



City of
Peterborough

TO: Members of the Committee of the Whole

FROM: Ken Doherty, Director of Community services

MEETING DATE: May 17, 2010

SUBJECT: Report CSD10-024
Communities in Bloom

PURPOSE

A report to propose strategic directions and to provide funding for Communities in Bloom for the period 2010 to 2012.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council approve the recommendations outlined in Report CSD10-024 dated May 17, 2010, of the Director of Community Services, as follows:

- a) That the proposed 3-year planning strategy be approved as follows:
 - (i) that the City, through the Committee, remain as a Communities In Bloom Friend and not compete in 2010;
 - (ii) that the City, through the Committee, compete in the National Competition in 2011;
 - (iii) that the City, through the Committee, compete in either the National or International competition in 2012, pending eligibility.

- b) That a contribution of \$20,000 from the Capital Levy Reserve to: assist with activities planned for 2010; provide staff support; cover the cost of up to three committee members/staff and one political representative to attend the annual conference in Halifax; and begin planning for the 2011 campaign, be approved.

- c) That a City contribution of \$80,000 for 2011 and \$100,000 for 2012 as Council approved enhancements to provide appropriate resources in support of the strategic plan be approved.

BUDGET AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Since no funds have been allocated to support Communities in Bloom for 2010, it is recommended that the City provide a \$20,000 contribution from the Capital Levy Reserve, which would result in a current balance of \$1,565,033.

Approval of the proposed plan will be a commitment for the Corporation over the next two years with the proposed financial commitments for 2011 and 2012 as a pre-commitment.

BACKGROUND

Communities in Bloom

Communities in Bloom promotes itself as:

a Canadian non-profit organization committed to fostering civic pride, environmental responsibility and beautification through community involvement and the challenge of a national program, with a focus on the promotion and value of green spaces in urban settings.

“People, plants and pride... growing together” is our slogan, and it captures the essence of the program. (www.communitiesinbloom.ca)

The Canadian program now includes more than 500 communities across the country competing annually in either the provincial, national, or international competition involving communities in the United States, Japan, and several European countries. Participating communities are evaluated against communities of a similar size, either nationally or provincially, by a volunteer jury of trained professionals on the accomplishments of the entire community. Communities are judged according to eight key criteria:

- Tidiness
- Environmental Awareness
- Community Involvement
- Natural and Cultural Heritage Conservation
- Urban Forestry
- Landscaped Areas
- Floral Displays
- Turf & Groundcovers

While Communities in Bloom emphasizes horticultural activities, it also serves as a metaphor for quality of life and civic pride in the community.

The City's Involvement

The City of Peterborough entered its first Communities in Bloom competition in 2005 as part of the City's centennial celebrations. The local committee competed in the Provincial category that year and received four out of a possible five "blooms" and recognition for Natural and Cultural Heritage Conservation. Based on that placement, Peterborough was invited to compete in the Nationals in 2006 and not only garnered five "blooms" but also received the highest mark among competing municipalities in the Natural and Cultural Heritage Conservation judging category. In 2007, the Committee took a year off from the competition but continued to pursue its Communities In Bloom initiatives as required to maintain Friend status.

In 2008, the Committee competed in the Nationals and once again was awarded five "blooms". This time it received recognition for its Youth activities. The Committee opted out of competition by retaining Friend status in 2009. It is recommended that this continue through 2010.

The Committee cannot, however, retain its Friend status for another year. If it does not compete in the Nationals in 2011, then it must start the process over again at the provincial level. If it competes in and wins the Nationals next year, then it is eligible to compete in the International program for 2012.

Typical Activities

Although the arrival of the judges and the formal judging tour are typically the highest profile portions of the competition, most of the work is done behind the scenes year round. The Committee and key City staff meet regularly to plan and coordinate all activities culminating in the judging. Typical activities include:

- researching and documenting all policies, programs and services relating to the judging categories
- writing, designing, and producing the annual Community Profile book to highlight tour components and accomplishments
- researching and identifying sites and facilities to be included on the tour and producing detailed tour program
- organizing all hospitality and ancillary events relating to the judging tour
- fund-raising and friend-raising to ensure broad community involvement, engagement, and support
- coordinating all work activities to ensure that all tour sites, tour routes, and the balance of the community is at its best when the judges arrive
- hosting the judges, conducting/ coordinating the tour, profiling the community at one or more community events, and ensuring that the judges have an opportunity to meet community and civic leaders

- documenting the judging tour
- attending the National conference to learn about best practices, build networks, and promote the community

In Support of the Recommendations

Governance:

Initially, from 2003 to 2005, the Committee functioned as a sub-committee of the Mayor's Centennial Celebrations Committee. Since then, however, it has functioned somewhat independently without formal committee status as a Mayor's Committee, Committee of Council, or with ties to an Advisory Committee.

