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## **Historic agreement between Bluewater & BFIT re Bayfield Community Centre**

The Municipality of Bluewater and BFIT (Bayfield Facilities Initiative Team) have entered into an historic agreement for the operation of the Bayfield Community Centre.

The agreement, which commences July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 and runs for a five-year term, arose from an extensive consultative process involving municipal staff and Council; area residents; and interested local service groups including BACPA (Bayfield Arena Community Partners Association) and BFIT. The public consultations led to eleven months of collaboration and negotiation between the Municipality and BFIT, resulting in the present agreement. The agreement is consistent with a preferred outcome described in Bluewater's current Strategic Plan regarding the development of new partnerships between public and private entities which reduce costs while capitalizing on local expertise.

"This is an exciting time in Bluewater's Facilities Department," notes Manager of Facilities, Jeff Newell. "This partnership is a creative way to address the community's recreation and facility needs. I am thrilled to be working with such a committed group of volunteers to make this initiative a reality."

Under the new agreement, the Municipality will contribute \$65,000 per year to operation of the facility, which is located at 4 Jane Street in Bayfield, as well as \$35,000 per year to a capital reserve. This compares favorably to the facility's previous annual operating deficit of approximately \$115,000. BFIT will be responsible for the ongoing operation and maintenance of the facility, including coordinating all bookings and rentals, and the facility will be staffed by BFIT employee(s) and volunteers. Current chattels, such as tables, chairs and dishes, will remain in the facility for its future use.

"Bluewater Council thanks our Manager of Facilities, Jeff Newell, and the board of BFIT for the hard work they've put in to bring this partnership to fruition," states Mayor Paul Klopp. "Management of the facility by BFIT and Bayfield volunteers will create a stronger sense of community ownership, while minimizing costs to the tax base."

"This agreement has been years in the making," notes Bayfield Councillor Bill Whetstone. "It's one of the reasons I decided to run for Council over five years ago. Not only does it represent the voice of a very dedicated community of residents, but it also demonstrates the willingness of Bluewater Council to look at new and alternative ways to keep services available. This agreement could serve as an important precedent going forward."

BFIT'S spokesperson, Sandy Scotchmer said, "The collaboration between our negotiation teams has resulted in a partnership with the Municipality that both parties can be proud of. The partnership serves as a great example to other community groups and Municipalities around the province, that when we work together, we can save our recreation facilities that are so vital to families in rural communities."

Scotchmer continued, "After negotiating together for over 11 months, BFIT and the Municipality have developed a strong partnership and we look forward to an exciting future for the Bayfield Arena. BFIT would also like to thank the residents of Bayfield, as well as all service and community groups, for your huge support throughout this journey. Your encouragement and support have been incredible and we can't thank you enough."

BFIT will hold a public meeting in the near future, once provincial emergency measures are lifted and public gatherings are once again allowed. Please watch the Bluewater and/or BFIT Facebook pages for further information.

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