APPENDIX 1

Summary: General Volunteer Engagement Questions

Staff Roles with Volunteers:

Community Services staff have a variety of roles in relationship to volunteers. These range from:

Primary – staff resource to committees and large community special events; recruiting and scheduling volunteers; and, staff resource to the Events Committee, work with volunteers for all special events and recreation programs, organize Volunteer Reception annually.

Secondary – support department staff, provide guidance, cover for staff; and, provide resources and equipment to some programs that are being led by volunteers (pickle ball, table tennis, bid euchre, festival of trees, etc.).

Question 1: Recruitment of volunteers to fill various roles has become increasingly challenging and seen as a serious issue to the Township of Minden Hills. This may be the primary issue…however, there may be other aspects of volunteer engagement that you feel should be addressed. What might these be:

- Development and application of applicable policies (city standards vs. small rural community - 25 years behind)
- Orientation and training of volunteers
- Volunteer inventory and tracking; creation of volunteer database
- Position descriptions for volunteers; specific task descriptions
- Advertising or marketing to recruit volunteers
- HR resources to manage volunteerism
- A clear understanding of the benefits and value of volunteering and not just a way to operate an organization with free labor.
- A clear understanding that volunteers as a human resource need to be supported and that means understanding it takes time to recruit, organize, train and support volunteers.
- The message that 'volunteers are not free' needs to come to the Township.
- Follow up with all volunteers at end of role to determine gaps; in other words, let volunteers help us determine what we could do better and listen to them and implement ideas together.

Question 2: Why do you think recruitment has become an issue in the Township? What contributing factors may have caused this shortage of human resources?

- A serious lack of appreciation by the Township. Township doesn't put a large emphasis on the importance of it.
- Support for volunteers is not actively done by any one staff member.
- A professional volunteer coordinator is needed.
- Recently the amount of paperwork that has been issued for volunteers to read and sign is causing people to not participate.
- No policies/procedures are in place to do so on a continuing basis.
- Have not planned for turn-over, waiting too long to do something.
- Not actively advertising opportunities throughout year.

Question 3: What do you perceive is the overall health of volunteering in the Township as a whole?

- Currently volunteer engagement is not sustainable.
- We are struggling to make ends meet.
- Committees questioning their role. Struggle to find committee, event, advisory, project volunteers.
- History: Many community volunteers e.g. at the gallery, had a great sense of pride; did what they wanted and created own programming. These volunteers had time to volunteer. Today, volunteers have less time; appear to be fewer passionate leaders.
- Need to strike a balance between staff and volunteers especially in government owned institutions.
- Volunteering has changed but we have not kept up or recognized the changes till now.
- Staff can easily push volunteers out – unintentionally – as it is just the nature of jobs and day to day operation. It is sometimes easier to do the work than bring someone in...
- Gallery programs that started and operated initially with volunteers are different now. Programming should be created and implemented by staff; volunteers matched to activities they would like to do; a process that is for the volunteer first with potential benefit for the institution.
- The purpose of volunteering is: "It's purpose is to ultimately make a *connection* to the community which is so critical".

Question 4: What other groups/organizations engage volunteers and do you know if they are having the same or similar challenges engaging volunteers?

Other community groups include:

Rotary Club, Lions Club, Kinsmen Club, Agricultural Society, Horticultural Society, Haliburton Highlands Field Naturalists, Haliburton Highlands Health Services, Legion, County of Haliburton, Community Centre Committees, Hike Haliburton, Kinsmen.

- Believe these groups are having the same issues. Current members are aging and declining to volunteers as much as they used to.
- No youth/older adults are stepping in to take their place.
- Volunteer engagement has become more professional. Colleagues in the field indicated that those galleries/museums that have a professional dedicated to volunteer coordination as part of their staff have a good number of volunteers. The coordinator acts a bridge between staff and volunteers and of course is a personal connection that offers training and recognition.

Question 5: How diverse is the population of the Township? (age, culture, skills, background) Is this a factor in recruitment/retention?

- Dominated by seniors. Majority over 60 years.
- Low income permanent residents.
- 75% of population seasonal.
- High school enrollment at 50%.
- Families and youth in decline up to 2011 census
- Youth find it very frustrating in the Haliburton area to find meaningful volunteer opportunities.
- Seniors find it equally frustrating to find satisfying and meaningful volunteer opportunities. There is a small core group of seniors who are doing everything – and I have come to see this as a 'closed' group that continues to rotate through its friends. Too many hats worn by one person leads to conflicts and burn-out.

Question 6: What are the benefit(s) of having volunteers involved in Township activities/committees/advisory boards and its work? (see Volunteering Policy #93)

- Community involvement and development, strengthens sense of community and identity. (knowing your neighbours, stay healthy, active living, social inclusion, part of the solution).
- Community connection, feeling of ownership and personal fulfillment that one is helping and contributing.
- Help deliver events and activities that Township neither has the staff, time and financial resources to deliver on its own.

Question 7: If you had to identify one challenge when working with volunteers…what would it be?

- They want to do their own thing, run with their idea right away, without regard.
- Time. Having the time to work with and schedule volunteers is the biggest challenge
- They all have different ideas how one thing should be run so finding a middle ground is challenging. With all those new ideas, comes more work which a lot of volunteers don't want to take on and our staff don't have the time to take on anything new themselves so things stay status quo and nothing really changes or grows.

Question 8: What does the Township do really well when working with volunteers?

