

2017 Annual Report to Council Environmental Advisory Committee

RECOMMENDATION

That the Environmental Advisory Committee's 2017 Annual Report be accepted as information and that the Environmental Advisory Committee continue to operate as presently constituted through 2018.

MEMBERSHIP

Citizen Members - January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017

Tanya Doran (Chair)	Citizen-at-large	Last of two-year term
Ben Thronson (Vice Chair)	Citizen-at-large	First of two-year term
Ken Crutchfield	Citizen-at-large	Last of two-year term
Victoria Neary	Citizen-at-large	Last of two-year term
Bill Marsh	Citizen-at-large	Last of two-year term
Sarah Pearson	Citizen-at-large	First of two-year term
Joel Gervais	Citizen-at-large	First of two-year term
Bob Lane	Citizen-at-large	Resigned (Jan-Feb)

Council Representation

In October 2016, Council reappointed Councillor Russell as the primary and Councillor Heron as the alternate representatives for the Environmental Advisory Committee.

In October 2017, Council appointed Councillor Hansen as the primary and Councillor Watkins as the alternate representatives for the Environmental Advisory Committee.

The EAC appreciates when a Council representative can be made available for the scheduled committee meetings. The importance of this liaison has proven beneficial for this committee to bring environmental issues to Council.

City Administration Representation

Committee assistance was provided by Environment department staff:

Meghan Myers, Environmental Coordinator – Community Strategy and Engagement
Christian Benson, Manager, Environment
Leah Kongsrude, Director, Environment

OVERVIEW

The Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) was established through Bylaw 29/2005 to advise Council on issues related to the environment. The purpose of the Committee is to provide advice to Council with respect to environmental policies, plans and initiatives, especially where a public perspective is desirable. The original Bylaw was repealed and replaced with an updated Bylaw (35/2015) in November 2015.

Direction and assistance to the EAC were obtained through the City's Environment department.

On January 9, 2017 Council provided the EAC with the following annual priorities:

-) Recommend the 2017 Environmental Initiatives Grant Program Recipients
-) Update the Implementation Plan for the Local Action Plan for Energy Conservation and Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions
-) Update targets for the Environmental Master Plan including community GHG emissions, tree canopy cover, river water quality index, and public participation targets
-) City-owned Contaminated Sites Policy update
-) Provide advice on Environmental policies within the Municipal Development Plan (if funded)

ACTIVITIES

The Environmental Advisory Committee met 9 times during 2017, meeting monthly except in July, August and December.

Advice and Input – Progress Report

Environmental Initiatives Grant Program Recommendations

The EAC continued with its other major function, namely reviewing applications submitted under the City's Environmental Initiatives Grant Program (EIGP) and providing funding recommendations to Council. A one-time submission of applications was received on October 5, 2017 for the EIGP in accordance with existing Council Policy C-EUS-02. The EAC reviewed 11 applications and 10 applications were recommended for funding.

Relevant Motion from October 26, 2017 EAC meeting:

Moved by K. Crutchfield

That the Environmental Advisory Committee recommend to Council that the following Environmental Initiatives Grant Program applications be approved:

