

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 8, 2014

Item 1, Report No. 5, of the Finance, Administration and Audit Committee, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on April 8, 2014.

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TEDX CONFERENCE – CODE FOR AMERICA OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

The Finance, Administration and Audit Committee recommends approval of the recommendation contained in the following report of the Commissioner of Strategic & Corporate Services and the Chief Information Officer (CIO), dated March 31, 2014:

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Strategic & Corporate Services and the Chief Information Officer (CIO), recommend:

1. That this report be received.

Contribution to Sustainability

n/a

Economic Impact

There is no economic impact resulting from the recommendation contained in this report.

Communications Plan

n/a

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Finance, Administration and Audit Committee related to the Code for America organization, its programs, and potential benefits of such programs to Vaughan. This information was requested at the Committee meeting held on September 23, 2013.

Background – Analysis and Options

Code for America Promotes Innovation and Collaboration

Code for America is an organization based out of the United States of America. The organization's vision statement, as posted on their website is "Code for America envisions a government that works by the people, for the people, in the 21st century". Code for America advances its vision through the following primary programs:

- **Fellowship** – through this program, web developers, designers, and entrepreneurs are recruited for a period of one year and then made available to work with civic organizations to help them better leverage technology for delivery of public services;
- **Accelerator** – through this program, "civic startups" are promoted by encouraging private sector partners to invest time and resources into public organizations, raise national awareness of such partnerships and offer business training and advice;
- **Brigade** – through this program, Code for America facilitates local and national discussion groups (chapters) for civic technologists across United States so that they can share information on remixing and reusing of applications and to work together on solving local problems.

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TEDX Conference Prompted a Reflection on Current Practices

On September 20, 2013, Vaughan hosted a TEDX Conference event. At this event, a presentation by Code of America representative was made to the conference attendees. The presentation referenced a number of cases where American civic organizations are taking advantage of opportunities offered through Code for America's programs to leverage and advance the use of technology for delivery of public services. At its meeting on September 23, 2013, the Finance, Administration and Audit Committee requested that staff consider opportunities presented by Code for America programs and to provide additional information to the Committee.

The City's Information and Technology Management department staff conducted research and analysis of the Code for America's Fellowship, Accelerator and Brigade programs by reviewing program descriptions and material provided by participating civic organizations through case studies and testimonials. Based on the research conducted, the intent and outcome of Code for America programs was clearly understood and compared to Vaughan's current technology development practices. The research concludes that Vaughan has been proactive and innovative in implementing practices that align with the guiding principles of Code for America programs, and that the potential benefits are already being realized.

Code for America Principles Mirror Vaughan Technology Practices

Vaughan implemented technology development and deployment practices and is participating in a number of local programs that drive at the same core principles and having the same opportunities for benefits as Code for America. Vaughan has clearly demonstrated leadership and innovation amongst its peer civic organizations, as implementation and use of some of these practices goes as far back as 1998. Code for America is a relatively recent initiative that promotes ideology and principles which have already been used by Vaughan for some time. The following are some examples of Vaughan's technology development and deployment practices and benefits being realized through local talent and resources:

- **Seneca @ York Co-op Program** – through this program, Vaughan benefits from access to software developers who are enrolled in the Seneca College or York University computer sciences program and who are enrolled in the Seneca @ York Co-op Program. Only top academic students are eligible to participate in the program. As part of the Co-op program, the students are taught specific skills in the development and application of leading-edge technologies that can be given practical application in their work terms, making them an excellent year-round source of skilled, enthusiastic, flexible and productive employees who possess good communication skills, a positive attitude, and a desire to learn and contribute to the host organization's business objectives. There are 2 to 3 co-op students being employed in the ITM department at any given time. Leveraging this local, highly creative and cost-effective resource, Vaughan developed and deployed a number of innovative technology solutions, including:
 1. Vaughan CTS GeoViewer – an application used by various departments to track citizens' service concerns. The CTS GeoViewer enables quick viewing of active cases, their geographic distribution across the City and their status in respect to established service delivery standards;
 2. Vaughan Online (Agendas, Minutes and Extracts) – this is one of the most frequently visited sections of the Vaughan Online website and was custom developed to meet City Clerk's Office requirements;
 3. Overnight Visitors Parking Permits Application – this application was developed in less than 3 months to address an urgent citizens' service requirement.