In response to Report APRAC10-015, dated April 20, 2010, the Arenas Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (APRAC) approved the following recommendations:

- a) That Communities in Bloom (the Committee) be approved as a standing committee of the Arenas Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee in accordance with Section 8 of By-law 07-041;
- b) That Shirley Eggleton and Yvonne Coveney-Boyd be appointed as the APRAC members to the Committee;
- c) That Yvonne Coveney-Boyd be appointed as the Chair of the Committee for the balance of 2010;
- d) That existing Committee members, Colleen Viscoff and Gord Henderson, be appointed as community representatives to the Committee; and that up to three additional Committee members be recruited;
- e) That the Committee and City staff be directed to draft Committee terms of reference, including role, composition, and terms of appointment for approval at a future APRAC meeting.

APRAC also endorsed the 3-year planning and funding strategy recommended in this report.

The recommendations to establish the Communities In Bloom Committee as a Standing Committee of the Arenas Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (APRAC) and to appoint the membership accordingly is within APRAC's mandate as outlined in By-law 07-041. This relationship reinforces the existing accountability and transparency; but more importantly, it also reflects ongoing administrative and political support for this activity.

Staff and City In-kind Support:

From its inception, the local Communities in Bloom initiative has enjoyed the active involvement and support of numerous City facilities, divisions, and departments. Staff

leadership to date has come primarily from the Public Works Division of the Utility Services Department, especially through the Division Manager, Peter Southall. Since the Community Services Department is typically more directly involved in program delivery and planning/coordinating community special events, it has been generally agreed administratively that this department will assume responsibility for coordinating and providing staff support to Committee henceforth. Nevertheless, the transfer of staff leadership is predicated on the ongoing involvement and support of the Public Works Division, and especially, the Parks and Horticultural functional area.

In the past, the day-to-day indirect staff involvement and other forms of in-kind support from all participating divisions has not been effectively tracked or calculated. It is proposed that through extensive consultation, this information will be provided as part of the 2011 and 2012 budget deliberations.

Financial Support:

The City provided direct funding support to the Communities in Bloom initiative as one of the many projects and events funded from the overall \$180,000 contribution to the City's 2005 Centennial Celebrations through Contingency and Capital Levy funding allocations in 2003, 2004, and 2005. The City also provided Capital Levy contributions of \$20,000 in 2006 and again in 2007. To its credit, the Committee also raised \$10,500 from local business and industry as well as \$28,450 of in-kind support of its activities. In the past, direct Committee expenses for each competition, including conference attendance, has been approximately \$30,000. The Committee currently has a cash balance of \$5,660.79.

The current balance can cover the anticipated costs for the Committee's planned activities needed to maintain its "Friend" status in 2010; however, additional funding is required to support adequate attendance at the annual conference in Halifax; to provide dedicated event planning/ clerical staff resources; and to begin the formal planning and coordination of the recommended National Competition in 2011. The recommended \$20,000 Capital Levy investment matches those of 2006 and 2007.

The recommended funding for 2011 and 2012 includes: a dedicated staff person as a .5 FTE to provide direction and support in event planning; financial resources for publications, promotions, events and additional jury expenses, especially for the anticipated International campaign; and adequate resources for an appropriately sized City contingency to attend the annual conference for those respective years.

Political Support:

The Committee's initial entry in the Provincial competition in 2005 was recognized as a key component of the City's centennial celebrations. The Committee enjoyed political support with the capital levy contributions in 2006 and again in 2007. It has also benefited greatly from the ongoing and active involvement of Councillor Eggleton and the active participation of the Mayor and several members of Council during the actual judging.

Through conference attendance, Committee members have seen that the most successful communities enjoy considerable funding and political support from their respective Councils. Many have dedicated part-time or full-time staff. Most have the Mayor and other members of Council in attendance at the National conference to hear the competition results. Through this report, the Committee and City staff seeks a strong mandate and tangible support for Peterborough's investment in Communities in Bloom over the next three years to ensure its success.

SUMMARY

The City of Peterborough, through its Communities In Bloom Committee, has performed admirably in its first three ventures into the Provincial and National Competitions. The Committee is seeking a governance structure, funding commitment, staff resources, and a mandate to win. An investment in Communities in Bloom celebrates our quality of life, instills civic pride, and promotes tourism to the area.

Submitted by,

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