



CITY OF HAMILTON
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Licensing and By-Law Services Division

TO:	Chair and Members Planning Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	November 14, 2023
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Waterfront Ambassador Program (PED23237) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Tamara Reid (905) 546-2424 Ext. 1969
SUBMITTED BY:	Monica Ciriello Director, Licensing and By-Law Services Planning and Economic Development Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That the Waterfront Ambassador Pilot Program at the Hamilton Beachfront (Ward 5), be approved as a permanent annual program subject to the approval of 2 full-time summer students from the months of May-September, at an estimated annual cost of \$36,658.18 and be referred to the 2024 Tax Supported Operating Budget process;
- (b) That the Waterfront Ambassador Pilot Program be expanded to include education and enforcement rotations at additional trail sites City wide as determined seasonally by the Director or designate of Licensing and By-Law Services, and in consultation with Ward Councillors, be approved as an enhancement to the permanent annual program, subject to the approval of 2 full-time summer students from the months of May-September at an estimated cost of \$36,658.18, and be referred to the 2024 Tax Supported Operating Budget process;
- (c) That subject to the approval of recommendation (a) and (b) the one-time cost of one vehicle \$54,525 plus operating costs \$6,250 to transport bicycles to the trail location and hold equipment/educational materials, be approved, for Licensing and By-Law Services;

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- (d) That the matter respecting Item 1, Planning Committee Report 23-007, from the Council meeting on May 10, 2023, be identified as complete and removed from the Outstanding Business List.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council approved Waterfront Ambassador Pilot Program has been in place since 2020, each year the Ward Councillor brought forward a motion to establish the program. Staff recommended that the pilot program be made an annual permanent summer program and that it be enhanced to additional areas of the City on a rotational schedule.

Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 6

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: The total estimated annual cost for the Waterfront program is \$73,316.36 plus a one-time vehicle cost of \$54,525 plus operation costs of \$6,250 for the purchase of one vehicle.

Staffing: 4 summer students will be hired each summer for the Waterfront Ambassador program from May-September.

Legal: N/A

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Waterfront Ambassador program provides for two summer students to monitor and act as ambassadors for the City of Hamilton along the Hamilton Beachfront (Ward 5) from the canal bridge to Confederation Park, a path which is approximately 7.5 kms in length. The smooth paved surface, at 6m wide, provides for many enjoyable activities by the public.

Council adopted a motion on June 24, 2020, Item 7.2, for City Ambassadors on the Hamilton Beachfront, as the trail became popular with out of town cyclists speeding and racing on the trail, leading to safety concerns for the public in the immediate area. As a result, Council directed Licensing and By-Law Services to hire two summer student Waterfront Ambassadors to educate the public during the months of July and August 2020 at a cost of \$12,000 funded by the Hamilton Beach Reserve Account No. 108037.

Planning Committee was updated on the success of the program on January 12, 2021, Information Report PED21013, conveying the positive impact it had for the residents of the Beach Community in the overall enjoyment of the waterfront.

Council approved the program again on February 10, 2021, Item 11.3 Planning Committee Report PED21-002, to include, in addition to concerns for out of town cyclists, apprehensions for the increase in use of e-bikes, e-scooters and other electric powered devices on the waterfront trail, contrary to the City's by-law. Licensing and By-Law Services hired 2 full time summer students and expanded the program to operate from May -August 2021 at a cost of \$27,522, funded by the Hamilton Beach Reserve Account No. 108037.

At the Council meeting on February 6, 2022, Planning Committee Report 22-002 Item 11.1 was approved, to have 2 full time summer student ambassadors to educate the public and enforce infractions on the waterfront trail for the months of May - August 2022, at a cost of approximately \$28,740.49 to be funded by the Hamilton Beach Reserve Account No. 108037.

At the Council meeting on May 9, 2023, Planning Committee Report 23-007 Item 12.1 was approved at a cost of approximately \$32,392.86 to be funded by the Hamilton Beach Reserve Account No. 108037. Council directed staff to report back with an evaluation of the program, and recommendations as to whether it should be made permanent as part of the 2024 Budget process, and/or whether it should be extended to other areas of the City.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

Not Applicable.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Not Applicable.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend that the Waterfront Ambassador Program, incorporating both education and enforcement, is having a positive effect on the safety and overall enjoyment of those on the waterfront trail. Ambassadors engage with neighbouring residents and local/out of town trail visitors. The goal of the program is to engage with the public and inform and educate on trail etiquette as opposed to issuing charges. Staff engaged with the public while patrolling the pathway, often responding to residents who reached out with concerns, inquiries and stories. Ambassadors sought out residents to ask their thoughts and recommendations of how they could improve trail safety and keeping them up to date on developments.

Staff have received public inquiries pertaining to the return of the student ambassadors at the onset of the 2023 summer season as a welcome program to the neighbourhood. Patrolling on bicycles provides open approach opportunities to engage with others.

