

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE – FEBRUARY 3, 2009

UPDATE – COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL MASTER PLAN: OUTREACH TO SCHOOLS

Recommendation

The City Manager, in consultation with the Director of Economic Development and the Manager of Corporate Policy recommend:

1. That staff continue to work with Stephen Lewis Secondary School (SLSS) to develop municipally focused classroom resources to support the school's urban studies/environmental curriculum;
2. That staff be available to present such material to students in a classroom setting;
3. That the Environment Committee provide direction on its participation in this outreach program by receiving select presentations from the students on their "culminating projects" at an Environment Committee meeting; and
4. That, subject to proceeding with 3. above, such presentations tentatively be scheduled for the week of June 1 – 5, 2009 either at a Special Environment Committee meeting or through the rescheduling of the May 26, 2009 meeting to the week of June 1 – 5, 2009, subject to further consultation with the school.

Economic Impact

There is no economic impact resulting from the receipt of this report.

Communications Plan

Not applicable at this time. However, should it be decided that presentations will be made to the Environment Committee, a plan may be developed at that time to advise of the occasion.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update and to obtain direction to move forward with a program to engage the students of Stephen Lewis Secondary School on sustainability issues as they relate to corresponding City initiatives (i.e. Community Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan and the Official Plan Review).

Background - Analysis and Options

Goal 5 of the draft Community Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan provides that the City demonstrate leadership in advocacy and education on sustainability issues. The actions under this goal recommend the development of an educational strategy for citizens, businesses and schools.

On December 8, 2008 the Environment Committee received a memorandum from the Manager of Corporate Policy reporting on preliminary discussions (December 2, 2008) with the Principal, Vice-Principal and Head of Geography at Stephen Lewis Secondary School about cooperating on the development of an educational program. Both meetings also involved representatives from the Official Plan Review Team. It is anticipated that OP Review Team will play an important role in this process. This report updates progress to-date and outlines potential steps forward.

A follow-up meeting was held on January 6, 2009. The following preliminary plan was proposed.

Class Presentations by City Staff

City staff will give a presentation to students of SLSS on the CSEMP and the OP. This presentation will include an overview of the CSEMP and the OP Review, as well as specific details on the Greenbelt legislation, Places to Grow, the growth projections for Vaughan and the City's own plans for growth. Date and appropriate staff to be determined.

This presentation will assist the students to prepare their "culminating" projects. These projects incorporate all the learning the Grade 9 Geography students have had up to that point regarding issues including, but not limited to: urban form, the environment, energy, waste and transportation. The students are tasked with redesigning Block 10 as a sustainable community and asked to prepare a scaled model and an oral presentation to explain their vision. These projects are typically due in the first week of June.

Presentation of Project Work by the Students to the Environment Committee

The staff at SLSS expressed an interest in having the students present their projects to the Environment Committee. The staff at SLSS would choose the best projects and Committee members will have the opportunity to comment, ask questions and evaluate the projects. This meeting would ideally include the Environment Committee and the OP and EMP teams along with other members of Council and any other staff who might be interested in seeing the students projects and hearing the presentations.

To accommodate the time constraints of the academic calendar (e.g. exams), a special meeting of the Environment Committee would need to be called for the first week of June 2009, giving the students enough time to complete their projects and present prior to the examination period, which begins in the second week of June. Alternately, the Environment Committee meeting of May 26, 2009 could be rescheduled to the week of June 1 – 5, 2009.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved.

Regional Implications

N/A

Conclusion

The draft working plan presented in this report has multiple benefits. It establishes a closer relationship between Council and students in Vaughan, providing them not only with the opportunity to receive "real world" and professional feedback on their projects. It also introduces the students to the Environment Committee, Council and the function and operation of their municipal government. This program could serve as a pilot and model for refining and developing an outreach program and ongoing relationship with the School Boards.

Additionally, outreach to schools and the community is one of the goals of the CSEMP and demonstrates the City's commitment to showing leadership and providing environmental education on sustainability issues, as well as providing another avenue of feedback for the OP Review team in the development of the new official plan.

Should the Committee wish to proceed and the recommendations of this report are adopted, staff will continue to report back on the progress of this initiative over the next few months.

Attachments

N/A

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Respectfully submitted,

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