

RES.#R11/17 -

YOUTH COUNCIL FRAMEWORK

Approval of the goals, objectives, and activities of the Youth Council, as outlined in the proposed Youth Council Framework.

Moved by: Jack Ballinger
Seconded by: Andrew Vrana

WHEREAS Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's Community Engagement Strategy (2017) has recommended the development of a Youth Council as a priority action;

LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT the program framework (attachment1) created by staff with input from the Regional Watershed Alliance Youth Council working group, be approved;

THAT the Regional Watershed Alliance Youth Council working group develop a recruitment plan and establish the Youth Council as per the approved Framework;

AND FURTHER THAT progress of the activities of the Youth Council working group continues to be reported to the Regional Watershed Alliance until the Youth Council is fully established.

CARRIED

BACKGROUND

The long-term success of efforts to advance environmental protection and sustainability in the Toronto region depends on the support of the region's youth, both now and into the future. The TRCA Community Engagement Strategy highlights the importance of engaging youth and reflecting their unique perspectives in TRCA's priorities and programs, and identifies the creation of a Youth Council, overseen by the Regional Watershed Alliance, as an important and immediate priority. Around the world, youth councils have been created by governments, community groups and non-profit organizations as a means of providing local youth with an opportunity to gain important skills, build capacity and network, while providing the sponsoring agencies with important input and perspectives from youth stakeholders.

"At Regional Watershed Alliance Meeting #1/2017, held on November 15th, 2017, Resolution #R002/17 was approved, in part, as follows:

WHEREAS THE Terms of Reference of the Regional Watershed Alliance proposes the establishment of Watershed/Working Groups, Youth Council, and Indigenous Liaison Committee;

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT the following members of the Alliance work with staff to lead the establishment of Youth Council including development of terms of reference:

a) Lisette Mallet; b) Amory Ngan; c) Rui Felix; d) Mick Malowany; and e) Karen Lockridge".

Staff have researched leading models for youth councils in the Toronto region and from other areas, and developed a preliminary concept outlining goals, objectives and potential program activities for a TRCA Youth Council. This preliminary concept was shared with the five members of the Regional Watershed Alliance (RWA) who volunteered to support staff in the development of the Youth Council (hereafter referred to as "the Youth Council working group"), who worked with

staff to finalize goals and objectives for the Council as well as a program framework of activities, outputs and outcomes. These are outlined in Attachment 1.

Framework Development

The Youth Council framework was developed using a program development and evaluation approach, which outlines clear connections between program goals, objectives, activities, outputs and deliverables, and ultimate program outcomes. By breaking down large-scale goals into defined objectives, activities can be identified that directly address those objectives, creating a clear pathway between goals and outcomes.

Program Goals and Objectives

A key goal of the Youth Council is to “Build healthy communities through improved connection to greenspace and nature.” It is recognized that the most meaningful type of connection to nature and greenspace may differ from one community or individual to the next, however, the RWA Youth working group and staff agree that enhancing that connection through diverse and appropriate initiatives will improve community health and wellbeing. A healthy community will inspire empowered and engaged youth, which is the second program goal that has been identified, laying the groundwork for youth to have an integral role in the discussion in the region about environmental and sustainability issues, beginning with the planning and shaping of the TRCA Youth Council itself.

There are four objectives that will guide the development of program activities for the Youth council:

- a) Build capacity and engage youth by providing youth across the Toronto region with learning opportunities;
- b) Build a youth network/strengthen existing networks through creation of a broad network of youth in the region that is interested in environmental and sustainability issues;
- c) Identify youth perspectives by developing an understanding of youth opinion around current environmental issues and how these might be incorporated in the work of TRCA and its partners; and
- d) Create fun opportunities for youth through entertaining and engaging learning opportunities.

Program Activities

Prior to developing a more detailed scope of work, the Youth Council will work with staff to better understand and characterize the environmental priorities and perspectives of youth in the Toronto region, so that these are reflected in the Council’s activities. Subject to the results of this characterization, preliminary set of activities for the TRCA Youth Council has also been outlined in the framework, including the following:

- Convening an annual event (an action item identified in the TRCA Community Engagement Strategy);
- Holding regular council meetings;
- Advocating for key environmental and sustainability issues;
- Providing feedback on key TRCA projects and initiatives; and
- Creating a framework for youth network interaction.

The above framework of goals, objectives and activities notwithstanding, the Youth Council working group and staff recommend that the Youth Council be provided the opportunity to identify their own priorities and activities to address those priorities (the “Activities” and “Outputs” rows in Attachment 1). If necessary, the framework should be updated to reflect these priorities and activities, subject to approval of the Regional Watershed Alliance. The highest level goals and

outcomes are to be agreed upon prior to convening the Youth Council, but the Youth Council will be provided the opportunity to determine the pathways (i.e., Activities, Outputs, and Immediate Outcomes) to achieve those goals.

Recruitment

The Youth Council working group and staff recommended that the Youth Council consist of a relatively small group of individuals between 16 and 24 years of age, but that the activities of the Council, supported by staff and the Regional Watershed Alliance, would include the development of a much larger network of youth of all ages throughout the region. The RWA Youth Council working group agreed that recruitment for the Youth Council should be widespread, with no specific targets at this stage for any one stakeholder group (e.g., region, municipality, or demographic). However, in the interest of ensuring representation from historically under-represented communities a recruitment campaign will be developed that specifically targets those communities, leveraging Regional Watershed Alliance and TRCA contact networks as appropriate. Interest from the community will, in part, determine the Youth Council's membership size and composition, but the selection of members will strive to reflect the cultural and geographic diversity of the Toronto Region. Youth Council working group and staff will begin development of a recruitment plan in Spring 2018, targeting approval of Youth Council membership by the Regional Watershed Alliance in Fall 2018.

RATIONALE

The Youth Council working group and staff have developed a TRCA Youth Council framework that satisfies the objectives of the TRCA Community Engagement Strategy and reflects approaches for convening youth councils used in other leading jurisdictions. The framework for the Youth Council (Attachment 1) has as its foundation goals and objectives of the TRCA Community Engagement Strategy (identified by the blue boxes). More specific goals and objectives were identified and agreed upon by staff and the Youth Council working group (identified by the orange boxes).

The working group and staff are prepared to proceed with recruitment of Youth Council members on the basis of this framework, and will report on and receive input from the Regional Watershed Alliance prior to finalizing membership.

FINANCIAL DETAILS

Funds are available in TRCA Watershed Strategies program accounts for watershed engagement and community projects to support the recruitment, convening and ongoing activities of the Youth Council. Staff will work with the Regional Watershed Alliance Youth Council working group and eventually with the Youth Council itself to ensure that the scope of work reflects available budget and staff support.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

- Approval of Youth Council Framework
- Develop a recruitment plan and identify prospective members
- Seek approval of final Youth Council membership.

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Attachments: 1