

DATE: May 26, 2025

REPORT NO: CS-04-2025

SUBJECT: **2025 Event Series Options**

CONTACT: Cynthia Summers, Director Community and Protective Services
Wendy Beaty, Coordinator of Recreational Services

OVERVIEW:

- The purpose of this Report is to provide Council with options for the 2025 Event Series in light of the hosting opportunity of the 2025 International Plowing Match (IPM)
- The IPM will bring approximately 75,000 people into West Lincoln with opportunities to capture economic activity for local business by attracting IPM event goers into Smithville to attend events at the West Lincoln Community Centre and shop locally
- The report presents three options:
 - Option One – Continue with the same summer event schedule as 2024 and not offer additional programming for the IPM.
 - Option Two – Reduce the number of Music Market and Park It events by three and add three community line-dancing events at the West Lincoln Community Centre to take place over the course of the IPM in September.
 - Option Three – Continue with the same summer event schedule as 2024 and add three additional community line dancing events at the West Lincoln Community Centre over the course of the IPM.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That, Recommendation Report CS-04-2025, titled “2025 Event Series Options” dated May 26, 2025 be received; and,
2. That, Administration be directed to proceed with the Option _____

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

Theme # 1

- **BUILD** – a safe, connected, caring and active community.

Theme # 3

- **ENRICH** – our strong agricultural legacy.

BACKGROUND:

The Music, Market and Park It event series was successfully delivered in 2024, combining a weekly open market, musical performances, and a community car show at the West Lincoln Community Centre. Community feedback was largely positive, with strong attendance at musical events and vendor participation. However, low farm vendor engagement continues to be a challenge, limiting eligibility to operate as a formal Farmers' Market under FMO.

Key 2024 performance outcomes included:

- Average concert attendance: 137
- Average vendors per event: 16
- Average market shoppers: 42
- Car show participation varied due to weather but peaked at 20 cars
- Strong community satisfaction with music and vendor quality
- Feedback emphasized the desire for better promotion and more vendors

Survey responses and observations highlighted interest in enhancing community events while also addressing opportunities to increase local economic activity, especially given the anticipated tourism influx from the 2025 IPM.

CURRENT SITUATION:

To guide 2025 planning and budgeting, Administration has developed three event delivery options for Council's consideration:

OPTION 1 – Status Quo (Same as 2024 Event Series)

- 6 weekly Music, Market and Park It events (mid-July to August)
- 1 Canada Day market
- 1 Parade Day holiday market
- No changes in structure, location, or budget
- Total cost: within existing approved Recreation operating budget

Pros:

- Proven format with positive community feedback
- Minimal planning adjustments required
- Fits within existing staffing and financial resources

Cons:

- Does not capitalize on economic opportunities related to IPM
- Limited innovation in programming
- Ongoing struggle to recruit farm vendors

OPTION 2 – Reduced Series with IPM Alignment

- Change Music, Market and Park It events to Music only events, and reduce the number from 6 to 3,
- Add 3 community dance events during the IPM in September at the West Lincoln Community Centre
- The dances aim to attract IPM visitors into Smithville and to promote local shopping and dining and provide local residents additional programming.
- Participation at the dances will be by donation, with the donations going to a local West Lincoln charity
- Total cost: within existing operating budget by reallocating resources from reduced number of summer events

Pros:

- Taps into tourism spin-offs from IPM
- New and inclusive programming (community dances)
- Flexible use of existing budget
- Supports economic development goals

Cons:

- Reduces frequency of Music, Market and Park It events
- Potential dissatisfaction from regular attendees and vendors
- Requires targeted promotion and coordination with IPM activities

OPTION 3 – Expanded Programming with Additional Line Dancing Events

- Maintain full 2024 event schedule
- Add 3 community line dancing nights at West Lincoln Community Centre
- Additional cost of \$14,000 to support facility use, instructors, and planning and promotion
- Requires funding from Contingency Reserve

Pros:

- Preserves successful summer event model
- Enhances community offerings with inclusive, low-barrier programs
- Leverages increased community interest in dance and music
- Potential to build partnerships with IPM organizers and rural audiences

Cons:

- May require funding from Contingency Reserve in the amount of \$14,000 in order to cover additional costs. This amount includes the need for additional resources for the additional programming, including part-time staffing and entertainment (musicians and dancing instructors).
- Higher staff resource demands
- Risk of low attendance at new events if not effectively marketed

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

As noted above, Administration has provided three options to Council in regards to how to approach and deliver the 2025 Recreation Program Event Series. The financial implication of each option is noted below:

Option 1: No additional funding required; the costs are within the approved 2025 budget.

Option 2: No additional funding required; the overall costs are covered within the approved 2025 budget. This will be achieved by reallocating resources and costs, through a reduction in the number of Music Market and Park It events, with an addition of the IPM related events in September at the WLCC.

Option 3: If this Option were selected by Council, this would allow for the full event programming that was in place in 2024 to continue in 2025, along with the addition of the IPM line dancing night events. There would be an additional cost of approximately \$14,000 in order to offer the IPM related programming. At the current time, Administration is forecasting that revenues within the Youth Recreation Programming subfunction will be higher than budgeted. This will help to offset the additional cost noted above.

In the event that these costs exceed the available budget, there is an opportunity to offset these costs by funding through the Contingency Reserve, up to a maximum of \$14,000. The Contingency Reserve was established to fund tax revenue shortfalls and one-time operating expenditures. Given the IPM event (and any programming related to this) is considered to be a one-time event/expenditure, this Reserve is the appropriate funding source for this request. If Council wishes to approve this Option, the Township programming related to the IPM could be funded through a transfer from the Contingency Reserve, as required, up to a maximum of \$14,000.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTS:

This Report was reviewed by the CAO, the Director of Corporate Services/CFO and the Clerk's Department.

CONCLUSION:

All three options offer unique benefits to the community. Option 1 maintains continuity, Option 2 leverages the IPM to drive economic activity, and Option 3 builds on momentum while offering new community engagement. Staff seek Council's direction to proceed with one of the proposed approaches.

Prepared & Submitted by:

Approved by:

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