

DATE OF MEETING May 25, 2022

AUTHORED BY DAVID STEWART, ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNER

SUBJECT COMMUNITY WATERSHED RESTORATION GRANT

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide the Environment Committee with Guidelines and Criteria for a Community Watershed Restoration Grant Program, for their consideration and recommendation to Council.

Recommendation

That the Environment Committee recommend that Council endorse the Community Watershed Restoration Planning Grant Guidelines and Criteria as included in Attachment A to the 2022-MAY-25 report by David Stewart, Environmental Planner.

BACKGROUND

On 2020-JUL-15, Council directed Staff to prepare a business case to establish an annual Community Watershed Restoration Grant. The Grant, once established, would be available to community organizations, environmental non-profits, or individual residents that aim to carry out watershed restoration projects focusing on urban stream and riparian restoration enhancement, natural environment protection, and climate change adaptation solutions. The intent of the grant was to support community groups and individuals undertaking restoration projects and looking to leverage other funding sources.

A budget of \$20,000 for the proposed grant was added to the 2021 – 2025 Financial Plan, to be funded from the Special Initiatives Reserve in 2021 and 2022 to support the annual grant.

The City works with a broad range of volunteers, both individuals and organizations that are interested in environmental stewardship in the City. City staff are often involved in providing training, material support and oversight for the restoration work.

Council has historically allocated funding to specific restoration and enhancement projects on a case-by-case basis, such as a recent 3-year \$69,000 commitment to the Watercourse Restoration and Enhancement Program, which included a salmon side channel feasibility study within East Wellington Park, and riparian restoration and hydrological study within the Buttertubs Marsh Conservation Area.

DISCUSSION

The Community Watershed Restoration Grant, as proposed, is supported by the Climate Change Resiliency Strategy and the Green Goals of the draft City Plan that highlight the

importance of reaching out to build capacity with residents and neighbourhood groups to support environmental restoration.

The proposed grant will support community restoration projects such as invasive species removal, watercourse restoration, and native planting within riparian areas. Funding will be used to provide financial support for restoration planning and design studies, material purchase, invasive plants disposal, equipment rental and labour.

While staff will continue to bring forward requests to fund specific restoration projects for consideration, the establishment of an annual grant will allow the City to be more nimble and flexible in providing support to community members and groups to carry out restoration projects.

Grant Criteria

Grant guidelines and criteria will be used to inform prospective grant applicants of the intent of the grant, who is eligible to apply, how much funding is available and how the applications will be evaluated. Proposed grant criteria are strategically aligned with the Green Goals in the draft City Plan. The criteria will support Staff in evaluating grant applications when making recommendations to Council. The draft guidelines and criteria (Attachment A), including the application review criteria were developed based on similar existing cultural and social planning grant guidelines and criteria.

Grant Timeline

The proposed grant timeline, attached as Attachment B, includes establishing the grant and grant criteria as well as launching the grant and receiving and awarding applications. The grant launch and review timelines align with timelines for other City grant applications.

OPTIONS

1. That the Environment Committee recommend that Council endorse the Community Watershed Restoration Grant Guidelines and Criteria as included in Attachment A.
 - The advantages of this option: The proposed option is consistent with Council direction and budget allocation. Establishing a Community Watershed Restoration Grant will: harness the energy of local volunteers; offer a consistent funding source for community restoration projects; support environmental stewardship volunteers (both individuals and groups) to carry out restoration projects and leverage other funding sources; and allow the City to build stronger partnerships with community groups and individuals interested in climate resiliency and environmental stewardship work.
 - The disadvantages of this option: The Community Watershed Restoration Grant, as proposed, is limited to community watershed restoration project costs and will not be available for other environmental initiatives.
 - Financial Implications: Funding for the grant has been approved and included in the 2021 – 2025 Financial Plan. If the grant timeline is endorsed as presented, the first grants could be considered and potentially be awarded in 2023.
2. That the Environment Committee provide alternate recommendation to Council.

SUMMARY POINTS

- On 2020-DEC-14, Council allocated \$20,000 per year within the 2021 – 2025 Financial Plan to support an annual Community Watershed Restoration Grant.
- The grant will support community environmental restoration projects focusing on urban stream and riparian restoration enhancement, natural environment protection, and climate change adaptation solutions.
- Staff have prepared draft guidelines and criteria to be used to inform prospective grant applicants and help Staff and Council evaluate future applications.
- If approved, the 2023 grant will be launched in the early fall of 2022 and be awarded in early 2023.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: Community Watershed Restoration Grant Program – Guidelines and Criteria

Attachment B: Grant Timeline

Submitted by:

Ting Pan
Manager, Sustainability

Concurrence by:

Jeremy Holm
Director, Development Approvals

Lisa Bhopalsingh
Director, Community Development

Dale Lindsay
General Manager, Development
Services/Deputy CAO