



Staff Report

Staff Report No. SR2026-47
Date: August 13, 2026
To: Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Members of Council
From: Becky Hagedorn, Community Engagement & Recreation Coordinator
Subject: Volunteer Advisory Councils Activity Report

Recommendation:

That Council receive SR2026-47 2026 Report from the Coordinator as information only.

Background:

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on current initiatives, programming, event planning and ongoing projects being undertaken through the Town of Kearney's Volunteer Advisory Councils. The transition from formal Committees of Council to Volunteer Advisory Councils is intended to provide a more flexible and accessible framework for community participation while continuing to recognize the important knowledge, experience and leadership provided by volunteers. The Coordinator continues to act as a liaison between the Volunteer Advisory Councils and Council and supports the implementation and coordination of initiatives identified by each group.

Recreation Advisory Council:

The Recreation Advisory Council continues to support the development and delivery of recreation programming and community events, with current work focused on summer programming, fall recreation opportunities and planning for upcoming community events.

Summer Recreation Programming

The Get Fit, Feel Great summer fitness pilot proceeded after reaching its minimum participant enrolment. Staff continues to review facility access and scheduling procedures to improve consistency for instructors and participants.

Canada Day at Mirror Bay

The Advisory Council reviewed the inaugural Canada Day at Mirror Bay celebration and considered the first-year event successful and well attended. The inflatable slide and face painting received particularly positive feedback. Opportunities identified for future celebrations include food vendors or a community barbecue, grant funding to support event growth, additional matting or temporary turf around inflatable activities, and expanded water-based programming while continuing to utilize Mirror Bay as the primary event location.

Event Partnership with Library and Drive-In Movie Night

Planning is underway for September's Drive-In Movie Night, with *The Goonies* selected as the feature film. Admission has been established at \$20 per vehicle or \$5 per walk-in attendee. The Legion and the Grumpy Veteran are expected to provide food service, with the Lions Club providing popcorn.

Staff will coordinate promotion of the Drive-In Movie Night alongside the Library's Rodeo themed event and explore additional advertising opportunities through local radio and community publications.

Fall Recreation Programming

Kids Dance programming with The SPACE Upstairs is scheduled to resume September 17 for a 10-week session. Staff is also exploring incorporating participating dancers into a Christmas-themed performance as part of the Santa Ski Charity Show.

The Advisory Council supported exploring a youth floor hockey program utilizing the Town's recently purchased equipment, subject to securing appropriate volunteer coaching support. Discussions are underway to plan additional potential fall programming including Zumba and Tai Chi, while future yoga programming remains dependent upon instructor availability.

Regatta Advisory Council:

The most recent Regatta Advisory Council meetings precede the 102nd Kearney Regatta which took place on the Civic long holiday weekend, Friday July 31 to Sunday, August 2. The Regatta Advisory Council's work at this time focused on final preparations and implementation of the 2026 Kearney Regatta, including volunteer coordination, vendor logistics, promotional materials, children's programming and waterfront activities.

Promotion and Sponsorship Recognition

Approximately 4,000 Regatta program and map handouts were produced and distributed throughout the community and during Regatta weekend. Sponsor signage, Regatta banners and downtown promotional materials were also introduced as part of an expanded effort to increase event visibility and provide greater recognition to the businesses and organizations supporting Regatta.

Vendor Market

Detailed vendor-market logistics were developed and implemented to coordinate the arrival and setup of vendors throughout Main Street and the additional vendor area. Vendors received booth assignments and arrival instructions in advance, with separate access points established to help manage congestion during setup. Summer students and volunteers assisted with barricades and vendor direction. A flexible arrival process was maintained rather than assigning rigid setup windows, allowing vendors to accommodate their individual setup requirements.

Volunteers and Event Operations

Volunteer recruitment was a significant priority leading into Regatta, with municipal summer students, Public Works/Roads staff, Facilities staff and community volunteers contributing to event operations. Additional youth volunteers from Emsdale also joined the volunteer team.

