



CITY OF HAMILTON
HEALTHY AND SAFE COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENT
Children's and Community Services Division

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	December 5, 2024
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Greater Hamilton Food Share Update (HSC23072(a)) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Colin McMullan (905) 546-2424 Ext. 3538
SUBMITTED BY:	Brenda Bax Acting Director, Children's and Community Services Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	<i>BBax</i>

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That representatives from Greater Hamilton Food Share present to the Emergency and Community Services Committee, on an annual basis, how funding has been distributed and the contract work they are doing to address food insecurity and the ongoing crisis in Hamilton's emergency food system (HSC23072).
- (b) That, as required by the Corporate Budget Policy, as approved by Council on FCS12010(a), the 2024 approved base budget amount of \$1.25M and the matching base budget Reserve funding of \$627,730 be transferred from General Manager's Office, Healthy and Safe Communities Dept ID, 679707 to the Children's and Community Services Division Dept id, 679136.
- (c) That Council approves the inclusion of the 2025 Budget variance of \$627,730 in the 2025 Tax Operating Budget so that the full committed balance of \$1.25M is fully levy funded in the 2025 Tax Operating budget.
- (d) That the General Manager of the Healthy and Safe Communities Department or designate be authorized and directed to execute the annual funding agreement with Greater Hamilton Food Share in a form that is satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Food insecurity and the number of people accessing foodbanks is increasing. At the same time, donations to foodbanks have been on the decline. In September of 2023, members of the Emergency Food Strategic Planning Committee/Greater Hamilton Food Share made a request for \$1.25M annually to address the ongoing crisis in Hamilton's emergency food system, which was subsequently approved as part of the City of Hamilton's 2024 operating budget. In addition, given the severe and immediate nature of the crisis, the City of Hamilton also approved an emergency grant of \$625,000 in the fall of 2023.

This report provides a year-to-date progress update and recommends that representatives of Greater Hamilton Food Share present annually to the Emergency and Community Services (ECS) Committee on the work they are undertaking to address food insecurity in Hamilton along with the realignment of funds to help support this work. Approval of this report will also allow the transfer of the 2024 base budget of \$1.25M from the General Manager, Healthy and Safe Communities Office, to the Children's and Community Services Division who is now designated to provide oversight to this program of work. The final recommendation is to include the \$627,730, that was funded by a Reserve in 2024 in the 2025 Tax Operating Budget.

Alternatives for Consideration: Not Applicable

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: The annual funding request for \$1.25M was referred to, and approved, as part of the City of Hamilton's 2024 budget process, which included funding through a one-time Reserve transfer of \$627,730 to bring the overall 2024 Levy increase to \$622,270, as approved by Council.

Staff are requesting a transfer of the 2024 base budget of \$1.25M from the General Manager's Office Dept ID 679707 to the Children's and Community Services Division Dept ID 679136 and include the \$627,730 that was funded by a Reserve in 2024 in the 2025 Tax Operating Budget so that the full \$1.25M will now be levy funded.

Greater Hamilton Food Share (HFS) (HSC23072)	2024 Budget	2025 Budget
Approved HFS Annual Budget	\$ 1,250,000	\$ 1,250,000
Reserve Utilization	\$ (627,730)	\$ 0
Levy	\$ 622,270	\$ 1,250,000
Prior Year Approved Levy	\$ 0	\$ (622,270)
Current Year Revised Levy Increase	\$ 622,270	\$ 627,730

Staffing: N/A

Legal: N/A

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On September 21, 2023, members of the Emergency Food Strategic Planning Committee/Greater Hamilton Food Share made a request to the Emergency and Community Services Committee for \$1.25M (\$625,000 for the purchase of food and \$625,000 to address staffing and infrastructure expenses at partner food bank agencies) annually to address the ongoing crisis in Hamilton's emergency food system.

On October 19, 2023, staff brought forward a report (HSC23072) to the Emergency and Community Services Committee recommending that the funding request made in the amount of \$1.25M, be referred to the 2024 Tax Supported Operating Budget Process. Given the severe and immediate nature of the crisis, In addition, Council approved an emergency grant of \$625,000 to Greater Hamilton Food Share at its October 25, 2023 meeting.

