

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 24, 2014

Item 7, Report No. 8, of the Finance, Administration and Audit Committee, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on June 24, 2014.

7 FORESTRY OPERATIONS LONG-TERM TREE REPLACEMENT STRATEGY

The Finance, Administration and Audit Committee recommends:

- 1) That the recommendation contained in the following report of the Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works, dated June 16, 2014, be approved; and
- 2) That a letter be sent from City of Vaughan Council to the Federal and Provincial Governments requesting that they establish a tree planting/replacement funding program for local municipalities and that this letter also be forwarded to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and other municipalities within the Region of York.

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works, in consultation with the Commissioner of Finance and City Treasurer, recommends:

1. That Council recognize the need for a long-term tree replanting strategy; and,
2. That the funding requirements identified within the report be considered as part of the 2015 business plan and financial planning process.

Contribution to Sustainability

The report on the impact of the ice storm on the City's urban forest canopy is intended to provide Council with estimated costs and timelines for the future replanting plan.

This report is consistent with the Green Directions Vaughan, Community Sustainability Environmental Master Plan, specifically, Goal 2, Objective 2.2: "To develop Vaughan as a City with maximum green space and an urban form that supports our expected population growth by providing strategies for achieving our urban forest targets which include; planning, maintenance, species and planting recommendations."

Economic Impact

The tree replacement costs impact associated with the December 2013 ice storm are estimated at \$7.2 million

While provincial funding is expected to offset most of the initial storm response, cleanup and damage costs, that funding will not cover associated tree replacement planting. The total costs of tree planting are estimated to be \$7.2 million. These costs exclude stump removal, approximately \$1.27 million, which is considered part of the initial cleanup activities being submitted under the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program (ODRAP) funding.

The strategy to replace the 11,000 trees damaged by the ice storm will require additional funding. Illustrated within this report is a preliminary multi-year strategy proposing to increase the current tree planting program (approximately 1,900 trees budgeted at \$1M) by an additional 2,100 trees per year starting in 2015 for approximately the next six years, restoring the City's tree canopy inventory by 2021. This action will require additional funding in the range of \$1.2M to \$1.6M per year, depending on market prices, species, etc. There may also be the need for additional temporary staffing to assist in administering the program. The strategy will be further refined as it moves through the 2015 financial planning process.

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 24, 2014

Item 7, Finance Report No. 8 – Page 2

Given the magnitude and impact of the ice storm tree planting strategy, staff will research the potential for alternative grant funding and continue to work with other external agencies for assistance. Otherwise the primary funding source supporting this strategy will be from property taxation or discretionary reserves.

Communications Plan

Over the next few years, annual Forestry reports will be provided to Council, outlining the progress of the tree replacement plans throughout the City

Currently, information about the clean-up operation has been delivered to the residents throughout the City of Vaughan through the City's website, as well as via Public Works' Spring/Summer Newsletters and mobile signage. In addition, Corporate Communications assisted with social media updates, PSA's and responses.

The City's website hosts the online tool, which is designed to provide details on past ice storm related activities, and will provide information with respect to the future replanting plans. It also has an up to date question and answer section to satisfy resident inquiries and concerns.

Moving forward, staff proposes to report annually on the progress of the replanting efforts to Council, and post that information on the department's web page.

Purpose

To provide Council with an update report of the impact of the 2013 ice storm on the City's tree canopy and outline the proposed long-term replanting program.

Background - Analysis and Options

Preliminary estimates indicate that approximately 11,000 trees will need to be replaced in order to restore the city-owned tree population to pre-ice storm levels.

Approximately 11,000 trees will need to be replaced in order to restore the City's pre-storm tree population. In a typical year, the City plants approximately 1,400 replacement trees. As a result of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) infestation, an additional 500 trees per year were included in the Annual Capital Budget Program, bringing the total number of trees planted each year to approximately 1,900 equating to a budget of approximately \$1M. Prior to the ice storm, staff identified approximately 3,500 EAB infected trees needing to be removed. This number is seven times the budgeted number of 500 trees per year.

The spring 2014 planting program will result in approximately 700 trees being planted. The fall planting, which will consist of approximately 1,200 trees, will further be scheduled to ensure an equal distribution of replacement trees in all wards.

Based on current evaluations, at the end of 2014 a city tree deficit of approximately 13,000 trees is anticipated.

The 13,000 trees consist of 11,000 trees related to the ice storm and 2,000 from the existing tree planting backlog. This would represent a cost of approximately \$8.5 million (\$7.2M ice storm + \$1.3M other). Even if the funding was made available to replant all 13,000 trees at once, the Department lacks the staff resources and/or tree supplies to undertake such a large scale replanting program.

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 24, 2014

Item 7, Finance Report No. 8 – Page 3

A multi-year tree replacement strategy of planting an additional 2,100 trees per year would address the existing city tree deficit.