Applicant (alphabetical)	Project Description	Proposed Grant
Bellerose Composite High School Sustainability Initiative	Using a sub-metre and Kill-A-Watt meters the school's Sustainably Club will pilot Energy Literacy Awareness Campaign with students.	\$2,913.90
Ecole Father Jan Elementary School Council (Friends of Father Jan Society)	Creation of an outdoor classroom for student learning. Classroom to include seating, raised garden beds, native trees and shrubs, rain barrels, compost bin, student murals and bird houses.	\$4,500.00
Keenooshayo Elementary School	Grade one students will have the opportunity to explore the science curriculum through gardening with a raised garden table.	\$632.10
Robert Rundle Elementary School	To fund activities and programs of the newly formed school environment club including composting, garden beds, and air quality monitoring.	\$1,700.00
St. Albert Daycare Society	To expand the daycare's outdoor garden program by improving existing gardens and constructing a greenhouse. Project includes partnerships with the Food Bank and other community stakeholders.	\$1,000.00
St. Albert Nature School	Funds will be used to help kick start a community environmental education program for preschool aged children.	\$3,612.00
St. Albert Urban Agriculture	Continuing with the success of the past 2 years, funds will be used to add seating, pathways, children's area, and herb spiral. In addition, SAUA applied for funding through another organization to increase their ability to host schools.	\$1,531.18
Tool Library of St. Albert	Funds will be used to initiate a tool sharing library including inventory, Fix It Café (in partnership with Library) and promotions.	\$5,000.00
Trout Unlimited	Building on the success of the 2016/2017 program in St. Albert, funding is required to assist groups with self-delivery of the program and further establish the program in St. Albert.	\$5,000.00
Venture into Nature	Targeted to families, the project will plan and implement nature walks in St. Albert's natural areas.	\$800.00
Total		\$26,689.18

CARRIED

As part of the overall funding recommendations EAC provided the following statement to be included in the Agenda Report (AR) to City Council:

EAC recognizes the importance of Trout Unlimited Yellow Fish Road program to stormwater education in St. Albert and recommends that City Council considers allocating sustainable funding outside the Environmental Initiatives Grant Program.

The EAC also recognizes, that although the impact may not be quantifiable, the program protects the Sturgeon River and the probability of substances getting released into surrounding water bodies. In the last two years, EIGP funding has been allocated to this work.

On November 27, 2017 Council accepted and approved the EAC recommendations.

Update Implementation Plan for the Local Action Plan for Energy Conservation and Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The update of the Implementation Plan for the Local Action Plan for Energy Conservation and Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions was delayed and will be included in the 2018 EAC Work Plan.

Update Targets for Environmental Master Plan including:

A) Community Greenhouse Gas Emissions

A reassessment of community greenhouse gas emissions using updated emission factors indicated that we had not meet this target. Therefore an update on the target was not necessary at this time.

B) Tree Canopy Cover Target

At the January 26, EAC meeting, Louise Stewart, Operations Manager, Parks and Open Spaces provided an overview of the Urban Forest Management Plan and tree canopy target.

The EAC provided written advice to Council on the Tree Canopy Cover Target that indicated:

1. Council should adopt an overall tree canopy target of 25% for St. Albert.
2. Council should seek to educate residents on best management of trees on private property.

Relevant motion from February 23, 2017:

Moved by B. Thronson

That EAC ratify Tree Canopy Target advice and pass along to City Council.

CARRIED

The Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) and Tree Canopy Target was presented to City Council on March 20, 2017 and the final UFMP presented and approved on June 26, 2017.

Within the Plan Council approved a Tree Canopy Cover Target of 20% with a review of this number after the formal tree inventory was completed in 2018/2019.

C) River Water Quality Index

At the March 23, 2017 EAC meeting, Leah Kongsrude, Director, Environment, provided an update on the river water quality index. In 2016, Environment staff requested additional parameters to be collected by the consultant for the Sturgeon River water quality sampling to calculate the index. The consultant reported that the lab who analyzes the samples did not assess four of the parameters required to calculate the updated river water quality index therefore the index could not be determined for 2016. The appropriate parameters would be sampled in 2017 and the river water quality index would be presented to EAC in 2018.

D) Public Participation Target

At the April 27, 2017 EAC meeting, it was determined a subcommittee would meet during the summer to review this target. At the September 28, 2017 EAC meeting, the Committee provided draft advice based on the discussion.

The EAC recommends Administration begin capturing additional community environmental stewardship as information in the 2017 and 2018 editions of the Report on the Environment and formally update the engagement target to reflect community involvement during the Environmental Master Plan review in 2019.

Relevant motion from October 26, 2017:

Moved by B Thronson

That public participation target Council advice be approved as amended.

CARRIED

City-Owned Contaminated Sites Policy Update

At the January 26, 2017 EAC meeting, Christian Benson, Manager, Environment, provided an overview of the policy update. The original policy was exclusive to Public Works facilities and was expanded to include all City-Owned properties.