The annual request for \$1.25M was referred to, and subsequently approved, as part of the City of Hamilton's 2024 budget process which included funding through a one-time reserve transfer of \$627,730 to offset the overall levy increase, as approved by Council. The City entered into a legal agreement with Greater Hamilton Food Share for the period of July 1, 2024-June 30 2025 for the \$1.25M.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

The recommendations adhere to the City of Hamilton's Corporate Budget Policy (FCS 12010(a)). Transferring the funding agreement and partnership from the General Manager to Children's and Community Services aligns with the food insecurity work the division is doing in the early years system and Community Safety and Well Being plan.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Staff in Finance were consulted for input into the financial components, implications and recommendations of this report. They are supportive of the recommendations put forth. Staff in the Clerk's Office were consulted for wording regarding recommendation (a). Staff from Greater Hamilton Food Share were also consulted for input during the preparation of the report.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Greater Hamilton Food Share has been in operation for over 30 years as the city's primary hunger-relief food hub and emergency food systems coordinator for the network of agencies it supports. Greater Hamilton Food Share provides food resources to 16 member agencies, operating 22 emergency food programs ensuring that people living in poverty have access to healthy good food for themselves and their families.

In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, Greater Hamilton Food Share distributed 4,670,610 pounds of food items that have been valued based on national standards recommended by Food Banks Canada at \$3.58 per pound for a total food value of \$16,720,784. Greater Hamilton Food Share purchased \$628,141 worth of food with a total weight of 445,635 pounds with the \$625,000 provided by the City of Hamilton at the end of 2023 which was distributed to their 16 member agencies.

The Emergency Food Network consists of some twenty-two hunger relief programs operating across the entire city of Hamilton. While it successfully secured one-time funding of \$625,000 from City Council in 2023 and a commitment of \$1.25M for 2024-25 (allocated equally for food/products and staffing/infrastructure to be managed by Greater Hamilton Food Share), there were concerns about the bureaucracy of the network meetings, the level of transparency, and the level of consensus-building within decision-making processes. Further, attendance at virtual meetings was low, and discussions centred primarily around ongoing advocacy efforts. Additionally, the network's structure raised questions about accountability, and some trust issues among participating agencies were identified.

In an effort to address these issues, during the past year, Greater Hamilton Food Share has worked with leadership from the various member agencies' to create two working groups: leadership and logistics. Both groups' initial meetings were highly successful with full in-person attendance. Key items of focus for the leadership group were:

- Developing a term of reference
- Transparency and the development of collaborative goals and shared accountability.

- The identification of system-level needs
- Branding and potential changes to the name of the emergency food network
- City of Hamilton funding and the process of allocating the funds

Throughout the process, Greater Hamilton Food Share management has adopted a participatory approach, emphasizing transparency whereby the group has agreed to share organization allocation information to enable a collective decision-making process for food allocation.

Additionally, several potential sub-committee projects were identified following system-level discussions:

1. Involvement of people with lived experience – perhaps an advisory
2. The development of a rating scale for food allocation which incorporates other key elements besides #of visits, dependency on HFS – possibly specialized populations, economic status of individuals receiving food etc.
3. Housing strategy – how to advocate and work more closely with housing providers to illustrate the need for more collaboration between housing and food security services.
4. Link2Feed project – one-stop food bank appointments from any location
5. Procuring specific foods for food banks – especially from an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) lens
6. Branding for the network – “emergency” no longer truly demonstrates the ongoing levels of food insecurity.
7. Indigenous Food Security Alignment - a working group focused on aligning Hamilton's food security network with the City of Hamilton's Urban Indigenous Strategy and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations.
8. Food Security Communication Network - a working group tasked with developing a portal or app to streamline communication across the food security network.

Finally, Greater Hamilton Food Share and partners have approved an initial funding formula, using the number of visits as the primary factor, with an added weighted factor based on a food bank's dependency on Greater Hamilton Food Share. A draft grant

application template was shared, and all grant applications will undergo a participatory approval process by the group.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:

N/A

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED:

N/A