

Report from Parks, Recreation and Culture Services, Business Planning and Strategic Services

Date of Report: September 5, 2017

Date of Meeting: September 18, 2017

Report Number: PRCS-B041-2017

File: 68.31.99

Subject: Funding for Community Gardens

Recommendation

That the Budget Standing Committee receive the report for consideration of the 2018 operating budget; and

That the Budget Standing Committee include \$12,400 to the 2018 operating budget to fund community gardens; and

That these funds be considered in addition to the 1.5% city expenditure budget increase for 2018.

Summary

This report provides an overview of the community garden funding program and recommends program changes for 2018 based on the experience of administering the grant in 2017 and feedback from grant recipients. The Green Advisory Committee has approved a motion to allocate 20% of its annual budget (\$7,600 based on 2018 budget request) towards the community gardens funding program. Additional funding for the program would need to be considered by the Budget Standing Committee as this cannot be supported within the PRCS operating budget given other funding demands and the budget increase direction from the Budget Standing Committee.

Background

On January 18, 2017, the Budget Standing Committee approved the following motion by Councillor Haywood:

Staff be directed to report back on the feasibility of adding \$50,000 to the PRCS budget from the Civic Project Fund for one year for community gardens before tabling the budget.

Staff prepared a report for consideration (report #[PRCS-B010-2017](#)) and through the 2017 operating budget Council approved \$25,000 from the civic project fund towards community gardens. Further to this approval the Budget Standing Committee approved the following motion by Councillor Phillips:

That the source of funding be revisited before the 2018 budget cycle.

Following approval of the funding staff developed a program that outlined program parameters, eligibility requirements, and an application process. A total of 12 applications from seven organizations were received with applications being reviewed by the Environmental Sustainability Pillar Committee. Each project received full funding under the program parameters with approximately \$17,200 being awarded. Due to capacity of one of the organizations it is likely that \$2,440 of this funding will not be used.

On May 29, 2017, Council approved the following motion by Councillor Haywood:

That Council direct staff to report on creating Terms of Reference for a funding model for the Green Advisory Committee related to community gardens and related educational activities.

Report

Community Garden Costs

The cost to implement a community garden is specific to each site; details can vary such as the design, existing access to water service, size of the garden and the number of plots. Water is a significant operational cost, which also varies based on the size of the garden and seasonal needs; and gardens can evolve over time with additional amenities as we have seen with the development of the garden at Torosian Park, such as fencing, storage buildings, and additional plots.

All costs related to a community garden under the existing Policy are the responsibility of the Community Garden Coordinator. It is anticipated that funding provided by the City would support the community's ability to implement more or improved gardens for public use. It is recommended that community groups present garden proposals demonstrating estimated costs and how the potential funding would be allocated.

Community Gardens Funding Program

Based on experience from the 2017 program (overview, terms and conditions attached as Appendix 1), feedback from community garden organizers (Appendix 2), and Council's direction to include related educational activities, the following changes to the community gardens funding program are recommended for 2018:

Priority system for community gardens and educational activities

The following system is recommended to prioritize projects that support the infrastructure needs of community gardens:

Priority 1: Projects that develop, redevelop, repair or improve community gardens, including the tools and equipment required for these activities.

If funding remains following award of priority 1 projects, consideration will be given to funding projects under:

Priority 2: Educational activities related to community gardens that are available to the public and publicized city-wide.

The Green Advisory Committee recommends that operating costs may be considered on a case-by-case basis. As the provision of community gardens and the needs of organizations operating community gardens change, the objectives of the funding program may also change. As such, each year staff and the Green Advisory Committee will review the types of projects eligible for funding.

Evaluation criteria to be changed to reflect updated program and changing objectives

The evaluation criteria will be amended to outline which criteria should be included in reviewing projects under each priority stream. The evaluation criteria would be reviewed and adjusted annually, before the call for applications, by staff and the Green Advisory Committee to reflect changes in program objectives over time.

Administration by staff and Green Advisory Committee (GAC)

Community gardens are well aligned with the mandate of the GAC and it is reasonable for the program to be administered by PRCS staff and the GAC. Program details would be reviewed and adjusted annually prior to the call for applications based on community needs and feedback from the previous year's program.

Funding to be awarded by the Green Advisory Committee

It is recommended that the funding be awarded by the GAC instead of the Environmental Sustainability Pillar Committee as was the case in 2017. As the GAC meets frequently (monthly compared to every 3 months for the Environmental Sustainability Pillar Committee) this will support a shorter review time which is essential given the short amount of time between operating budget approval and the start of the garden season. The timing of this report did not provide an opportunity to be reviewed by the Pillar Committee. The Pillar Committee's discussion while reviewing the 2017 applications mirrored the GAC's discussion on the types and priority of projects that should be eligible for funding.

Reduction in budget recommended

Of the \$25,000 available, approximately \$17,200 was awarded through the 2017 community gardens funding program. Due to capacity of one of the organizations it is likely that \$2,440 of this funding will not be used. Based on this use, a reduction to \$20,000 is supported.

Source of funding

In 2017, Council funded the program from the civic project fund and directed staff to review the funding source for 2018. The City has been working to reduce reliance on the Civic Project Fund and as such FMS does not recommend that this program be funded from that account.

Green Advisory Committee Annual Operating Budget

The Green Advisory Committee is supportive of community gardens and has provided funding towards community gardens in the past. On August 31, 2017 the GAC discussed the community gardens funding program and approved the following motion:

That up to 20% of the committee's annual budget be allocated for the community gardens funding program.

The mandate of the GAC is diverse and this approach ensures that the committee has funds for other priority initiatives, such as beautification, education, partnerships, and canopy projects. Any funds from the committee's budget not awarded under the community gardens funding program would be available to the GAC to allocate to other projects.

