

Town approves contribution to commercial kitchen

Will contribute a total of \$75,000 over three years toward the project

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At its June 27 meeting, council approved a \$25,000 contribution in each of the next three fiscal years toward the upgrades of the Olds Regional Exhibition's (ORE) commercial kitchen.

The town's total contribution from 2017-19 will be \$75,000.

According to councillors' briefing notes, the ORE board voted in June to begin renovations in the Cow Palace, where the existing galley-style kitchen, office and boardroom will be converted into the commercial kitchen. To replace the space for those functions, a mezzanine would be built.

ORE's executive director Tami Gardner said that work has started and that the organization sought more than just the town's financial support for the \$354,200 project.

"More than anything, we wanted council's endorsement of this project, that we believe will be extraordinarily impactful to our community. And certainly the financial contribution is wonderful," Gardner said.

In its business plan submitted to council, the ORE, a registered charity, currently operates in two areas:

providing space for third party groups to host agricultural and commercial events, and event production, particularly those that serve the agriculture sector, rural youth and community.

With the commercial kitchen, the ORE hopes to add hospitality to the list.

Gardner said the kitchen is a long-standing project, with residents having discussed the creation of a community centre and convention facility in the past.

"But still, not only in Olds but all of Mountain View County, there isn't a space that allows a thousand people to gather under one roof and we are very happy that the Cow Palace fulfills that function. Unfortunately there was no ability to provide hospitality there with a tiny galley-style apartment kitchen," she said.

"So this is going to be really a game-changing thing, not only for the exhibition as we diversify our revenue streams but for the community to have that access to it as well."

ORE is aiming at making this year's Kegs and Legs 5K beer run the first event at the Cow Palace, she said.

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