The EAC advice indicated that the proposed policy addresses the City of St. Albert's (City) present and future commitment to mitigating the environmental risks and financial liabilities related to all City owned sites and contaminated sites according to relevant legislation, regulations and standards.

Relevant motion from February 23, 2017:

Moved by B. Marsh

That the EAC approved advice on the City-Owned Contaminated Sites Policy as presented.

CARRIED

On March 26, 2017, City Council approved the amended policy (C-IS-06 Environmental Management of Contaminated Sites).

Urban Beekeeping

At the May 25, 2017 EAC meeting, Tracy Tsui, Planner and Brooke Hoeven, Planning Research Assistant presented the proposed Urban Beekeeping Bylaw, including all research and comparable bylaws within the Capital Region.

The Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) supported the establishment of a bylaw to permit and regulate urban beekeeping in St. Albert.

Relevant motion from June 22, 2017:

Moved by J. Gervais

Motion to approve the amended Urban Beekeeping advice to Council.

CARRIED

On September 11, 2017, City Council passed the Urban Beekeeping Bylaw.

Environmental Leadership Recognition Options

At the September 28, 2017 EAC meeting, the Committee was provided information on examples of other municipal environmental leadership recognition programs and the City's existing Community Recognition Policy. The City's existing program includes a citizenship category with recognition criteria for environmental services.

EAC recommended the existing Community Recognition Policy be updated with a category for environmental stewardship and that the EAC be delegated the responsibility for recommending any residents or groups nominated under this category.

Relevant motion from November 23, 2017:

Moved by K. Crutchfield

That the Environmental Leadership Recognition Program advice to City Council be approved as amended.

CARRIED

EAC Input Provided to Administration –

Water Conservation Bylaw education and awareness campaign

February 23, 2017 – EAC reviewed the Water Conservation Bylaw awareness campaign strategy and provided Administration with suggestions for improvements (for example, more inserts or waste truck ads versus bus ads, ideas for promotional items, and campaign language).

Waste diversion targets and public education and awareness campaign updates

April 27, 2017 – Olivia Kwok, Supervisor, Waste and Diversion Programs, provided an overview of the current waste and diversion programs and the 2017 education initiatives. O. Kwok returned to EAC on November 23, 2017 meeting and presented on the results of education initiatives including results of the Curbside Waste Education Program.

Promotion of the Environmental Initiatives Grant Program

April 27, 2017 – An update and overview of the 2017 Environmental Initiatives Grant Program promotions was provided to EAC by Administration. Key suggestions from EAC included contacting teachers earlier and emailing past grant recipients. The long-term vision of the EAC is that it will be mandatory for applicants to attend a grant information session prior to applying.

Environmental Initiatives Grant Program 10 Year Anniversary

May 25, 2017 – An overview of a 10-year anniversary celebration of the Environmental Initiatives Grant Program was provided by Administration. EAC provided suggestions to promote future projects and possibly a “what did we learn” as part of the celebration.

Stormwater Rates Model

May 25, 2017 – Stephen Graham, Senior Business Analyst, had attended EAC meetings several times in 2016 and provided an update to the project including the use of impermeability criteria for setting the rates and implementation timelines.

Red Willow Park West Master Plan Update

September 28, 2017 – Margo Brenneis, Parks Project Specialist, provided a brief overview of Red Willow Park and the Red Willow Park West Master Plan update project. EAC requested to be involved in the public engagement phase of the project when the concept plans have been developed (Feb-June 2018).

Contaminated Sites Assessment Update

September 28, 2017 – L. Kongsrude, Director, Environment provided an update on the contaminated sites assessment of three city-owned properties: Jack Kraft Public Works facility, Riel Drive Public Works Satellite Yard, and the temporary Snow Storage Site on Villeneuve Drive. More detailed information will be provided to EAC following a Council update in January.

