

BUDGET COMMITTEE - DECEMBER 14, 2004

COMMUNITIES IN BLOOM

Council, at its meeting of December 6, 2004, approved in part:

That an additional \$25,000.00 be included in the Operating Budget in order to facilitate the 2005 International Communities in Bloom program and that this be referred to the Budget Committee for consideration.

Attachment: Item 29, Committee of the Whole Report No. 87

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 6, 2004

Item 29, Report No. 87, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on December 6, 2004.

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COMMUNITIES IN BLOOM

The Committee of the Whole recommends:

- 1) That the recommendation contained in the following report of the Chair of the Communities in Bloom Beautification Committee, dated November 29, 2004, be approved:
- 2) That Regional Councillor Mario Ferri be appointed as Chair;
- 3) That Regional Councillor Joyce Frustaglio be appointed as Vice-Chair; and
- 4) That 3 additional Vice-Chairs be appointed from residents at large in the following areas: West Vaughan, East Vaughan and North Vaughan.

Recommendation

The Chair of the Communities in Bloom Beautification Committee, in consultation with the Commissioner of Community Services, recommends:

1. That Council approve the City of Vaughan registering as a participant in the 2005 International Edition of Communities in Bloom; and,
2. That Council, in light of this being an international competition, request full participation all City of Vaughan Departments to support the 2005 International Communities in Bloom program; and,
3. That Council direct staff to explore the potential for competing in the Communities in Bloom Winter Lights program; and,
4. That Council direct staff to explore the potential for hosting the 2009 Communities in Bloom National Conference as it would promote tourism, economic development, community pride and beautification, and international recognition; and,
5. That all Members of Vaughan Council be appointed to the Communities in Bloom Beautification Committee for 2005; and,
6. That Council appoint a Communities in Bloom Beautification Committee Chairperson from City of Vaughan Council; and
7. That an additional \$25,000.00 be included in the Operating Budget in order to facilitate the 2005 International Communities in Bloom program and that this be referred to the Budget Committee for consideration.

Purpose

To obtain Council approval to register as a participant in the 2005 International Edition of Communities in Bloom, and to secure an additional \$25,000.00 in funding in order to facilitate the 2005 International Communities in Bloom program.

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Background - Analysis and Options

What is Communities in Bloom?

"People, Plants and Pride – Growing Together": Communities in Bloom is a non-profit organization committed to fostering civic pride, environmental responsibility and beautification through community participation and the challenge of friendly competition.

National beautification programs have flourished in Europe, including England, France and Ireland for decades, and were the inspiration for Communities in Bloom. It began in 1995 with 29 Canadian communities and has grown to more than 100 national and hundreds of municipalities registered in the provincial editions.

Communities in Bloom promotes involvement and action by citizens of all ages, the municipal government, local organizations and businesses. The program strives to improve the tidiness, appearance and visual appeal of Canada's neighbourhoods, parks, open spaces and streets through the imaginative use of flowers, plants and trees. A focus on environmental awareness and preservation of heritage and culture is also an integral part of its success resulting in an improved quality of life.

"More than a Beauty Contest": Expert, specially trained volunteer judges travel across Canada during the summer to evaluate municipalities on the following eight key criteria:

- floral displays;
- turf and groundcover areas;
- landscaped areas;
- heritage preservation;
- tidiness effort;
- environmental awareness;
- urban forestry; and
- community involvement.

What Are the Benefits of Communities in Bloom?

Since 1995 both expected and unexpected benefits have been realized by communities participating in the program. These benefits may include:

- Increase in civic pride and community involvement;
- Participation from all ages and walks of life;
- Citizens, groups, organizations, businesses and municipal government all mobilized and working together towards a common goal;
- Year 'round project, not just one event;
- Tangible and appealing results;
- Information and cultural exchanges within the community and with neighbouring national and international communities;
- Decreased vandalism;
- Valuable information and feedback from the judges;
- Economic development;
- Increased property values;
- Municipal marketing and promotional potential;
- Increased tourism;
- Increased impact on the hospitality industry;
- Increased impact on the retail industry.

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City of Vaughan's Successes in Communities in Bloom

The City of Vaughan began its involvement with the Communities in Bloom program in 2002 has participated annually since that time. Our successes have been remarkable due in large part to community involvement/participation, City of Vaughan staff dedication, financial support from Vaughan's business community and the efforts of the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce. Our successes include:

2002 Ontario Provincial Edition - In the 2002 Ontario Provincial Edition, the City of Vaughan achieved a *four blooms* rating in the first year of participation.

2003 Ontario Provincial Edition - By building upon our accomplishments and expanding the program, the City scored a *five bloom* rating and won the *2003 Ontario Provincial Edition*. In addition, *special mention* was received in the *Tidiness Effort* category. The City of Vaughan, as winner of this category in its population size, was invited to participate in the 2004 Canadian National Edition.