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- **Ontario Colleges and Universities Internship Programs** – through these programs, Vaughan benefits from access to creative thinkers from various industries and professional background. Technologists, business leaders, senior public administrators who undertake continuing education and participate in the internship programs are asked to work on assignments for Vaughan. These assignments are focused on development of leading practices, policies, standards and procedures for the development, deployment and use of technology in Vaughan at no cost to the municipality. Over the years, a number of such engagements resulted in accomplishments such as:
 1. Project Management Office – York University business administration program interns participated in the development and implementation of Project Management best practices for delivery of business solutions. The use of structured project management methodology enables Vaughan to successfully complete large technology projects. The same methodology was also used in the successful execution and delivery of non-technology projects, such as 2009 Communities in Bloom Conference (hosted by Vaughan) and the 2010 Municipal Election;
 2. Field Staff Technology Enablement – currently, Vaughan is leveraging expertise of IVEY School of Business Executive Masters of Business Administration program participants to develop a strategy for technology-enabling field and mobile workers. Participating with Vaughan in this initiative are some of the top business leaders from the private sector, including Vice President of Business Development from one of the top 5 Canadian banks, President of an Ontario based high-tech corporation, Senior Executive of a national transportation company and an owner and operator of a multi-location animal services clinic.
- **Private-Public-Partnerships (PPP)** – this partnership model is practiced by Vaughan when possible. Vaughan is recognized by peer municipalities and local IT industry professionals as an “early adopter” of technology. Having such reputation, attracts ideas and proposals from various partners to prototype, develop and deploy innovative solutions to business and citizen service needs. The following are some examples of past initiatives where Vaughan demonstrated leadership in leveraging Private-Public-Partnerships to achieve cost savings and enhance service excellence:
 1. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Application – by being one of the first municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) to adopt an ERP solution, Vaughan benefited from significant discounts on the initial capital investment and ongoing maintenance costs offered by the software vendor;
 2. Fiber-Optic Network – by being the first municipality in York Region to architect and deploy a fiber-optic data network, Vaughan benefited from the vendor's deeply discounted communications costs;
 3. BlackBerry Deployment – Vaughan was one of the first municipalities in Ontario to deploy BlackBerry devices to enhance communications and increase staff productivity. As such, Vaughan was approached by private sector organizations to prototype and deploy a number of software applications to enhance productivity and service delivery. One of these applications includes geo-based citizens' concerns tracking for which Vaughan received an innovation award from RIM Canada;
 4. SharePoint Deployment – while many organizations are starting to consider SharePoint technology as a foundation for delivery of collaboration solutions, Vaughan was the first municipality in Ontario to deploy SharePoint in partnership with the vendor. As an “early adopter”, Vaughan benefited in the form of software license discounts and free services, such as planning, design, implementation, training and support from the vendor;

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5. Development Tracking Application (DTA) – Vaughan was the first in Ontario to implement DTA which is a technology tool used by the City's planning department to track development applications. This initiative involved cost sharing between Vaughan and the vendor for the development of the solution. The benefit of this partnership to Vaughan is in the form of reduced solution development costs and royalties collected from deployment of DTA in other municipalities.
- **YorkInfo Commons Data Exchange** – through partnership in this program, Vaughan benefits from access to a wealth of data resources being individually and collectively developed or acquired and managed by neighbouring municipalities, school boards, conservation authorities and the Region. Some examples of benefits and accomplishments include:
 1. Joint purchases of aerial imagery data, resulting in reduced costs for participating members;
 2. Joint purchases of Teranet (land parcels information) datasets, resulting in significant costs reductions and access to bundled datasets such as easements;
 3. Collaboration on projects of mutual benefit, such as development of digital applications and plans submission processes and enabling technology.

Vaughan has been a leader in adopting innovative technology practices. The effect and benefits of such practices are maximized by tapping into local talent and resources. Code for America programs drive at the same principles as many of the local organizations. Being a good corporate citizen, Vaughan actively seeks opportunities within the local business community to expedite adoption of technology and to reduce associated costs. Such partnerships are established within the context of the City's procurement policies.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

Recommendations contained in this report contribute to the following strategic objectives:

- Ensure a High Performing Organization by taking advantage of efficiency and cost saving opportunities through collaboration with partner organizations;
- Ensure Financial Sustainability by exploring and benefiting from cost-effective technology solutions.

Regional Implications

Through partnership in the YorkInfo Commons Data Exchange, Vaughan benefits from access to a wealth of data resources being individually and collectively developed or acquired and managed by neighbouring municipalities, school boards, conservation authorities and the Region. This type of collaboration is beneficial to all partnership participants and will continue.

Conclusion

Vaughan implemented technology development and deployment practices and is participating in a number of local programs that drive at the same core principles and having the same opportunities for benefits as Code for America programs. Vaughan has clearly demonstrated leadership and innovation amongst its peer civic organizations, as implementation and use of some of these practices goes as far back as 1998. Code for America is a relatively recent initiative that promotes ideology and principles which have been used by Vaughan for some time.

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Attachments

None

Report prepared by:

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