Environmental Initiatives Grant Extension Requests

As per the Environmental Initiative Grant policy, Environmental Initiative Grants are required to be used within one year of being awarded unless an extension is approved by the Environmental Advisory Committee. Administration received three requests for grant extensions and forwarded them to EAC for their recommendation.

Relevant motion from March 23, 2017:

Moved by V. Neary

That the St. Albert Bike Association be granted a reporting extension for the bicycle repair station project to November 28, 2017.

CARRIED

Relevant motion from October 26, 2017:

Moved by S. Pearson

That the Grey Nuns White Spruce Park Working Group Grant extension request be approved.

CARRIED

Moved by B. Thronson

That the Grandin Community Garden grant extension request be approved.

CARRIED

Updates Provided to EAC

Zero Waste Process Update

March 23, 2017 – Kevin Scoble, City Manager introduced the zero-waste process based on his experience in Wood Buffalo. This topic was discussed with City Council at the February 27 meeting in which Council approved a motion for a feasibility study of zero-waste process in St. Albert and funding to complete a cost-benefit analysis.

St. Albert Air Quality Data from Alberta Environment and Parks

March 23, 2017 – The air quality monitoring station at Salisbury started collecting data in April 2016. The initial nine months of data was reviewed with EAC. Baseline data for at least a full year is required to accurately show the air quality in St. Albert.

Environmental Master Plan Annual Report

March 23, 2017 - Administration provided an water update on the 2016 Annual Report on the Environment. A six-page newspaper insert was included in the St. Albert Gazette Saturday, April 22, 2017 edition as well as posted to the City website.

Sturgeon River Watershed Alliance - Water quality and quantity studies

April 27, 2017 – EAC received information on riparian and natural area assessments being conducted in the watershed including depth readings for Big Lake and assessment of the river crossings.

Heritage Lakes Storm System Design Update

May 25, 2017 – Kevin Cole, Director, Utilities, updated EAC on the progress of the Heritage Lakes Storm System rehabilitation project. This project is addressing a manmade creek system that uses stormwater and groundwater to create an aesthetic feature for the neighborhood. The City is proposing to eliminate the use of groundwater and recirculate the stormwater to maintain the feature. An open house in May produced feedback from residents that lead to a redesign of one of the phases of construction. EAC was asked to review a new design and provide comments.

3-Year Work Plan

Council approved EAC's 3-Year Work Plan on January 9, 2017 and the following 2018 priorities are based on this work plan.

2018 Priority Recommendations

These are major environmental initiatives that are being developed in 2018 that require in depth formal involvement from EAC and written advice to Council.

1. Recommend 2018 Environmental Initiative Grant Program Recipients
2. Provide advice on the review of the Idle-Free Bylaw and Residential Solid Waste Management Bylaw
3. Provide advice on the update of the Implementation Plan for the Local Action Plan for Energy Conservation and Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Other Input

These environmental initiatives are ongoing or in early stages of development and City administration would benefit from discussion and input from EAC but no formal written advice to Council is required:

Provide input to Administration:

-) 2018 Community Environmental Survey (public consultation for the update of the EMP)
-) Red Willow Park West Master Plan Update
-) Review of Road Sand Recovery target
-) Parks and Fire Bylaw
-) School curriculum support materials related to the Sturgeon River
-) Environmental Leadership Recognition

Receive information:

-) St. Albert Air quality data summary or analysis from Alberta Environment and Parks
-) Capital Region Particulate Matter Response Plan
-) Stormwater Rates Model

-) Transportation Master Plan initiatives related to Environmental Master Plan goals
-) Utilities Master Plan initiatives related to Environmental Master Plan goals
-) Natural Areas Conservation and Management Plan implementation update
-) Integrated Pest Management Plan update
-) City Owned Contaminated Sites update
-) Sturgeon River Watershed Alliance studies updates
-) Water Conservation Bylaw updates
-) Urban Forest Management Plan – tree inventory

EAC ENDORSEMENT OF CITY PROGRAMS

The Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) would like to acknowledge the continued support and leadership of St. Albert Council for establishing an EAC to provide advice to Council and Administration on environmental matters. The EAC supports innovative programs and encourages citizen participation in environmental responsibility as an extension of the Environmental Master Plan.