2004 Canadian National Edition - The City of Vaughan continued to improve and enhance upon this successful program and attained a *five blooms* rating and won the *2004 Canadian National Edition* for its *population* category. In addition, *special mention* was received for our *Woodlot Protection and Tree Planting*. Other cities that participated in the friendly competition included Brampton, Saskatoon and Chatham-Kent. This great achievement is only part of the successes associated with the Communities in Bloom program.

2005 International Edition - Following its exceptional achievement in 2004, the City of Vaughan has been invited to participate in the *International Edition of Communities in Bloom* in 2005. Participation in this edition will provide a fantastic opportunity for the City of Vaughan to showcase our civic pride, community involvement and floral displays on an international stage. (refer to Attachment 'A').

Next Steps - 2005 International Edition

Financial Commitment

In order to participate and achieve success at the international level, an additional \$25,000.00 funding is required to facilitate the 2005 International Communities in Bloom program. A financial commitment by the City of Vaughan will improve the frequency and measure of private sponsorship and send a strong message to community members that Vaughan is committed to be "A Great Place to Grow".

Sponsorship Program

In 2004, a number of local businesses provided both financial and in-kind sponsorship for the Communities in Bloom program. The Community Services Department raised over \$30,000 in financial sponsorships and the Economic/Technology Development Department was instrumental in identifying in-kind services from restaurants, hotel, media and local businesses. A broadened sponsorship initiative may be an effective way of reducing the financial impacts of the City of Vaughan. The potential for sponsorship, in-kind services and media coverage far exceeds that which was attained in the 2004 Canadian National Edition of Communities in Bloom.

In order to fully realize the full potential for sponsorship and maximize potential costs recoveries, it is imperative that the City of Vaughan through the Economic/Technology Development Department becomes fully engaged with the sponsorship program. In addition, their expertise is

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critical for preparing media releases and speaking notes, developing promotional, assisting with advertising campaigns, distribution of Community in Bloom literature throughout the business community.

Beautification Committee

An integral component to the success and viability of the Communities in Bloom program is community involvement. The Communities in Bloom Beautification Committee is responsible for the development of local initiatives, promotion of the program, building community awareness and garnering participation. In 2004, the Beautification Committee consisted of all members of Council including an elected chair, and members of the Community including representatives from the local horticultural societies, local businesses and service and sports clubs. It is anticipated that the 2005 Beautification Committee will be enhanced through the creation of a number of working groups that will be charged with promoting community awareness and involvement of this program. These working groups may consist of the following:

- Events Planning Working Group
- Community Awards Program Working Group
- School / Education Working Group
- Community Involvement Working Group
- Businesses / Business Improvement Areas (BIA's) Working Group
- Seniors Working Group
- Youth Working Group
- Media Working Group

These working groups will take an active role in showcasing the City of Vaughan and coordinating many of the events during the Communities in Bloom Judges tour.

Future Communities in Bloom Initiatives

Winter Lights Initiative

Increasing tourism and economic development within the City of Vaughan is one of the "spin-off" benefits of the City's participation in Communities in Bloom. The Winter Lights Celebration is an extension of Communities in Bloom through the winter season and offers similar benefits. It is a national competition encouraging municipalities, large and small throughout Canada, to celebrate light with decorative, cultural and spiritual programs, with the objective of creating attractions for tourism and economic development from within Canada and abroad.

Hosting National Communities in Bloom Conference 2009

Another initiative that may also benefit the City of Vaughan is hosting the National Communities in Bloom Conference in 2009. Hosting this event will bring over one thousand visitors to the City of Vaughan. This influx of tourists may in turn create profitable opportunities for local businesses as well as showcase Vaughan to national and international communities. The cost and benefits of participating in such activities should be explored.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

Participation in the 2005 International Edition of Communities in Bloom will promote civic pride, and assist in developing a safe, livable and sustainable environment for the residents of the City of Vaughan.

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This report recommends a change from the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have not been allocated.

Conclusion

As part of the Council's continuing support of the Communities in Bloom program, staff seeks to obtain Council approval to register as a participant in the 2005 International Edition of Communities in Bloom, and approval of an additional \$25,000.00 funding in order to facilitate this initiative.

Attachments

Appendix 'A' – Invitation to Participate in the 2005 International Communities in Bloom Program

Report prepared by:

Marlon Kallideen, Commissioner of Community Services, Ext. 6126
Paul Gardner, Manager of Parks Development, Ext. 3209
Marjie Fraser, Director of Parks Operations and Forestry, Ext. 6137
Lynne Bonneville, Administrative Manager, Ext. 8296
Tom Sudak, Manager of Parks Services, Ext. 6311

(A copy of the attachments referred to in the foregoing have been forwarded to each Member of Council and a copy thereof is also on file in the office of the City Clerk.)