

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Wednesday, May 12, 2021

WARD(S): ALL

**TITLE: SOVEREIGNTY GARDEN PILOT PROGRAM UPDATE
FILE 22.37**

FROM:

Jim Harnum, City Manager

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To seek direction for staff to support the Sovereignty Garden Program by reposting promotional materials provided by York Region.

Report Highlights

- The Sovereignty Garden Program supports the City's urban agricultural and local food initiatives outlined in Green Directions Vaughan 2019 and aligns with other City initiatives to improve community well-being through the support of local food.
- The risk and legal ramifications review conducted by staff determined that a formal partnership between the City and Transformation Initiative is not recommended at this time, as they do not meet the City's liability standards and requirements.
- York Region is exploring becoming a promotional support partner by entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with Transformation Initiative.
- Support for the Sovereignty Garden Program can be achieved by reposting York Region's communications (e.g., social media) once a partnership is formalized between York Region and Transformation Initiative.

Recommendation

1. That staff be directed to repost the promotional materials provided by York Region, subsequent to the Region entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with Transformation Initiative.

Background

Council directed Staff to review the risk and legal ramifications of the Sovereignty Garden Pilot Program

Council on May 27, 2020, passed a Member's Resolution to endorse the Sovereignty Garden Pilot Program (the 'Pilot Program'), led by Transformation Initiative, in principle. The Member's Resolution also recommended that City staff work with Transformation Initiative to determine the scope and logistics of the Pilot Program, and report back to Mayor and Members of Council on staff's recommendation on whether to proceed with the Pilot Program. Transformation Initiative is a Canadian registered not-for profit agency which focuses efforts in Canada's five core sectors: Finance, Insurance, Energy, Resources and Agri-food.

The intent of the Pilot Program is to encourage Vaughan residents to grow fresh produce and donate part of their harvest to local food banks. The intent of the Pilot Program aligns with Green Directions Vaughan 2019 to promote the improvement of community well-being through growing and sharing local food. The implementation of City of Vaughan Official Plan 2010 policies section 7.4.1.5 also states to support community agriculture, including community gardens, and other community related opportunities for local food production. The actions in York Region's Agricultural System and Agri-Food Strategy are also reinforced.

On June 16, 2020, staff provided Council with a staff report outlining the benefits and alignments of the Pilot Program with other City initiatives to improve community well-being through the support of local food. However, it was identified that staff needed to further review the legal and risk ramifications of entering into a formal partnership with a third party such as Transformation Initiative. Council on June 29, 2020, approved a recommendation in principle to support the Pilot Program, subject to staff's ongoing review of legal and risk ramifications.

Partnerships that support urban agriculture and local food initiatives

The Food Bank of York Region has been identified as a partner receiving the fresh produce grown and donated by Vaughan residents. This initiative meets the mandate of the Food Bank of York Region which serves nine municipalities and aims to encourage

backyard growers to cultivate fruits and vegetables to donate the surplus towards those in need.

In addition, the York Region Food Council supports the donation of fresh food to local food banks as it implements local food system projects, builds capacity to influence change, and engages on local food and farming issues that are relevant in the community. They work closely with the local food banks and other food non-profit organizations and, therefore, can connect the City with these organizations and support the communications plan.

Previous Reports/Authority

Previous reports considered by Council related to the Sovereignty Gardens Pilot Program can be found at the following links:

[Item 12, Report No. 25, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on June 29, 2020.](#)

[Committee of the Whole \(2\), May 20, 2020](#) - Member's Resolution for Sovereignty Garden Pilot Program.

[Item 7, Report No. 39, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on December 17, 2019.](#) - Green Directions Vaughan 2019 was approved by Council in December 2019.

Analysis and Options

Findings from the due diligence review

As directed by Council in 2020, City staff conducted due diligence to identify any legal and risk ramifications in partnering with Transformation Initiative. The City's Risk Management and Legal Services departments identified the need for a formal Agreement between the City and Transformation Initiative to describe the processes for the Pilot Program and set out the roles, responsibilities, and liabilities of each party. As Transformation Initiative requested the use of the City's logo for promotional purposes, the Agreement would also establish the parameters of such use and ensure that the City could maintain control of the use of its logo. A formal Agreement would also serve to indemnify the City for any operational aspects of the project undertaken by Transformation Initiative.

Through the due diligence review, it was determined that Transformation Initiative does not have adequate insurance to meet the City's standard requirements to enter into an

Agreement. The review also identified that entering into a formal Agreement with a third party was not advisable because there were no services being provided to the City. It was also noted by the Risk Management and Legal Services departments that the City does not have a formal policy to manage the use of the City's logo or enter into partnerships with outside organizations.

As a result of Transformation Initiative not meeting the recommended insurance requirements, City staff have been exploring other options to support the intent of the Pilot Program.

York Region to support the Sovereignty Garden Program

City staff have been exploring alternatives to support the intent of the Pilot Program and have been in communication with York Region staff, as they have also been approached by Transformation Initiative for support. Through our discussions, it was determined that York Region can enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Transformation Initiative if Transformation Initiative obtains the proper insurance and meets logo use requirements. If Transformation Initiative meets these requirements, York Region can become a promotional support partner for the Sovereignty Garden Program. York Region would then work with Transformation Initiative on the messaging for the Sovereignty Garden Program, more specifically to develop a communications plan that would be delivered through the Region's corporate social media channels.

Should a partnership be secured by York Region and Transformation Initiative, the City would be able to support the intent of the Program by sharing York Region's social media posts through the City's corporate social media. In the past, the City has reposted regional urban agricultural and local food initiatives prepared by York Region, such as Canada's Agricultural Day and Local Food Week. Therefore, staff seek Council direction to share York Region's Sovereignty Garden Program in the annual Policy Planning and Environmental Sustainability communications plan and work with Corporate and Strategic Communications to share York Region's messaging via the City's social media platforms.

Financial Impact

Staff will provide services in-kind to fulfill responsibilities associated with promotional support.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

As noted on the York Region web site in reference to "Food Access and Insecurity", food insecurity is an issue that affects households throughout York Region. An estimated 7 percent of York Region households experienced food insecurity between 2009 and 2014,

representing approximately 24,700 households. While local food programs are not the entire solution to food insecurity, they can make healthy, affordable food more accessible to York Region residents. The act of residents donating fresh food to local food banks can be used to demonstrate the impact of accessible fresh food and sustainable food systems. This initiative including the communications and marketing plan can be utilized by other municipalities within York Region to also support other communities.

As a member of the York Region Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy Municipal Working Group, the City is mandated to implement action items in the Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector Strategy. City staff are working with York Region staff on this collaboration.

Conclusion

As a result of the review of the risk and legal ramifications conducted, staff do not support a formal partnership between the City and Transformation Initiative as a third-party partner due the organization not meeting City liability standards and requirements. City staff do support the intent and messaging behind the Sovereignty Garden Pilot Program as the initiative supports actions and goals outlined in Green Directions Vaughan 2019, the Vaughan Official Plan 2010 policies, and the actions in York Region's Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector Strategy.

Subject to York Region entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with Transformation Initiative, City staff recommend that in-kind support from staff be approved to share York Region's social media posts. City staff will also review the need to develop a policy to manage the use of the City's logo or enter into partnerships with outside organizations.

For more information, please contact Ruth Rendon, Senior Environmental Planner at extension 8104.

Attachments

None

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