- Nothing has been exemplary.
- As a whole, the Township does not do anything really well with volunteers.
- Volunteers are viewed as an afterthought.
- Have good staff that support as best as possible with resources currently at hand.
- Some staff appreciate the work and effort put in by volunteers and they try their best to thank them in different ways.

Question 9: What one or two things could the Township do/implement that would improve working with volunteers?

- Designate staff resource to manage volunteers. Hire a professional Manager of Volunteers.
- Create role descriptions for volunteers.
- Develop a formal marketing campaign for volunteers based on role descriptions. Open houses and dialogue could be part of this.
- Training for all staff on how to work with volunteers.
- Develop appreciation/recognition program that is consistent.
- Ask the volunteers themselves. They will tell us what we are doing wrong and how we can improve.

Question 10: What feedback have you solicited from or received from volunteers? What do they tell you they like or dislike or have they made suggestions for improvement?

- Have not solicited - received casually from time to time from individuals.
- Everyone has different opinions! There are some who seem to volunteer to receive the recognition (invitation to the reception, thank-you ads, awards etc.) while others don't want the fuss and would rather just do their task and are happy with that
- Volunteers on advisory committees feel their input and participation is irrelevant. Staff creates the programming etc. Volunteers 'advise'. Many volunteers feel this is a rubber stamp.
- Volunteers want to feel more useful with their time which for many means making decisions and implementing. Highly skilled volunteers of today are not being utilized in the volunteer roles we currently offer.

Question 11: Do you have ideas/suggestions that would help with the following areas of volunteer engagement?

a) Positions or roles for volunteers – new or enhanced? Do you have clear, written roles for volunteers?

- Majority of volunteer roles are not written.
- Some volunteer roles are written like Advisory Committee role or Living History role; but not consistent.

b) Orientation for volunteers?

- Little to no orientation. What we do we need to make more efficient/organized.

c) Training for volunteers?

- Currently provide no training; but could be determined from job description.

d) Acknowledgement or Recognition?

- See awards update. Policy developed recently to promote several formal awards recognizing specific people. Awards presented at annual events.

e) Support or supervision? Do you give volunteers formal or informal feedback?

- Informal, supervision via casual check-ins, variable
- None
- Try to give feedback when and where possible. Send off a quick email after the event to thank them (along with sending them a thank you card) and ask them their suggestions/observations about that task.

f) Scheduling?

- Event/project driven, most often coordinated through partner service clubs
- Only with specific events like Festival of Trees

g) Ideas for recruitment of Youth age 14-20 and older adults/Baby Boomers 55+/newly retired?

- Youth - challenges are time (always working) and distance to travel (no form of transportation).
- Engage via social media – develop more social media use.

h) How to keep volunteers engaged longer with the organization? (retention)

- Help them feel welcomed, valued and educate them of their impact.
- Find out what makes them happy to volunteer and if we are meeting the mark in providing that opportunity.

i) Screening practices (police checks, interviews, reference checks)

- Police Checks just recently implemented. Requirement has increased paper work which is often daunting and is causing people to not volunteer.
- Specific challenges with our baseball league getting these requirements completed.

j) Social Media/Web site/Technology related to volunteers?

- Not currently developed but is under review.
- We need to be able to have it! The township currently has no social media outlets

Question 12: What are your expectations of volunteers and have these been met? Have you documented or expressed your expectations? Are there any consequences if expectations are not met?

- Meet policy requirements, (police checks, policy sign offs)
- Expectations have been expressed to volunteers and the majority of them understand and have no problem with it.
- Especially health & safety, if they don't - cannot participate.
- A number of processes were developed in the past but none adopted.
- As of right now there are no policies/procedures in place to deal with this problem except for verbally telling them they cannot participate (but there is no one policing this either).

Question 13: How do you see 'growing volunteer resources' in the Township to meet not only current needs but future demands? What suggestions do you have to manage this resource, provide staff support or adjust/alter the current staffing structure to engage and keep volunteers?

- When an organization reaches a certain capacity of production, volunteering needs to become a recognized part of the structure. Processes for paid staff can be adapted for volunteers but should be in place. Until the township implements this and sets the parameters and guidelines etc., instead of waiting for people to just volunteer, there will continue to be a struggle.
- The Township needs to develop and promote a volunteerism philosophy in order to attract and continue to build volunteer resources.
- Develop appropriate policies, procedures, and staff resources.
- Send staff for training.

Question 14: What challenges will you have to implement changes with regards to growing volunteer resources?

- Reluctance to change or endorse group vision - too many personal agendas and difficult personalities.
- Educating council about changes in volunteerism and examining current volunteer committees/project volunteers etc. and how we might restructure to maximize resources and impact.
- Staff time needed to build volunteer resources.
- Understanding what the MHCC is...and how volunteers could be engaged.
- When change occurs and some groups of volunteers are cliquey and if one or two decide to quit they can easily take the whole group with them.

Question 15: Do you have any final suggestions, ideas or comments you would like to share about engaging volunteers in the Township? All comments are appreciated.

- Hoping to learn best practices and successes of other successful communities/organizations.
- It is critical for the survival of the MHCC to have volunteers - it is like a gage to its success but it has never been taken seriously nor understood. Pressure it puts on staff to bring in volunteers for reasons that are outdated and out of touch. Need to revamp the roles for volunteers which might in turn increase interest.
- Need to have structure and professional staff in place. Have to give volunteering meaning and support.
- The Township (starting with Council; department heads and other staff) need to make a better attempt at promoting and being involved with volunteers. They need to recognize the importance of volunteers and make decisions that enhance volunteer resources not turn them away. We need a one vision approach.