



Town of Newmarket
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Widdifield Family Plaque at Riverwalk Commons Information Report to Council

Report Number: INFO-2020-38

Department(s): Recreation and Culture Services

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In accordance with the Procedure By-law, any member of Council may make a request to the Town Clerk that this Report be placed on an upcoming Committee of the Whole agenda for discussion.

Purpose

To update Mayor and Council on a plaque recognizing the Widdifield Family for their donation of land located in the south section of present day Riverwalk Commons Park, between Timothy St and Water St. Direction to place a plaque was given by Council.

Background

In 2019, Council directed staff to commemorate the Widdifield Family regarding the donation of the land parcel east of the river and west of Doug Duncan Drive, that lies between Timothy and Water St.

This item was delayed due to the pandemic, but was to be resolved by Q4 of 2020. After a review of historic records by staff, it has been confirmed that the Widdifield family donated the land and that recognizing their generosity merits a commemorative plaque.

Discussion

Culture Services staff researched the land donation as well as the long history of the Widdifield family in Newmarket. After that review, it is clear the Widdifield family's long local history and land donation merit a plaque recognizing the family.

The original direction from Council was to name the land "Widdifield Park", however there was concern this would cause confusion as the land is currently known as part of Riverwalk Commons. In the process of confirming the land donation, the rich family

history suggested a more suitable title for the plaque would be “Widdifield Family” to honour more than simply the land donation, while also avoiding any confusion by referencing another “park” within Riverwalk Commons. Please see Appendix #1 for a digital copy of the plaque.

The Widdifield Family plaque will be located centrally, within identified parcel of land. Please see Appendix #2 for exact location.

Conclusion

Staff will have the Widdifield Family plaque created and installed in spring of 2021. The plaque will be designed in line with the *Historic Newmarket* theme. The Family will be contacted and a ceremony will be held in line with the Public Health guidelines at such time.

Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages

Well-Balanced; Encouraging arts, culture, entertainment and heritage preservation

Well-Respected; Honouring our past while planning for the future

Consultation

Recreation and Culture staff worked with members of Legislative services and Parks and Property Services to confirm the land donation, plaque content and location for the plaque.

Human Resource Considerations

Not Applicable

Budget Impact

Cost for the Plaque will be covered by operating expenses

Attachments

Appendix 1 - Widdifield Family Plaque

Appendix 2 - Widdifield Family Plaque Location

Contact

Rob Wilson, Manager Culture & Community Events at rwilson@newmarket.ca

Approval

Colin Service, Director of Recreation and Culture Services

Ian McDougall, Commissioner of Community Services

HISTORIC

MAIN STREET

NEWMARKET

Settled 1801

WIDDIFIELD FAMILY

William C. Widdifield was born in 1855 on a farm 2.5 miles from Newmarket, the grandson of **Henry Widdifield**, a Quaker who arrived from Pennsylvania in 1802.

William attended school in Newmarket and went on to further his education at the University of Toronto, graduating from Osgoode Hall in 1885. He practiced in Newmarket, and became a prominent solicitor. His office was located on the second floor of the building known as the Reformer Block, built c.1879 and still stands at the South-West corner of Botsford and Main Street.

His brother **Joseph H. Widdifield** was a Newmarket doctor for many years, and went on to become a Member of Parliament and later, Sheriff of York County.

Another brother, **James Edward Widdifield** remained on the family farm until years later. In 1908, he was appointed Post Master of Newmarket.

William C. Widdifield generously contributed to many causes in the town and upon his death on August 9, 1930 willed this land to the Town of Newmarket.



Appendix #2 – Location of Widdifield Family Plaque

