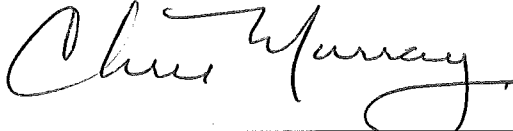


Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

TO: Mayor and Members General Issues Committee	WARD(S) AFFECTED: CITY WIDE
COMMITTEE DATE: November 20, 2013	
SUBJECT/REPORT NO: Re-Launch of the Citizen Engagement Project Regarding City Services – Update (CM13008(a)) (City Wide)	
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Council Direction:

The re-launch of the citizen engagement initiative was presented at the General Issues Committee (GIC) meeting, April 17th 2013. At that time, staff informed GIC that information would be brought to future meetings with details about how citizen engagement work was progressing.

Information

The purpose of this report is to provide details on the City of Hamilton Citizen Engagement Initiative and to describe the changes recommended by citizens who are now involved in the planning process.

In April 2013, a staff team was assembled to implement a Senior Management Team (SMT) and Council approved public engagement plan. The plan focused on three key components: public education, face to face public sessions and the development and completion of a City services survey and report card.

To bring awareness and obtain approval for our planned approach, an information session for residents was held on June 27th, 2013. Citizen feedback and a follow-up evaluation suggested that half of the residents in attendance felt positive about our engagement plans, however the other half had concerns and reservations about the purpose, meaning and value of engagement overall including:

- Varying expectations and perceptions about engagement, and the role of citizens
- Uncertainty with regard to the City's approach, and how citizens would be involved in engagement planning.

Staff felt that the concerns expressed at the meeting on June 27th were significant enough to warrant continued conversation with citizens about the best way to move forward on an engagement initiative. Meetings with several of the attendees of the June 27th meeting continued over the summer and in September a larger meeting of interested citizens agreed to form a "Convening Table" to help the City move forward on a number of actions including the development of an engagement "charter" and the design of an engagement strategy to discuss City services.

What has changed from the original plan?

While the goals for engagement as originally approved have not changed, given the concerns expressed by citizens, staff have adjusted activities so that citizens are now included in the planning process. A citizen led process will create a strong foundation for building trust and confidence between residents and local government and will strengthen plans to ensure that citizens are part of the problem solving and decision-making process. This change in process is supported by best practice evidence.

The following activities have been added to inform our process and to ensure that we design a two-way public engagement model that allows local governments and citizens to interact, listen and learn from each other:

- Convening Table: The use of a Convening Table allows a small group of engaged citizens to work with staff to set the "conditions for success" as we build an approach for the longer term work on Citizen Engagement. The work of the Convening Table will result in a recommended approach to launch a citizen-led, city-wide engagement initiative, steered by a committee of residents and staff. This citizen – led committee will guide the development of an engagement charter as well as to provide advice regarding the completion of public engagement activities related to City services.
- Facilitated Sessions: Two (2) or three (3) facilitated sessions are scheduled to take place with the current group of citizen volunteers (Convening Table), November – December 2013.
- 2014 Engagement Committee: A City of Hamilton Engagement Committee will be established, utilizing the Convening Table's recommendations for citizen recruitment in January-February 2014.
- The City services survey is on hold and will be reviewed and vetted through the Engagement Committee in 2014.

- The focus groups to discuss City services will be postponed until 2014 and a city-wide process to engage citizens will be created collaboratively with the citizen-led Engagement Committee.

Staff Training

In October, fifteen (15) staff members from Public Health Services, Community and Emergency Services, Public Works, Planning and Economic Development and Corporate Services completed the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) training program. These staff members now hold a recognized credential in public engagement. They will be resources in their own departments and can provide advice to colleagues regarding best practices in developing public participation activities. The group has also agreed to remain connected as a “network” within the City of Hamilton to support the development of a comprehensive approach to citizen engagement.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to share more information in the New Year when the work of the Convening Table is completed and the larger Engagement Committee is developed.

The Engagement Committee will work with staff to develop a City of Hamilton Public Engagement Charter. This work is expected to be completed by June 2013.