They are able to rest and communicate trail rules directly. The bikes are able to traverse onto the beach and grassy sections safely to address unsafe beach fires and BBQ use. The Hamilton Beachfront has a popular social media following due to its amenities and

accessible paved pathway enabling a variety of activities to occur while enjoying beautiful views and wildlife habitat. It is important to advise destination visitors on how to respectfully and safely enjoy their experience while providing opportunities to adhere to the rules prior to the issuance of fines which may discourage repeat visits.

Table 1 shows the progression of the program from 2020 to 2023, indicating the continued need and reliance by the public for the program. Higher visitor numbers were captured at the peak of COVID-19 in 2021 and in some areas continue to show high traffic on the trail (skateboarders, rollerbladers). Education is the prime focus of the program, over the course of three years Audible Warnings have decreased substantially, from 1,049 in 2021 to 208 in 2023 despite there being a relatively consistent estimate of visitors. A total of 24 charges were issued over the three-year term. Charges issued under the Parks By-Law 01-219 included:

- Stoke fire/bonfire in park;
- Use charcoal portable BBQs in park; and,
- Use other than charcoal/briquettes in stationary barbecues.

Table 1

Waterfront Student Ambassador Program (May to August)	2020	2021	2022	2023
Overview				
Estimated Visitors	123,942	186,495	61,026	104,571
Estimated Escooter, Ebike, etc	62	159	335	187
Estimated Group Cyclists (5+)	45	503	52	97
Cyclists	15,673	24,628	5,229	11,696
Pedestrians	40,816	73,634	31,881	52,541
Skateboard/Rollerbladers	2,259	5,657	1,672	4,112
Beach patrons	65,194	82,576	19,945	36,224
Warnings	796	1,920	558	421
Charges	10	9	2	3
Warnings				
Fire/BBQ	99	77	61	74
Audible Warning	458	1,049	333	208
Smoking	94	N/A	64	58
Speed	145	609	73	45
Social Distancing	N/A	26	N/A	N/A

More information can be found in the attached as Appendix "A" to Report PED23237.

To date the ambassador pilot program has successfully:

1. Improved the overall safety and enjoyment of the Waterfront Trail.
2. Educated the public on trail etiquette and Park By-Law including the use of audible warnings when passing others on the trail, navigating at safe speeds, and maintaining activity on the appropriate side of the path
3. Established and enhanced relationships with the beach community residents by asking questions, active listening, providing updates and sharing stories.

Students often went above and beyond the program requirements including:

- Requesting the trimming of greenery affecting site lines of the path;
- Ensuring entrepreneurs, including on one occasion, the prohibition of a new alcoholic beverage, marketed on the trail, without a permit;
- Assisting to return a small child to their family;
- Returning lost articles;
- Answering questions on other by-laws; and,
- Educating on area wildlife.

During the 2022 Summer Program, students conducted several patrols of Bayfront Park to Pier 8 in Ward 1 and 2. Their observations are detailed in the table 2 below.

Table 2

BayFront Student Ambassador Program (May to August)	2022
Overview	
Estimated Visitors	10,291
Estimated Escooter, Ebike, etc.	57
Estimated Group Cyclists (5>)	6
Cyclists	540
Pedestrians	8,057
Skateboard/Rollerbladers	136
Beach patrons	82
Warnings	83
Charges	0
Warnings	
Fire/BBQ	12
Audible Warning	43
Smoking	13
Speed	14
Social Distancing	N/A

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The success of the above additional park patrol indicates that additional students and areas could also benefit from the program in educating and contributing to a safer environment for the public to explore the City's waterfront. Additional high traffic sites could be considered and included for the program:

- As it easily adapts to new locations;
- Ambassadors are mobile;
- The Municipal Parks By-Law 01-219 is in effect City-wide; and,
- Typical park signage would already be in place (would review for additional signage needs).

In summary, the Council approved Waterfront Ambassador program was welcomed by area residents, appreciated by both local and out of town users, in decreasing the safety concerns and increasing the overall positive perception of the trail.

Attached as Appendix "A" to Report PED23237, Summer 2023 Waterfront Trail Report.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Council may choose to revisit the program prior to the start of the next summer season and bring forward a motion at that time at an approximate cost of \$36,658.18 for 2 full time summers students to patrol the beachfront for the period May until August 2024 funded from the Hamilton Beach Reserve Account 108037. This is not recommended as the program has been successful from its inception in 2020 and should become permanent at this time.
2. Council may choose to confirm the program permanent, *without* the recommended enhancements of 2 additional summer students to assist with other areas in the City on a rotational schedule at an approximate cost \$36,658.18 funded by the Planning and Economic Development Department, Licensing and By-Law Services.
3. Council may choose to confirm the program permanent, *without* the recommended enhancements of 2 additional summer students to assist with other areas in the City on a rotational schedule at an approximate cost of \$36,658.18 but include the purchase of a vehicle at the cost of \$54,525 plus operating costs \$6,250 for the program be funded from Planning and Economic Development, Licensing and By-Law Services accounts.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix "A" to Report PED23237 - Summer 2023 Waterfront Trail Report