The Environmental Advisory Committee acknowledges the dedication and competency of the City of St. Albert's Environment staff throughout 2017 (M. Myers, C. Benson, and L. Kongsrude) as well as their ongoing support towards the Committee. It is through the efforts of the Environment department, that important sustainability-focused programs are developed and put into practice in the community.

Appendix I – Written Advice Submitted to Council Urban Forest Management Plan and Tree Canopy Cover Target

Recommendation

At the January 2017 meeting of the EAC, the committee received a presentation from City staff on the Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP).

In the opinion of the EAC, urban forests are passive infrastructure assets which reduce municipal costs by helping with stormwater management, water conservation, air quality management and carbon capture and storage. Urban forests contribute to improving the health of the environment while also improving the visual appeal of the community.

The EAC feels that the presented UFMP is progressive insofar as it addresses the need for a healthy and functioning urban forest as an integral element of city infrastructure. Additionally, the proposed UFMP will help the city to achieve policy aims stated in St. Albert's Environmental Master Plan. Finally, the UFMP will contribute to reinforcing St. Albert's identity as a botanic city.

At this time, the EAC has been asked to provide advice to Council on a target for overall tree canopy coverage in St. Albert. The EAC feels that St. Albert's tree canopy target should be both aspirational and attainable. The target should be aspirational in the sense that it encourages tree-planting efforts beyond the management of trees that have already been planted. At the same time, it should be an attainable target that is realistic given St. Albert's available resources. As such, the EAC offers the following advice:

3. Council should adopt an overall tree canopy target of 25% for St. Albert.

Based on the information presented to the EAC, St. Albert will attain a coverage level of 20% by following the City's current tree planting and maintenance program, especially given that already-planted trees in newer areas of St. Albert have yet to reach maturity. The EAC believes that a target of 25% is a realistic and feasible goal which can be achieved with a slightly more ambitious planting program.

4. Council should seek to educate residents on best management of trees on private property.

In order to attain a tree canopy target of 25% and maintain this coverage level over time, Council should provide for public education on the subject of tree management and replacement on private property. The EAC feels that public education regarding optimal strategies for tree replacement will be especially important in coming years as trees in older neighbourhoods die or are cut down for other reasons. The EAC also believes that the City's tax assessment base will be enhanced by ensuring that St. Albert's tree canopy cover on private land remains robust.

Appendix II – Written Advice Submitted to Council Public Participation Target

Background

The Environmental Master Plan (2014) goal (no. 9) to foster community environmental stewardship targets to grow participation in the Clean and Green RiverFest, Arbor Day and Naturalization projects to 1000 participants or more by 2020. In 2015, the target was met with 1,375 participants (reported in the annual Report on the Environment). The review of the target was approved by City Council as a priority for the Environmental Advisory Committee 2017 work plan.

Recommendation

The current Public Engagement target in the Environmental Master Plan reflects metrics from City run events that are reportable and reliable; however, the goal does not capture other community stewardship efforts. The EAC recommends Administration begin capturing additional community environmental stewardship as information in the 2017 and 2018 editions of the Report on the Environment and formally update the engagement target to reflect community involvement during the Environmental Master Plan review in 2019.

The Environmental Advisory Committee recommends including information from but not limited to community projects such as: St. Albert Botanic Park participation, Partners in Parks, St. Albert Food Forest and other community lead initiatives and partnerships that involve direct resident environment stewardship.

Appendix III – Written Advice Submitted to Council Contaminated Sites Management

Recommendation

The Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) has reviewed the proposed changes to the 'Public Works Site Management' City Council Policy which is renamed the 'Contaminated Sites Management' City Council Policy, C-IS-06.

The EAC agrees that the proposed policy addresses the City of St. Albert's (City) present and future commitment to mitigating the environmental risks and financial liabilities related to all City owned sites and contaminated sites according to relevant legislation, regulations and standards. The EAC supports industry best practices and the City's registered Environmental Management System will be adhered to for the acquisition, development, operations, disposal and management of City owned sites to prevent or reduce contamination related environmental impacts.