As such, a graduated replanting strategy is being recommended. The strategy will take into consideration the following:

- approved criteria for replacement priority
- tree removal date
- diversification mandate (10% of any one genus)
- recognition of highest impact areas (ice storm and EAB)

The proposed strategy will prioritize tree replacements based the following criteria:

1. Boulevard trees in residential areas
2. Boulevard trees in commercial/industrial and arterial areas
3. Trees in parks and open spaces

Subject to budget approvals, the proposed planting strategy of an additional 2,100 trees per year will see all residential boulevard trees replaced by 2018, and the City's entire tree inventory restored to pre-ice storm numbers by 2021 (incl. future EAB losses)

This action will require additional funding in the range of \$1.2M to \$1.6M per year, depending on market prices, species, etc. There may also be the need for additional temporary staffing to assist in administering the program. The strategy will be further refined as it moves through the 2015 financial planning process.

Should alternative funding sources come available for tree planning or should Council approve further additional funding for tree planting, the City's urban forest canopy can be restored to pre-ice storm status in a shorter period of time, pending tree and contractor availability. The below table illustrates the timing of the recommended strategy and highlights the residential tree planning with 4 years.

Year	Regular (Budgeted)	EAB (Budgeted)	Ice Storm			Existing Back-Log	Total
			Residential Blvd.	Non- Residential Blvd	Parks & Open Spaces		
2014	1,400	500					1,900
2015	1,400	500	2,100				4,000
2016	1,400	500	2,100				4,000
2017	1,400	500	2,100				4,000
2018	1,400	500	2,100				4,000
2019	1,400	500		1,050	1,050		4,000
2020	1,400	500			500	1,600	4,000
2021	1,400	500				400	2,300
2022	1,400	500					1,900
Total			8,400	1,050	1,550	2,000	

11,000

Note: By 2022, the Ice Storm and Existing Back-Log of trees have been planted and the City will return to the regular 1,900 per year tree program.

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 24, 2014

Item 7, Finance Report No. 8 – Page 4

It is essential to ensure that the City's boulevard tree inventory be maintained

It should be noted, that some residents have expressed a desire not to have a tree replanted in the boulevard area fronting their house. Notwithstanding this request, it is in the best interests of the City to ensure its urban tree canopy is fully restored, for both environmental and aesthetic reasons. As such, the proposed long-term plan takes into account a one for one replacement to ensure that the priorities previously set by Council in the Green Directions Vaughan, Community Sustainability Environmental Master Plan, are met, specifically, Goal 2, Objective 2.2: *"To develop Vaughan as a City with maximum green space and an urban form that supports our expected population growth by providing strategies for achieving our urban forest targets which include; planning, maintenance, species and planting recommendations."*

In order to expedite the tree replacement program, and provide opportunities to residents to plant a larger caliper tree on the City's boulevard, residents are given the option to plant a larger tree at their expense

As noted previously, it is anticipated that even with an accelerated planting strategy, it would take approximately four years for the City to replace all of the residential street boulevard trees damaged as a result of the ice storm, as well as the EAB identified trees.

Some residents may prefer not to wait for the City to replace the tree, and may want to plant their own tree. Similarly, residents may prefer to plant a larger caliper tree in the boulevard. To accommodate these requests, a process has been established to allow residents to plant their own replacement trees, based on meeting certain criteria, as follows:

- The location must be approved and prepared by City staff.
- Species is selected in accordance with the City's current diversification mandate.
- The resident, at their own expense, is responsible for co-ordination, planting and all associated costs.
- The normal 12 month warranty on the tree must be signed over to the City.

Although this program has been in place for a number of years, the number of requests has increased substantially since the ice storm.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

In consideration of the strategic priorities related to Vaughan Vision 2020, the actions to date and the long-term tree replacement strategy will provide:

- **STRATEGIC GOAL:**
Service Excellence – Providing service excellence to citizens.
- **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:**
Pursue Excellence in Service Delivery, Enhance and Ensure Community Safety and Health and Wellness – To deliver high quality services and to promote health and wellness through design and program.

The long-term tree replacement strategy outlined in this report is a change from the previous approved tree replacement program. As such, the necessary resources have not been allocated. Funding requests for the tree replacement strategy will form part of the 2015, and future, budget submissions, with implications beyond the 4-year budget period.

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 24, 2014

Item 7, Finance Report No. 8 – Page 5

Regional Implications

The Region is responsible for all trees planted within the Region's road allowance. As such, there are no implications on trees maintained by the Region as a result of this report. City staff continues to work with the Region to create strategies, and look at shared resource opportunities wherever possible to reduce costs and increase efficiencies.

Conclusion

Given the magnitude of the tree replacements as a result of the ice storm, and the funding limitations, a long-term strategy is required in order return the City's boulevard tree population back to pre-ice storm conditions.

Subject to budget approvals, the proposed strategy to plant an additional 2,100 trees per year will result in all residential boulevard trees being replaced by 2018 and the City's full tree inventory by 2021.

Attachments

N/A

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