traveled to Cumberland House in this boat to commemorate "Canada 125" in 1992.

A crew of six to eight oarsmen each had a responsibility of one thousand pounds of weight. York boats were more economical than canoes since they carried more cargo in proportion to crew. They could safely cross, lakes in storms, were little harmed by floating ice and also sailed better than canoes.

Although a smaller size was, used elsewhere, this replica is typical of the larger boats used in Saskatchewan. When loaded with up to 8,000 pounds, they drew only two feet of water.

The life of a York boat was short, lasting only about three years. Since soft woods such as local pine and spruce were used for boat building, they did not stand up well to hard usage in rapids and portage.

From the 18th into the 20th Century, York boats were busy on the waterways of North America. They carried Hudson Bay Company furs and pemmican from remote trading posts to tidewater or railhead and returned with goods and provisions. From about 1800, boats from this area carried furs beyond Cumberland House and Lake Winnipeg as far as Oxford House.

In their heyday before the coming of river steamers, upwards of 200 boats manned by more than 1200 voyagers completed an annual round trip from Portage La Loche (between the Saskatchewan and Athabasca river systems) to York factory (on Hudson's Bay) and back to the remote posts.

Prior to the accident in April of this year, the boat has stood in place at this site since 1992 or 28 years and been the focal point of those entering or exiting the City on this highway 2 corridor during this period of time. When originally installed on site the top of the boat remained opened and within the last 10-15 years saw plywood sheets installed to try and weather/vandal proof the exhibit.

The boat was made using the original plans and materials of which the Rotary Club stills holds the original plans. If you noted above in the historical write up of the boat, the boats life was short lived in its day due to the softwoods used such as pine and spruce. For almost 30 years the boat has seen its share of weather events and change of seasons and over that course of time the wear and tear on the boat has become evident. The boat has significant visible rot thru out the exterior and significant rot at the core of the boat due to years of exposure to the elements.

This rot became more visible in April due to the accident in which Community Services has just received confirmation (September 14, 2020) thru our insurance provider and SGI as to the following:

“Our investigation confirms that the auto in question was stolen. When a theft claim is involved, each party’s own insurance responds, unless a suspect is apprehended and charged. However, as the City of Prince Albert is a municipality, it is not able to claim under Section 52 of the AAIA and therefore remains subject to its own insurance.”

The accident has highlighted not only the rot in the boat but also the support posts used to hold the boat in place have completely rotted out and as a result of this and the car hitting the boat, the boat now sits on its side in the park.

Upon research into the boat and its placement within the park, there was a resolution of Council in 1991 in regards to installing the York Boat with all costs with this task associated to the Rotary Club. There was also a letter submitted to the Mayor’s Office in 2001 from the Rotary Club indicating that they would be restoring the York Boat, there is no known agreement between the Club and the City as to ownership of the boat.

Community Services continues to reach out to the Rotary Club with the latest correspondence from the Club as follows:

“We have been communicating with one of the Metis Local Organizations about the opportunity to restore or use the Boat. Our assessment as a club is that it would be outside of our scope to be able to manage a restoration ourselves. The Metis local has indicated that they also believe the boat is beyond repair and therefore we do not have any alternatives for the City to consider.”

Rotary Club

The attached pictures highlight the significant rot in the boat in its current state and Community Services agrees with the correspondence provided above that the boat is beyond repair that noting any repair would be in the thousands of dollars. The boat has seen a good life and there may be an opportunity as the Rotary Club holds the original plans to look at the boat being rebuilt one day in the future, however at this time there would be no commitment to such a project or to timeline to see this happen.

The boat and even the historical signage is rotting and falling apart as each week and month passes. The boat at this time would require removing from site (costs still to be determined) and disposed of in some fashion. The Club has communicated that it is outside their scope of expertise and further consultation has indicated that there is agreement that the boat is beyond repair.

PUBLIC AND/OR STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT:

Community Services has continued and will continue to consult with the Rotary Club regarding the boat.

Community Services continues to communicate with the City's insurance provider and SGI on financial compensation.

COMMUNICATION PLAN:

Community Services would continue to work and communicate with all stakeholders as to the final outcome of the boat and future considerations for the site in which it sits.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

Fiscal Management and Accountability – The City strives to align priorities and initiatives to the corporate strategies and deliver municipal services in cost-effective ways. Any funding for replacement of the York boat would need to be done in partnership with a user group(s) and financial consideration brought thru the budgeting process for Councils consideration.

OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN:

Community Services contributes to infrastructure and sustainability efforts. Proper planning can help preserve and maintain natural and built environments. It is important to anticipate, encourage and prepare for growth in response to the needs of the community. Investing in infrastructure will support growth while planning for continuous improvement. Our connection to the natural world is important and must be considered in the delivery of community services. Likewise, maintaining and investing in the built environment with a consideration to sustainability is important.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS:

There are no other considerations/implications under Options to recommendations, Policy Implications, Financial implications or privacy implications.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

Public Notice pursuant to the Public Notice Bylaw No. 24 of 2015 is not required.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. York Boat Pictures

Written by: Timothy Yeaman, Parks Manager

Approved by: Director of Community Services and City Manager