

# Memorandum to Council

Community Services Department

Facilities Division



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<b>To:</b>	Mayor and Members of Council	
<b>CC:</b>	Catherine Bridgeman, Director of Facilities	<b>Acknowledged by M. Gaskell, Chief Administrative Officer</b>
<b>From:</b>	John Romano, Commissioner of Community Services	
<b>Date:</b>	January 29, 2024	
<b>File #:</b>	N/A	
<b>Subject:</b>	Update – CMS 09-23 James Rowe House Food and Beverage RFP	

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As a follow up to Council's request to consider broader uses for the James Rowe House rather than exclusively focusing on a food and beverage use, staff are recommending the issuance of an Expression of Interest to seek potential partners for a lease of the building.

As indicated through [staff report CMS 09-23](#) James Rowe House – Food and Beverage RFP, the Town has received inquiries about the potential for the building to be leased as a restaurant space. This interest combined with the community's strong desire for additional food and beverage opportunities and placemaking experiences along the waterfront to enhance the waterfront and offset the capital costs associated with maintaining the historic building.

However, at Council direction, the process will be opened to consider a broader range of potential uses for the building and to support the vision and actions of the Community Strategic Plan to enhance Whitby's tourism sector, including a focus on the waterfront, staff are also looking at the lands surrounding the Rowe House and how they could be animated to create a year-round visitor experience.

Staff are considering applying for a grant through the Federal Tourism Growth Program to support nautical tourism experiences such as paddle boards / kayak rentals and opportunities for a seasonal visitors centre and rest stop for cyclists as well as act as the starting point for Hop on / Hop Off Food and Lights Tours. Other enhancements such as public art and Muskoka Chairs could animate the space around the Rowe House. These ideas further support actions in the Town's Tourism Strategy 2022 – 2025 and the Town's Culture Plan. This location would act as a hub of activity and connect active transportation users along the waterfront trail.

To fairly consider a range of potential opportunities, staff are recommending the issuance of an Expression of Interest (EOI) to allow potential tenants with an avenue to register their interest and to provide input on ideas/concepts that would then be evaluated fairly on their ability to support the Town's goals of enhancing the waterfront, building new partnerships, supporting and enhancing the Port Whitby Marina and providing services that respond to community needs while balancing the impact to the taxpayers.

By using the EOI, the Town will have a simplified method of allowing potential partners to convey their concept and demonstrate how it will support the Town's vision, goals and objectives for the waterfront and the building. It will be open to a variety of potential concepts allowing the Town to understand not only the level of interest in the opportunity but also the potential differing uses envisioned for the space that complement and create a tourism destination and focal point for the waterfront. Following the EOI, a formal Request for Proposal could be issued to incorporate some of the best ideas from the EOI submissions, or direct negotiations could be undertaken, or the Town could determine that no suitable concept and close the opportunity with no further commitments.

At the conclusion of the EOI process, staff will report back to Council with the outcome and recommended next steps for Council's direction.

If Council supports the staff recommendation to issue an EOI as a mechanism to solicit interest a potential lease of the James Rowe House, the following recommendation could be brought forward to direct staff: "That staff be directed to issue an Expression of Interest seeking proposals on future use of the James Rowe House and report back to Council with recommending next steps."