



CITY OF HAMILTON
COMMUNITY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Neighbourhood & Community Initiatives Division

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| TO: | Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee |
| COMMITTEE DATE: | April 10, 2017 |
| SUBJECT/REPORT NO: | McQuesten Urban Farm Farming and Community Engagement for the 2017 Season (CES17011) (Ward 4) |
| WARD(S) AFFECTED: | Ward 4 |
| PREPARED BY: | Adam Watson 905-546-2424 ext. 7806 |
| SUBMITTED BY: | Suzanne Brown Director, Neighbourhood & Community Initiatives Division Community & Emergency Services Department |
| SIGNATURE: | |

RECOMMENDATION

That the scope of Contract C5-23-15 Farming Services for McQuesten Urban Farm with Plan B Organic Farms for the term February 7, 2017 to February 6, 2018 be expanded and the value of the contract increased from \$96,000 to \$144,480 to be funded from the Maple Leaf Centre Action on Food Security grant in the amount of \$119,480 and \$25,000 from the Neighbourhood Action Strategy Capital fund (#20551255204).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The McQuesten Urban Farm became operational in 2016 and staff and McQuesten residents are now preparing for the first full year of farm production in 2017. The McQuesten Urban Farm has been awarded a grant from the new Maple Leaf Foods Centre for Action on Food Security (Maple Leaf) which will be held by the Hamilton Community Foundation. The commitment for this grant is for one year initially with up to three years contingent on meeting the identified outcomes. The grant recommendation letter is attached as Appendix A to Report CES17011.

The grant will cover the majority of farm operating costs and allow for the urban farm to launch new initiatives to improve food security for residents, such as a mobile farm market and increased engagement programming. The grant application Key Activity Plan and Budget Forecast is attached as Appendix B to Report CES17011.

The operation of the McQuesten Urban Farm is carried out by Plan B Organic Farms, the successful proponent for Contract C5-23-15, Farming Services for McQuesten Urban Farm, issued through a request for proposals (RFP) in February 2016. The initial term of the Farming Contract expired on February 6, 2017.

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With the successful grant application to Maple Leaf Foods, staff is recommending that the existing \$96,000 contract with Plan B Organic Farms which provides for farm materials/seeds, farmer (farm oversight, supervision and mentoring of resident employees and volunteers), farm and engagement staff positions, be expanded in 2017 and the value of the contract be increased by \$48,480 to allow for expansion of on-farm and off-farm programming, e.g. new greenhouse operations and mobile farmers market to CityHousing Hamilton properties. If the expansion of the Farming Contract is approved, the new total contract amount would be \$144,480, of which the Maple Leaf grant funds \$119,480. The \$25,000 shortfall in the total contract amount is recommended to be funded through the Neighbourhood Action Strategy capital fund.

With a greater anticipated yield of produce from the farm, a climate-controlled unit to refrigerate freshly harvested food and for use as cold storage for winter will be purchased at the upset cost of \$10,000, to be funded through the Maple Leaf grant. The remaining balance of the Maple Leaf Foods grant is allocated to program evaluation and farm equipment and programming supplies. A breakdown of the planned grant expenditures is included below.

Table 1: Planned Expenditures for the Maple Leaf Foods Grant

| Expenditures | Budgeted Amount |
|---|------------------------|
| Farming Services contract with Plan B Organic Farms | \$119,480 |
| Climate Controlled Storage Unit | \$10,000 |
| Program Evaluation | \$15,000 |
| Farm Equipment & Program Supplies | \$5,520 |
| Total | \$150,000 |

Alternatives for Consideration – Not Applicable

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial:

Total funding commitment requested from the NAS fund, over and above the \$119,480 paid by the Maple Leaf grant, is \$25,000. With approval of this funding, \$145,950 will remain within the NAS Fund (#2051255204).

Staffing:

There are no staffing implications related to Report CES17011.

Legal:

A funding commitment letter between the Hamilton Community Foundation and City of Hamilton setting out the obligations between the parties, the terms of the relationship and flow of funds has been received in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The McQuesten neighbourhood is considered a food desert, with the closest grocery stores and sources of fresh food being two kilometres or more away. Actions to improve food security and reduce barriers to fresh food access are some of the top priorities identified by McQuesten residents in their Neighbourhood Action Plan that aims to improve the overall health and quality of life for people living in the neighbourhood.

The McQuesten Urban Farm project comes out of the McQuesten Neighbourhood Action Plan as a key action to promote greater food security for neighbourhood residents, to improve social connectedness and to provide skills development within the neighbourhood. The McQuesten Neighbourhood Action Plan provides the foundation for resident-led initiatives that target neighbourhood improvements that address priorities identified by the residents themselves. The urban farm is led by a group of residents who identified the need to address food insecurity by bringing fresh food production and food education to the heart of their neighbourhood. Over the past decade these residents have advocated for the development of the project and spurred municipal investment in both land and financial support to make the urban farm a reality.

As part of Report CES15023, Council approved \$350,000 from the NAS Capital Fund to fund the main capital works necessary to make the urban farm operational in 2016. This included the preparation of the lands for farming, purchase and installation of the irrigation system, accessible pathways and the creation of an outdoor classroom/community gathering space in the centre of the site. Staff and volunteers have been successful in acquiring grants and donations of over \$600,000, including the funding from Maple Leaf, to fund farm operations and other site features, primarily greenhouses, plantings, site furnishings and programming for residents and students.