The Advisory Council assisted with coordinating numerous operational components, including eating contests, parade activities, vendor support, children's programming and waterfront activities. The involvement of returning and new volunteers provided important support throughout the weekend and contributed to the successful delivery of the event.

Kidz Zone and Waterfront Programming

This year, the Kidz Zone featured a portable mini-putt course and welcomed Library staff, who organized a variety of family-friendly activities that complemented the children's programming offered throughout the weekend. The Advisory Council also supported preparations for Sunday's waterfront programming, including the canoe and paddle races, mile swim and other water-based activities. Planning included coordinating course markers and identifying volunteers and community partners who could assist with waterfront operations.

As Regatta weekend approached, the Advisory Council transitioned from formal planning discussions to hands-on event preparation and implementation. Following the completion of the 2026 Regatta, the focus will shift toward reviewing feedback and lessons learned from the weekend and identifying opportunities to strengthen planning and operations for future years. A staff report summarizing the outcomes and activities of the 102nd Kearney Regatta will be presented to Council at its September meeting.

Santa Claus Charity Ski Show:

Planning has commenced for the 2026 Santa Ski Charity Show, which will mark the event's 10th anniversary. The Advisory Council is exploring opportunities to expand the event beyond the traditional waterfront ski show and establish a broader Christmas celebration utilizing both Mirror Bay and the Kearney Community Centre.

Community Centre and Christmas Market

The Community Centre is being considered as a central event hub, providing a warm indoor gathering area while accommodating additional activities. Concepts under consideration include an indoor Christmas market, community bake sale, public food service and expanded involvement from local community organizations.

Vendor interest is being assessed while maintaining sufficient space for public circulation, food service and volunteer operations.

10th Anniversary Entertainment

The Advisory Council discussed expanding the parade and incorporating additional entertainment to distinguish the 10th-anniversary celebration. Staff will investigate winter-themed circus and specialty performers, potentially including aerial or hoop performers, subject to cost, sponsorship and site suitability.

Staff is also working with The SPACE Upstairs to explore a Christmas-themed youth dance performance as part of the event.

Waterfront Programming and Emergency Services

The ski show is anticipated to begin at approximately 1:30 p.m., following opening ceremonies. Opportunities are being explored to introduce additional morning programming while skiers prepare at Mirror Bay. Potential participation from the Kearney Fire Department is being explored, including a water-rescue or public-safety demonstration. Staff will also follow up regarding OPP participation and presence during the event.

Insurance and Special Features

Insurance documentation for the ski show will be obtained through the applicable water ski organization. Staff will separately investigate insurance requirements associated with the Santa Ski Show parade. A potential snowmobile water-cross demonstration was also discussed. This would be treated strictly as an optional enhancement and would only proceed following appropriate testing and confirmation of safety measures, including an experienced operator and suitable recovery equipment.

Event Growth

Staff intend to investigate eligibility for applicable funding towards the annual Santa Ski Show. Historical information discussed raised revenue, participant attendance, and food bank donations for funding purposes. The event remains free to attend and is supported substantially through volunteer involvement and participating skiers who donate their time and travel expenses. Sponsorship recruitment will continue, with opportunities to approach additional businesses and sectors as part of the 10th-anniversary celebration. The Advisory Council also discussed anniversary-specific branding and merchandise.

Dog Sled Advisory Council (KDSR):

2027 Kearney Dog Sled Races (KDSR)

The first Dog Sled Advisory Council meeting for the 2027 event is scheduled to take place on Thursday, September 10, 2026. Further updates regarding planning, volunteer coordination, sponsorship and event operations will be provided as preparations progress.

Summary:

The Town's Volunteer Advisory Councils continue to play an important role in supporting community events, recreation programming and volunteer-led initiatives. Current activities range from the delivery and evaluation of summer recreation programming to the development of fall programs, preparations for upcoming community events and early planning for major seasonal events.

Staff will continue to support each Advisory Council, coordinate implementation of identified initiatives, facilitate volunteer and community partnerships, and provide Council with updates as projects and events progress.

Prepared by:

Becky Hagedorn, Community Engagement & Recreation Coordinator