

Staff Report

Presented By: Amanda Monaghan, Community Development Officer
Meeting Date: August 11, 2025
Subject: Port Elgin Pumpkinfest Request for Administrative Workspace
Attachment(s): None

Recommendation

That Council authorize the Director, Community Services to execute a one-year lease agreement with Port Elgin Pumpkinfest for administrative use of the Town-owned Business Centre.

Report Summary

Port Elgin Pumpkinfest is requesting one administrative workspace within the Town-owned Business Centre for a one-year term.

Background/Analysis

Port Elgin Pumpkinfest is a non-profit community organization that builds community spirit by organizing a safe and inclusive shoulder-season event that showcases the vibrancy of Port Elgin. The festival promotes Saugeen Shores as a premier destination and generates significant off-season economic activity.

With a five-year average attendance of 25,000 to 35,000 visitors, Pumpkinfest is the largest festival in the region. According to the Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM), the event generates an estimated \$3.5 million annually for Saugeen Shores. This impact benefits local businesses and community groups through participation, tourism, and fundraising opportunities.

Pumpkinfest currently operates out of the Powerlink building, leveraging the lease held by the Saugeen Sparks Training Centre. Pumpkinfest shares administrative workspace with Sparks and currently operates with:

- 1 full-time staff;
- 2 part-time contract staff; and
- 1 summer student.

Current Municipal Support

The Town generously waives the rental fee for the Saugeen Shores Event Resource Centre located at 751 Market Street, Port Elgin. Due to the team's expertise and equipment needs, Pumpkinfest also manages the Event Centre's administration and logistics, supporting the broader local events community with access to essential resources, grant information, and equipment. The Town also offers in-kind support in promoting the annual Port Elgin Pumpkinfest event to residents and visitors.

Request

Port Elgin Pumpkinfest is a not-for-profit organization that depends on grant funding, donations, and sponsorships to support their operational budget and programming. By providing administrative workspace, the Town can help alleviate the financial burden associated with leasing commercial office space and reduce the need for funding requests related to these costs.

The current lease at the Powerlink building expires on March 31, 2026. Beginning April 1, 2026, Pumpkinfest is requesting access to one administrative workspace within the Town's Business Centre located at 559 Goderich Street, Port Elgin. The request is for a one-year term, with a review at the end of that period.

The Planning and Development team will be moving from the Business Centre to new workspaces at the AWC in early 2026. This will leave most of the workspace at the Business Centre available.

Pumpkinfest would work with the Town to develop a formal lease agreement between the Town and Pumpkinfest. An option for renewal will be built into the lease agreement. If Pumpkinfest secures independent office space, or the building is deemed for another use by Council, the Agreement will be terminated.

Summary of Workspace Needs

- Secure building access to the Business Centre during business hours and after-hours.
- Meeting room access for board meetings or larger collaborative in-person meetings.
 - Meeting frequency of monthly board meetings and ad hoc meetings; meeting attendance varies anywhere from two to upwards of 20 people.
- Workspace for computer/desk/administrative work.
- One desk to use for rotating team members.
- Space for locked file cabinets.

Analysis

This section discusses implementation of the above recommendation in terms of Strategic Plan and Business Plan overall alignment, and financial and operational implications.

Strategic Plan

The recommendation aligns with the Strategic Plan, specifically Strategic Pillar 4: *Fostering a Vibrant Place to Live and Visit*. This pillar includes a directive to grow local arts, culture, and recreation. By supporting Port Elgin Pumpkinfest as an organization, it helps ensure the success of the annual shoulder season event, while sustaining and growing the Town as a place for residents to live and tourists to visit.

Business Plan

The recommendation is an outcome of the Planning and Development Division Highlights for 2025, with a goal to facilitate a business plan discussion with Pumpkinfest. The recommendation is also supportive of the Destination Development Plan and Community Toolkits as it relates to encouraging shoulder season events and tourism.

Financial Implication

Town Council will not have to entertain future funding requests for leases from Port Elgin Pumpkinfest, while noting the intent of the request is to provide the Town space at no cost.

Summary

It is recommended that Council authorize the Director, Community Services to execute a one-year lease and shared office arrangement for Port Elgin Pumpkinfest within the Town-owned Business Centre. The lease will begin April 1, 2026, and will be considered for renewal before March 31, 2027.

Linkages

- Strategic Plan Alignment: Pillar 4: Fostering a Vibrant Place to Live and Visit
- Business Plan Alignment: Development Services Division Highlight

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding

No costs or revenue is associated with this report.

Prepared By: Amanda Monaghan, Community Development Officer

Reviewed By: Mark Paoli, Director, Development Services

Approved By: Kara Van Myall, Chief Administrative Officer