The 2018 PRCS operating budget request includes \$38,000 for the GAC; this is the same as the committee's approved budget for 2017. Based on this budget the committee would allocate up to \$7,600 toward the program.

Parks, Recreation and Culture Services Operating Budget

The community gardens funding program could be funded through a new line in the PRCS operating budget. Given other departmental funding needs this approach cannot be accommodated within the direction received by the Budget Standing Committee to limit the 2018 City expenditures budget increase to 1.5% and therefore was not included. The difference between the GAC's funding commitment (\$7,600 based on a budget request of \$38,000) and the recommended funding level (\$20,000) is \$12,400. This has not been added to the PRCS operating budget submission in order to meet the Budget Standing Committee's directed related to the overall budget.

Financial Implications

The Green Advisory Committee will allocate 20% of its annual budget towards the community gardens funding program, which is \$7,600 based on 2018 budget request. If Council wishes to provide additional support for the community gardens funding program this should be considered during the 2018 budget discussions. If such funding is approved, projects would be awarded proportionately from the operating and the committee's budget.

Relationship to Strategic Plan

Funding for community gardens is related to action item 7.5 under the environmental sustainability pillar, to support partnerships to expand the community gardens network across the City.

Conclusion

This report recommends changes to the community garden funding program and recommends that moving forward the program be administered by the Green Advisory Committee. The GAC has agreed to allocate 20% of its annual budget towards the community gardens funding program.

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Submitted by: Amy Tomaino, Manager of Business Planning and Strategic Services

Approved by: Phil Cristi, Director of Parks, Recreation and Culture Services (Acting)



Community Gardens Funding Application

Program Overview

The Community Gardens Funding program provides matching funds for the capital costs of community gardens in St. Catharines.

Who Can Apply

The City will not issue a cheque in the name of an individual; instead cheques will be made out to a recognized or accountable group, such as incorporated charities and not-for profit corporations.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria

1. Capacity to support long term maintenance/operation
2. Demonstrated ability of the group to complete similar projects
3. Confirmation of matching funds
4. Project reach/audience, including at-risk populations
5. Project supports engagement or is going to be completed through collaboration or partnerships with other organizations, groups, or the public
6. Ability to leverage other funds

Appendix 4: Terms and Conditions of Funding

Successful applicants shall adhere to the following:

Acknowledgment of Funding

The recipient shall acknowledge the support of the City of St. Catharines by using the City's logo in all advertising, publicity, programs, signage, and plaques relating to the project to which funds are granted. The recipient shall not hold the City out as a partner or as otherwise responsible for any obligations relating to the organization and project, unless specifically agreed to by the City in writing.

Purpose of Funds

Funds shall only be used for the purposes outlined in the letter of approval and any attachments thereto. Changes in the proposal shall only be made with the City's written approval. Any unused portion of the funds remains the property of the City of St. Catharines and shall be returned to the City.

Funding Commitment

The City's funding is limited to 50% of the total cost of the project and shall not exceed the funding amount identified on the letter of approval. If the project is completed under budget the City funding will be reduced accordingly.

Sample of Eligible Project Costs

- Permits
- Project materials
- Project-related costs for contractors

Sample of Ineligible Project Costs

- Applicant's operating and administrative expenses
- Expenditures or financial commitments made before the application was approved
- Deposits and refundable credits (e.g. HST) paid by the applicant

Payment of Funds

Funds will be paid out to the applicant according to the schedule included in the letter of approval. Any residual funds following project completion shall be returned to the City. The City will not issue a cheque in the name of an individual; instead cheques will be made out to a recognized or accountable group.

Disposal of funds

The recipient shall not sell, lease or otherwise dispose of assets purchased in whole or part with City funds, within 5 years of funding approval without prior written consent of the City.

Repayment of funds

The recipient shall repay to the City the whole or any portion of the funds if the recipient:

2017 Community Gardens Funding Application

- ceases operating during term of funding;
- fails to complete the project;
- has knowingly provided false information in their application;
- uses the funds for purposes other than those detailed in the application;
- breaches any of the terms and conditions of this Agreement;
- breaches any of the provisions of the Human Rights Code, in the operation of this organization and/or project;
- commences, or has commenced against them, any proceeding in bankruptcy or is adjudged a bankrupt.

Where required, the funds shall be repaid by cheque, payable to the "City of St. Catharines" and mailed to: Parks, Recreation and Culture Services, P.O. Box 3012, 50 Church Street, St. Catharines, ON L2R 7C2.

Release and Indemnity

The Applicant indemnifies and holds harmless The Corporation of the City of St. Catharines, its employees, elected officials, and agents from and against any and all liability, damage, loss, claims or demands and actions of every nature whatsoever, which arise out of or are in any way associated with the project.

The Applicant assumes all liability for the project and releases The Corporation of the City of St. Catharines, its employees, elected officials, and agents from any and all liability for any loss or injury sustained by the Applicant, or any of its employees, volunteers, agents or affiliates, regardless of how caused, resulting from or in connection with the project.

Accounting

The recipient shall keep and maintain all records, invoices and other documents relating to the Community Gardens Funding Program in a manner consistent with generally accepted accounting principles and record keeping practices, and shall maintain records for a period of three (3) years. The recipient authorizes the City and its agents at all reasonable times to inspect and copy any records, invoices and documents relating to the Grant, in the possession, or under the control, of the recipient and the recipient shall submit such receipts to the City upon request.

Reporting

The recipient shall provide a final report to the City within three (3) months of completion of the project or year, providing all details required by the City and, upon request of the City, shall submit interim progress reports.

Additional Terms

The City reserves the right to impose additional terms and conditions on the project in its letter of approval and the Applicant acknowledges that it may be required to enter into a formal funding agreement with the City.