The McQuesten Urban Farm formally launched in the spring of 2016 with a focus on site construction, soil development and preliminary food production. With farm operations fully in place, and the extensive knowledge and expertise of our farm staff, staff expects that the increase in field production in 2017 will be substantial. Based on the production levels achieved in our inaugural season, we are expecting annual food production to be 75,000 pounds, of which 50% is intended to be sold into the neighbourhood at cost and the other half marketed outside of the neighbourhood to cover some operating costs and additional programming and skill building opportunities. This weight estimate is based on growing a diversity of crops to meet the preferences and nutritional needs of residents and to focus on some higher value crops to maximize revenue generation. The planned addition of greenhouse operations in 2017 will increase this amount and allow for year-round availability of produce and food programming in the neighbourhood.

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POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

City of Hamilton By-law #16-070, Procurement Policy, allows for Council to approve any extension to an existing contract as proposed in Report CES17011.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

The Procurement section was consulted and supports the recommendations in Report CES17011.

The McQuesten Community Planning Team has been consulted and is in favour of continuing to work with Plan B Organic Farms for 2017.

Legal Services has been consulted in preparation of this Report.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The McQuesten Urban Farm has been awarded a grant from the newly-created Maple Leaf Foods Centre for Action on Food Security. The goal of the Centre is to fund innovative projects aimed at addressing sustainable food security, with the goal of decreasing food insecurity in Canada by 50% by 2035. The McQuesten Urban Farm has been awarded a grant for one year initially, commencing in 2017, with up to three years contingent on meeting the identified outcomes by the Maple Leaf Foods Centre to fund farm operations, farming and community engagement staff, resident employment opportunities and the development of new and innovative programs to improve food security in the McQuesten Neighbourhood. This financial commitment from Maple Leaf Foods will be administered through the Hamilton Community Foundation, as outlined in Appendix C to Report CES17011.

The operation of the McQuesten Urban Farm is carried out through a City contract for farming services overseen by a Project Manager in the Neighbourhood Action Strategy office who works in collaboration with McQuesten residents and the McQuesten Community Planning Team. Plan B Organic Farms was the successful proponent for Contract C5-23-15, Farming Services for McQuesten Urban Farm, issued through a request for proposals (RFP) in February 2016. This contract was awarded to Plan B Organic Farms who was the only respondent to the RFP.

Plan B Organic Farms began activity on the McQuesten Urban Farm site in March 2016 and has successfully developed the site into a functioning and productive farm. In addition the company has established strong relationships with McQuesten residents and farm volunteers and have begun to train and mentor residents to take on farm operations themselves. In order to expand the farm programming, staff recommends that the existing \$96,000 contract with Plan B Organic Farms which provides for farm materials/seeds, farmer (farm oversight, supervision and mentoring of resident

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employees and volunteers), farm and engagement staff positions, be expanded in 2017 and the value of the contract be increased by \$48,480 to allow for expansion of on-farm and off-farm programming for the McQuesten Urban Farm.

The deliverables from the 2016 contract still apply to 2017 farm activities, including farm field operations, food distribution and marketing, volunteer and community engagement and food skills programming. However due to the award of the Centre for Action on Food Security grant there is additional funding to launch new food programming, and additional farm and community engagement staffing is required to achieve the grant deliverables.

The total cost of the 2017 contract with Plan B Organic Farms will be \$144,480, with \$119,480 of the cost being funded through the Maple Leaf Centre for Action on Food Security grant. This will fund staffing for farm operations and community engagement, including resident employment opportunities, as well as farm operation, sales and marketing. An additional \$25,000 is required to fund farm operating requirements for 2017 that were not funded by the Centre for Action on Food Security grant. These include, but are not limited to, consulting on crop and pest management and greenhouse setup and operations as well as administering farm sales and distribution of produce to customers.

In addition to the funding for the farming services contract there is a one-time cost related to capital equipment, i.e. a climate controlled refrigeration unit and operating supplies required for the food distribution programs that have been funded by the Maple Leaf Centre for Action on Food Security. These purchases will allow for a large volume of harvested food to be processed and stored for sale and distribution. Committee and Council are advised that the procurement of the refrigeration unit and the operating supplies will follow the City's Procurement Policy.

The McQuesten Urban Farm has also received a \$5,000 grant from the Hamilton Industrial Environmental Association to support the planting of native and pollinator-friendly plants. Staff will purchase these plants for community planting events at the farm throughout the 2017 season.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

None

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Community Engagement & Participation

Hamilton has an open, transparent and accessible approach to City government that engages with and empowers all citizens to be involved in their community.

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Healthy and Safe Communities

Hamilton is a safe and supportive city where people are active, healthy, and have a high quality of life.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix A to Report CES17011: Maple Leaf Centre for Action on Food Security Grant Recommendation Letter

Appendix B to Report CES17011: McQuesten Urban Farm Centre for Action on Food Security Grant – Key Activity Plan and Budget Forecast

Appendix C to Report CES17011: Hamilton Community Foundation Letter Formalizing Funding Agreement between Maple Leaf Foods, Hamilton Community Foundation and the City of Hamilton