



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

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	October 23, 2017
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Hamilton Youth Advisory Committee (HYAC) (CES15056(b)) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SUBMITTED BY:	Vicki Woodcox Acting General Manager Community and Emergency Services Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That the Hamilton Youth Advisory Committee (HYAC) be formally disbanded as an Advisory Committee of Council, and be replaced with a new youth driven engagement collaboration;
- (b) That the reporting structure of the new youth driven engagement collaboration be changed from the City Clerk’s Office to the Neighbourhood and Community Initiatives Division, within the Community and Emergency Services Department;
- (c) That a staff lead be identified within the existing staff complement of the Community and Emergency Services Department and be based out of the Neighbourhood and Community Initiatives Division, who will lead and implement a youth action plan and/or strategy for the City, in partnership with the new youth driven engagement collaboration;
- (d) That staff report back to City Council, detailing progress to date of the youth driven engagement collaboration including youth initiatives, accomplishments, opportunities and pertinent issues impacting youth in Hamilton by Q2 of 2018; and,
- (e) That the outstanding business item identified as “Hamilton Youth Advisory Committee (HYAC),” be removed.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Established in 2007, the Hamilton Youth Advisory Committee (HYAC) played a pivotal role in bringing community youth voice to municipal decision making. At the beginning of HYAC, youth attendance was high and interest was strong for a number of years. However, by the end of 2014, only three HYAC members remained as youth interest waned considerably. The lack of interest was due to the formality of the Advisory Committees of Council, myriad of interests and avenues that engage youth, the impact of social media and the lack of positioning HYAC to serve a strategic youth agenda for the City of Hamilton.

In December 2015, Council directed staff to conduct a full review of HYAC and report back on what a better municipally-supported youth engagement strategy should look like in Hamilton. Between January 2016 and May 2017, staff conducted a series of youth engagement initiatives and reviewed best practices from other jurisdictions. Key findings from this review concluded the following:

- Social media, technology and availability of various engagement channels continue to impact municipally-supported youth engagement. Governments need to do a better job at ensuring youth engagement is youth-led and youth-driven.
- Among others, the kinds of engagement that interests youth tend to be informal, activity-based, interactive, place-based and exciting. A good municipally-supported youth engagement needs to incorporate these elements.
- City of Hamilton divisions are involved in various youth engagement activities but these initiatives, to a large extent, work in isolation of each other and lack strategic coordination towards a shared youth agenda for the City.
- Community organizations also work with youth on various initiatives, which at times would benefit the City of Hamilton as a visible enabler and strategic supporter of these initiatives. The need to have the City take a more strategic approach to youth involvement and engagement was identified.

Based on these key research and engagement findings, it is recommended that the City of Hamilton formally disband HYAC as an Advisory Committee of Council, and form a new youth driven engagement collaboration under the Community and Emergency Services (CES) Department, Neighbourhood and Community Initiatives Division. This will allow the new youth collaboration to be less formal and connected to other related community initiatives underway within the department.

The immediate priority of the new youth driven engagement collaboration will be to identify key priorities for youth in Hamilton. They will also advise on the best way to ensure youth engagement is a standard component of program development,

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implementation and evaluation of City of Hamilton youth services. It is anticipated that from this, an action plan and/or strategy will be developed for the City of Hamilton. The youth action plan and/or strategy will coalesce the City of Hamilton and various community partners around a common method by which to work with and engage youth in a sustainable way to address their priorities within the City of Hamilton. Particular attention will be paid to the channels by which we engage youth particularly as it relates to social media and technology.

There is also a need to create a project manager role for strategic youth initiatives within the existing staff complement of the Community and Emergency Services Department. The position will lead the new youth engagement collaboration to develop and implement a youth action plan and/or strategy as described. The position will also foster and co-ordinate citywide youth engagement, apply a youth lens to city programming, , develop partnerships, source youth funding and produce an annual youth progress report for Hamilton.

Alternatives for Consideration – Not Applicable

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: There are no financial implications associated with Report CES15056(b).

Staffing: The Recreation Division will transfer one current Project Manager, Grade 5 to the Neighbourhood & Community Initiatives Division. There is no new FTE associated with Report CES15056(b).

Legal: There are no legal implications associated with Report CES15056(b).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Hamilton Youth Advisory Committee (HYAC) was formally established in 2007 (Report SSC06017(a)) and reported to Council through the Social Services Committee (subsequently Emergency and Community Services Committee). Membership was comprised of youth 14 to 24 years of age from across Hamilton.

