



STAFF REPORT

SUBMITTED BY: Chris Frotten, Suzy Atwood, Cameron Whiteway

DATE: July 12, 2021

SUBJECT: Lobster Trap Christmas Tree Enhancements

ORIGIN

After more than a decade of assembling a lobster trap Christmas tree on the North East Point waterfront, Council has budgeted an investment of \$15,000 to build a new and improved tree. This report has been prepared to seek direction from Council on how to proceed.

BACKGROUND

The building of the tree and its lighting ceremony have become a tradition in the Municipality that has gained notoriety throughout the province – with other Nova Scotia communities joining us, including Lunenburg, Port Mouton and Musquodoboit Harbour, which has a small lighthouse atop its tree.

As we know all too well, the tree is cherished by many. It is adorned with approximately 130 wooden and plastic buoys, each painted in a unique pattern and placed by family and friends of lobster fishermen and women in memory of those lost at sea, those who have since passed on, as well as those who were, and still today are fishing the waters along our rugged coastline.

Nearly 200 salvaged traps/pots make up our tree, all which have served their duty catching thousands of lobsters on the bottom of our ocean floor. The tree, as all Christmas trees do, brings families, friends and in this case, our wonderful community together to celebrate the Christmas and lobster season and remember loved ones. It's a reminder of the importance the lobster industry plays to our communities, residents, businesses, not only here in the Municipality of Barrington but to the entire province of Nova Scotia.

DISCUSSION

Our lobster trap Christmas tree has taken on a few different looks over the years. This is due, in part, to the use of salvaged traps from our C&D Site, the varying experience of the assembly crew and the weather.



Traditions represent a critical piece of a culture. They help form the structure and foundation of a community and they remind us that we are part of a history that defines our past, shapes who we are today and who we are likely to become.

As does every longstanding tradition, they evolve over time. Our tree is no different and every tree we've assembled has had its unique personality. That said, there seems to be a desire for a new and improved tree that could be consistently recreated every year, thus enhancing the tradition.

Typically, upon approval by Council, the details of a project or service are executed by staff but seeing as this is so important to the residents of our Municipality and reflects on its image, we felt we required more direction on what Council envisions.

In an effort to provide Council with options, we researched the look and feel of a number of different trees that exist locally and abroad. Following our research, we determined that the trees from Rockland, Maine and Gloucester, Massachusetts would be two examples of trees that would be achievable for us and would fit the look and feel of our Municipality.

Rockland, Maine Tree

The tree built in Rockland, Maine is roughly 40-feet tall, is made up of 155 traps and 2,500 Christmas lights and is assembled entirely by volunteers.

The tree is a part of Rockland's Festival of Lights, a 25-year-old tradition that takes place just after Thanksgiving and runs through Christmas. For about the past 10 years, Rockland Main Street Inc. has been organizing both the Festival of Light and the lobster trap tree.





Gloucester, Massachusetts Tree

The Gloucester tree is about 45-feet tall and is built from 350 traps. The idea behind the tree began in 2001 by Janice Lufkin Shea, a downtown business owner. Jeff Worthley started it and built it for 10-years and then handed it off to other members of the community.

Local lobstermen donate their traps and volunteers work to build it. The fire department uses their hook and ladder to set the star at the top.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The way we currently assemble the tree costs the Municipality very little. As mentioned, the traps are salvaged from our C&D Site and Staff of the Department of Property Services physically assemble it. The only real cost is staff time, the renting of a boom lift to help us place the traps towards the top of the tree and some lights.

As you will read in our recommendation, we believe we can achieve the desired outcome without the need for much of the allocated funds.

That said, if our recommendation is rejected or does not work out, we recommend investing the allocated funds in the construction of a metal frame and the purchase of new traps. This would achieve the goal of creating a new and improved tree that could be replicated year after year as the frame and new traps would solidify the tree and keep the shape consistent.

It is estimated that the cost of a new trap (basic rectangle box nothing else) would be approx. \$80 each.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

PUBLIC CONSULTATION/COMMUNICATIONS

N/A

RECOMMENDATION

After careful consideration, we recommend assembling the tree similar to Gloucester's.

In addition to this recommended design, I've said many times that a project or initiative is never as successful than when it is born or has significant buy-in from the community. As you will read in the articles, the two trees we provided as options began and continue to be built and led by the community.

We have also seen the benefits of involving the community firsthand through one of our largest events – the Nova Scotia Marathon. Since creating our marathon committee, the event has improved substantially.

Although many cherish the tree, its assembly and lighting ceremony are still entirely led by the Municipality. In order to achieve the desired consistency and pride of a new and improved tree, we recommend the following:

1. Solicit donations of either a new trap or good used trap (with specific dimensions) from our local fishers/residents/businesses. Each trap could have a tag placed on it with either details on who it has been donated by or in memory of a loved one. Such a campaign could start in the summer and run until October, or until we reach our goal.
2. Form a committee to help build the tree. We could issue a call for volunteers to work on the tree for a few days and the team could meet prior to building it to go over the construction process and how that will work.

SUGGESTED MOTION

N/A

ALTERNATIVES

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

- News Articles – Rockland, Maine Tree
 - <https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/local/lobster-trap-christmas-tree-lights-up-rockland/97-d3f4b6ae-81c8-411f-b9cd-3541c4fe20ea>
 - <https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/local/207/rockland-builds-largest-lobster-trap-christmas-tree/97-569cd039-4021-460b-ba8b-337671247a7f>
 - <https://www.penbaypilot.com/article/rockland-s-lobster-trap-tree-rises-its-20th/141201>
- News Articles Gloucester, Massachusetts Tree
 - https://www.gloucestertimes.com/news/holiday-tree-stands-tall/article_7a716f99-3f2c-5748-a58c-8be346891161.html
 - <https://goodmorninggloucester.com/tag/gloucester-lobster-trap-christmas-tree/>
- Assembly Videos – Rockland, Maine Tree
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZsKJpQ49MMw>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYEH0wgP9jc&t=71s>
- Assembly Video – Gloucester, Massachusetts Tree
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceF2ylsx3ns>