The proposed policy ensures the land development review process of all considered land includes appropriate Environmental Site Assessments and if required, remediation. Implementing this will facilitate efficient and effective environmentally responsible.

The EAC recommends Council adoption of the changes to this policy as presented.

Appendix IV – Written Advice Submitted to Council Urban Beekeeping Bylaw

Recommendation:

The Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) supports the establishment of a bylaw to permit and regulate urban beekeeping in St. Albert. As pollinators, bees play an integral role in plant pollination processes and survival. Plants are an integral component of the biological diversity of our living environment. The health and vigor of the urban environmental landscape that is St. Albert is reliant on plants for the role they play in contributing to community living. Urban bee keeping augments the natural bee community associated with these healthy urban environments. To that end, the EAC supports legislative action enabling members of the public, meeting defined parameters, to keep bees in St. Albert.

Provisions exist under the Municipal Government Act for Council to enact a bylaw encompassing urban beekeeping. Some preliminary work engaging St. Albert residents has revealed an expression of interest to pursue and support urban bee keeping. Provided appropriate precautions are taken to safeguard public safety and Alberta's apiculture industry, the EAC is pleased to see proactive legislation coming forward on this matter. While the EAC is aware that the final bylaw must comply with the provincial legislation, including the Bee Act, the Municipal Government Act, and other legislation as relevant, the EAC encourages Council to ensure that the final bylaw is minimally burdensome so as not to unduly discourage interested residents.

In conclusion, the EAC is hopeful that the introduction and ensuing debate of this proposed bylaw will spark a greater interest in urban beekeeping amongst the citizens of St. Albert. Additionally, should this bylaw be passed, the EAC encourages Council to support the new bylaw with a public awareness campaign to further encourage residents to take up apiculture.

Appendix V – Written Advice Submitted to Council Environmental Leadership Recognition Program

The Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) supports amendment of the City Council Policy concerning Community Recognition Program (C-CS-03). The proposed amendment would expand the policy to include Environment as a category. The category would provide an opportunity for Council to recognized person(s)-organizations-businesses who have benefited St. Albert for their work related to environment matters.

The City of St. Albert has provided leadership within the community and the region for its work on the environment. Most recently it has advanced work on improving the quality of water being discharged within its borders to the Sturgeon River. Further, St. Albert engaged surrounding communities in development of collaborative efforts that led to the formation of the Sturgeon River Watershed Alliance. Additional efforts have been applied to involve the community in environmental stewardship through community events and incentivizing community/citizen initiatives through the annual Environmental Grants Program. A variety of individuals, schools and independent groups (Big Lake Environmental Support Society, St. Albert Fish and Game Association, Friends of St. Albert Botanic Park etc.) have provided significant contributions to safeguard the air, land and water environments of St. Albert.

The present Community Recognition Program endeavors to raise pride within the community by recognizing and celebrating achievements by individuals, organizations and businesses in various categories including environmental service recognition in the Citizenship category. The time has come to include an “environment” category. The proposed environment category would acknowledge achievements in advancing natural and built environment

Community and Protective Services would continue to promote the Community Recognition Program and invite nominations annually. Nominations would be submitted to Community and Protective Services and then passed to the Environmental Advisory Committee who would adjudicate and make recommendations to Council on deserving nominees. A proposed standard to support nomination for recognition in the environment category would include:

-) resident and/or group/business situated in St. Albert
-) achievement would be associated with natural and built environment.
-) achievement is recognized as a single event and/or a culmination of accomplishments over the course of time that has markedly benefited the St. Albert community.

In conclusion, the EAC is hopeful that the introduction and ensuing debate of this proposed amendment will stimulate greater community interest in environmental stewardship. Should this amendment be passed, the EAC encourages Council to support the new recognition with a public awareness campaign to further encourage residents to step forward and nominate resident(s)-groups-schools-businesses providing strong environmental stewardship and benefits to the community.