HYAC's mandate was to engage and create opportunities for youth to participate in municipal government and decision-making. Over the years, HYAC's mandate expanded and provided opportunities to discuss broader issues facing youth in Hamilton. HYAC also supported local youth-oriented events and programs, such as the annual Hamilton Youth Week celebration.

During its first four years of existence, HYAC consistently maintained high attendance at meetings and enthusiastic participation. However, between 2011 and 2104, HYAC struggled to maintain youth commitment, interest and quorum. By the end of 2014,

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HYAC had only three members. Consequently, on December 8, 2015, the Emergency and Community Services approved the motion:

- (a) *“That the Hamilton Youth Advisory Committee be put in abeyance until the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2016 such that staff are able to complete a full review of the Hamilton Youth Advisory Committee and determine an approach or model for municipally supported youth engagement”*; and
- (b) *“That staff be requested to provide quarterly updates to the Emergency and Community Services Committee throughout 2016 on this matter”*.

Furthermore, a motion approved by Council, directed staff to: *“investigate the ability of being one of the first municipalities in Canada to broadcast Advisory Committee meetings using video chat technology and enable members of the committee to join in those meetings for quorum and participation accordingly”*.

Between January 2016 and May 2017, staff conducted a full review of HYAC as directed by Council, and further investigated the motion on video technology. The review was comprised of evaluating best practices from other similar municipalities, assessing City and community youth initiatives, engaging with youth at various community tables and partnering with youth service organizations. Some of the key youth engagement initiatives that informed HYAC’s evaluation include:

1. Our Future Hamilton

Over a period of one year, about 55,000 residents and stakeholders were engaged in creating a new 25-year community vision for Hamilton. 3,200 community youth, high school students and children were also engaged as part of the visioning process. The community vision strategy contains six themes and 81 community priorities, with strong emphasis on the need to strengthen youth engagement, decision making and general wellbeing. Hamilton City Council approved ‘Our Future Hamilton’ in February 2016.

2. Mayor’s Citywide Youth Roundtable

The Mayor’s Office established a Youth Roundtable in the fall of 2015. The purpose of the meeting was to understand key issues facing youth in Hamilton by engaging youth and youth service agencies. The initiative engaged 35 youth service agencies, held 25 community conversations and listened to over 250 youth. Some of the key themes include support for youth housing, mental health, education, violence, racism, LGBTQ and adult mentorship.

3. The Lieutenant Governor’s Visit to Hamilton

In March 2016, The Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, paid an official visit to the City of Hamilton. Central to her agenda was

youth engagement and empowerment. With staff support, Her Honour chaired a roundtable discussion involving 22 Hamilton youth. Key findings from the conversation indicated youth needed more support for employment, skills development, social hubs, better awareness of community resources, housing, financial literacy, mental health, youth leadership opportunities and advocacy for Indigenous youth. There was also discussion on the importance of using social media tools to connect and convey information and solicit views from youth on what a successful youth engagement should look like.

4. The Xperience Annex

The Xperience Annex was formally launched in June 2016, funded by the Local Poverty Reduction Fund. Since its launch, Xperience Annex has received 1,400 visitors to the space, engaged over 500 youth and partnered with over 100 representatives from more than 60 community organizations. The key feedback from the Xperience Annex's engagement efforts underscored the need to build youth trust, collective ownership, informal engagement, flexibility, employment support, dealing with criminal records and support for creativity and talent.

5. "Youth Friendly Community" designation

The City of Hamilton was awarded the "Youth Friendly Community" designation in 2016 by Play Works, a designation that is renewable annually. The City of Hamilton was one of the largest municipalities to receive such a designation. As part of the submission process, staff engaged extensively with youth and youth service agencies and submitted a 1,200-page application in collaboration with 409 service providers. This prestigious designation confirmed that the City had demonstrated substantial evidence of opportunities for youth across all sixteen criteria, including youth leadership development, youth advocacy and civic involvement.

6. Public Health Services' Youth Engagement Initiatives

Public Health Services has employed youth engagement principals in the assessment, design, delivery, and evaluation of various programs, services and initiatives for many years. Some key examples include youth tobacco use prevention, the delivery of sexual and school health services and the Healthy Birth Weights Initiative. The input, participation and leadership of youth age 12-27 in the identification, design and execution of various services and initiatives has been essential to incorporating and valuing the knowledge, expertise and contributions of young people. An optimal state of youth engagement exists when young people are free to initiate and share decision-making with adults concerning services and initiatives that are intended for them. Such projects empower young people while at the same time enabling them to access and learn from the life experience and expertise of adults. A number of Public Health Services' youth engagement initiatives have garnered widespread interest and

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attention from a local to an international stage, including identification of best and promising practices for engaging youth.

