

DECISION/DIRECTION NOTE

Title: Youth Forum

Date Prepared: July 5, 2022

Report To: Youth Engagement Working Group

Councillor and Role: Jill Bruce, Youth Engagement Working Group

Ward: N/A

Decision/Direction Required: Seek approval from Council for a Youth Forum to take place in Fall 2022.

Discussion – Background and Current Status:

The Youth Engagement Action Team (YEAT) in its report to Council in 2020 included a number of recommendations to get young people more actively engaged in civic matters. To date, the Youth Advisory Committee was repurposed to the Youth Engagement Working Group and three meetings have taken place. As well an online Youth Panel was launched in Q1 and City staff are able to share short surveys on topics they would like to receive youth feedback on; youth in the panel can receive notifications via text message or email and choose to participate in the topics of interest to them. To date, five surveys have been issued through the Panel and feedback shared with lead staff. These include:

- Youthful Cities Indicators
- The City as an Employer
- Elections and Voting
- Affordable Housing
- Emergency and Disaster Preparedness

One of the recommendations in the Youth Engagement Strategy was to create more youth-focused events such as youth forums, live youth events on social media, and to demonstrate the value of youth voices in decision making. These activities can help create a welcoming environment for youth thereby increasing their connection to the City.

The Youth Engagement Working Group has discussed the idea of holding a youth forum as a way of bringing young people together to talk about issues important to this demographic but also for youth to learn more about what's happening within the city organization that is relevant to them.

At the July 26 YEWG the team discussed both the purpose and format of a proposed forum. To be successful a forum must show young people they have a voice and can be actively engaged in conversations about what matters to them in the City. Key attributes of a forum would include:

ST. JOHN'S

- have a series of smaller events that people could opt in to rather than one large event.
- Provide options to participate in-person and online. It was suggested that the kick off or opening event be held in person with additional virtual and in person events to maximize attendance.
- An event should take place in each ward, with the Ward Councillor in attendance. This would lessen the transportation barrier (if held in person) and would permit discussion to focus on the interests of youth in each ward. Previously collected data can be examined to determine if there are any interests particular to one area. Community Centres and the Community Market, as well as City Hall were suggested as possible meeting locations. Proximity to a bus route or easily accessible venues would be necessary. Sessions would be no more than 2 hours.
- As a great deal of data has been collected, it was noted that the Forum should focus on finding solutions and creating actionable items for previously identified areas of interest or concern. Data can be leveraged to find the topics of most interest, and the sessions can provide an opportunity to inform the solutions. The forum working group will look at the data and choose 4 or 5 topics of interest to focus on for each event. These items can guide the events and there can still be an opportunity for Open Space facilitation. The Forum needs to have an action-oriented component to it.
- It was suggested that there be devices available at in-person events to help people sign up for the Online Youth Panel. This will capture new audiences that have not been previously engaged.
- YEWG Co-Chair Maria Penney, and members Nathan Young and Jen Crowe will form the sub-committee and start ironing out the details of the event and will liaise with Organizational Performance and Strategy Staff on logistics and details.

Staff have reviewed the comments from the Youth Engagement Working Group and note that based on previous experience and feedback received throughout the youth engagement strategy development, participation in multiple in-person events may be challenging and potentially result in smaller numbers of people participating at each event. It is suggested that one in-person event be held as a kick off event followed by two to three virtual events that are topic specific and designed to include break out rooms for small group discussion that could be ward/area/topic specific. This inaugural “forum” would then be evaluated to determine if it meets its objectives and recommendations on approaches for future forums would be brought forward.

Key Considerations/Implications:

1. Budget/Financial Implications:

A budget has not been developed as the full scope of the event has not been determined but it is expected any funds would come from existing operational budget.

2. Partners or Other Stakeholders:

Youth Serving Organizations, Clubs, educational institutions

3. Alignment with Strategic Directions:

A Connected City: Increase and improve opportunities for residents to connect with each other and the City.

4. Alignment with Adopted Plans:

[Youth Engagement Strategy](#) approved in 2020

5. Accessibility and Inclusion:

Every effort will be made to ensure the event is inclusive. The YEWG will work with partners and lead city staff for inclusion.

6. Legal or Policy Implications:

N/A

7. Privacy Implications:

N/A

8. Engagement and Communications Considerations:

A communications plan will be required to promote the forum and actively engage the YEWG.

9. Human Resource Implications:

Staff in Organizational Performance and Strategy will organize the event with the YEWG and involve other relevant city staff as required.

10. Procurement Implications:

None anticipated at this time.

11. Information Technology Implications:

Staff will work with YEWG to determine whether the event will take place in-person, virtually or a combination of both.

12. Other Implications:

Feedback and discussion from this event can help inform city planning and budget considerations for 2023.

Recommendation:

That Council approve the YEWG to start working on a youth forum for Fall 2022 and provide direction on whether they would like to see one or more in-person events and/or virtual events as outlined.

Prepared by: Victoria Etchegary, Manager, Organizational Performance and Strategy

Approved by:

Report Approval Details

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This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

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