7. Other Corporate and Community Youth Initiatives

Between 2016 and 2017, HYAC's review also involved engagement with a number of City departments and youth agencies who run different youth initiatives. The engagement revealed the need for better coordination of youth initiatives, creating more awareness for youth opportunities and establishing a more strategic alignment between the City of Hamilton and various community youth initiatives.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

Not applicable.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

The recommendations of this report were informed by strategic youth consultation, research and best practices involving various partners. They include:

Internal Stakeholders

- Mayor's Office
- Neighbourhood and Community Initiatives Division
- Recreation Division
- Public Health Services
- City Manager's Office

External Stakeholders

- Hamilton Wentworth District School Board
- Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board
- Youth Serving Agency Network
- YMCA
- Hamilton HIVE

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The full evaluation conducted on HYAC, including best practices research and review of internal/external youth engagement initiatives, revealed a number of findings. First and foremost, former HYAC members offered their thoughts on why HYAC did not work anymore as part of the evaluation process. Their conclusion pointed to the formal structure of HYAC, busyness with school and life, other community opportunities for youth engagement, lack of a clear long-term direction for HYAC and the impact of social

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media. Essentially, HYAC was no longer effective because the engagement needs of youth continue to change based on various priorities and interests.

Youth engagement in Hamilton and across many jurisdictions has also changed significantly since the establishment of HYAC in 2007. Youth now increasingly engage in various creative, social media and informal activities that are beyond the traditional Committees of Council structure. While some Canadian municipalities have some form of “Youth Advisory Committee”, many others do not. In general, municipalities continue to review and readapt their youth committees to make them more relevant to changing community needs.

Furthermore, within the City of Hamilton, there are many divisions that have platforms for various youth engagement and initiatives. These divisions tend to do their work in silos, with very little inter-divisional collaboration and strategic connection. Similarly, within the Hamilton community, there are also many successful youth service agencies and projects. Currently the City is involved with some of these youth initiatives but in an informal manner which does not position the City well enough to advance a strategic youth agenda for the City.

Lastly, some of the best practices documents reviewed from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the City of Calgary, on the kinds of engagement that currently interest youth, and which are integral to the success of any municipally-supported youth engagement, offered the following suggestions:

- Meetings are informal, interactive, and activity based
- Meetings are scheduled where youth are likely to congregate
- Social media and online tools are essential for continual updates and engagement
- Involvement of local leaders and politicians with adequate resources and personnel to fulfil mandate
- Youth initiated projects with shared decision making with adults
- Seek out partnerships with youth organizations to co-design the engagement process
- Provide mentoring opportunities between older youth and youth-friendly adults
- Develop a clear mandate and focus, and produce policy-relevant work which is meaningful to the participants

Based on these key findings, staff concluded that the current formal structure of the Hamilton Youth Advisory Committee (HYAC) is no longer relevant to the changing youth needs and community priorities. HYAC should therefore be formally disbanded as an Advisory Committee of Council and a new youth driven collaboration should be created.

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The new youth collaboration structure should be co-designed with youth, youth service agencies, City staff and other community stakeholders. This youth collaboration will advise members on how to effectively engage youth on an ongoing basis both with City of Hamilton departments and community agencies. Further to this, youth will identify key priorities/gaps in programs and services. The youth collaborative will provide direction on either an action plan or a strategy which they believe will address these priorities in a timely manner. Further to this, there will be increased focus on channels of communication such as social media and technology.

Although youth engagement is a component of many City Departments, staff recommend that the new youth engagement collaboration be housed under the Community and Emergency Service Department – Neighbourhood and Community Initiatives Division. This will ensure the collaboration is able to strategically leverage and connect to various community programs and other youth initiatives across the City.

Integral to the success of any municipally-supported youth collaboration is also the ability to build strategic visions, engage stakeholders, track collective progress, measure success and report on pertinent issues. This kind of strategic role with focus on youth engagement requires a stronger presence within the City of Hamilton.

Staff recommend that the above role be created within the existing staff complement of the Community and Emergency Services Department. The position will lead the development and implementation of a Hamilton youth strategy in partnership with key stakeholders. The position will also align youth engagement efforts across City divisions, provide a strategic youth lens to City priorities, pursue funding opportunities and produce an annual youth progress report for Council.

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.

Healthy and Safe Communities

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

Culture and Diversity

Hamilton is a thriving, vibrant place for arts, culture, and heritage where diversity and inclusivity are embraced and celebrated.

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Our People and Performance

Hamiltonians have a high level of trust and confidence in their City government.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

None

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