

Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) Update January 2016 – October 2016

The EAC last presented to Council March 8, 2016 to report on their activities for 2015. The EAC met a total of seven times from January 2016 to October 2016. Updates on the Urban Agricultural Strategy, Colchester and Bremner debate, and the Capital Region Board Growth Plan were provided. The EAC was invited to attend public events and council meetings for all the above items. County Connect was launched and the EAC was invited to share concerns and receive answers to questions surrounding the County.

1. Beaver Hills Initiative and Beaver Hills Biosphere

A presentation was given to the EAC summarizing the BHI and the opportunities for the committee members to participate. Members of the EAC attended board and working group meetings.

2. Agricultural Master Plan – Urban Agricultural Strategy

The EAC was given updates on the Agricultural Master Plan by County administration and the consultant and were involved in the public consultation process for the Urban Agricultural Strategy. The consultant attended the May meeting to present and gather feedback. Information packages regarding the Urban Hen Pilot Project and Backyard Bees Pilot Project were shared with the consultants. The EAC was invited to join the newsletter, to attend public consultation/information events and to review the Urban Agricultural Strategy draft.

3. Public and Community Gardens

The EAC continued to explore Public and Community Gardens. Feasibility and potential sites, such as Community Gardens in Transportation Utility Corridors, were discussed as was the implementation of a subcommittee. These initiatives are currently on hold until the Urban Agriculture Strategy is finalized. The EAC was invited to attend the planting of a native pollinator garden at the Legacy Forest.

Recommendation: The EAC recommends that potential areas to increase pollinator gardens should be explored within the County to increase native vegetation and decrease manicured grass.

4. Education and Outreach

Continuing on with last year's Green Informational Program, five digital ad ideas were provided to the communications specialist in Planning & Development Services. A new digital ad begins circulation approximately every two months. The topics for 2016 are attached and include:

1. Environmental Sensitivities
2. Abandoned Items (SCRAP)
3. Lawn Care
4. Fire Pit (air quality)
5. Air Quality Monitoring Station

5. Water Conservation/Stormwater

Many of the current County initiatives were discussed, including:

- a. **Yellow Fish Road & “Stream of Dreams”:** In 2013 Strathcona County signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Trout Unlimited to manage the Yellow Fish Road Program. The EAC did further research on stormwater and drainage for Utilities. Stream of Dreams is a mural of coloured fish on school fences showing what goes where in the stormwater management system. It is a way to potentially build on the current school programming and yellow fish road program.
Recommendation: The EAC recommends that the County to continue or increase school programming related to stormwater.
- b. **Creek Watch:** The Creek Watch program has been implemented in Edmonton and Calgary. Strathcona County would be interested in the program but will have to wait until the program receives more funding and continues.
Recommendation: The EAC recommends that the County supports the Creek Watch program and encourages it to extend to Strathcona County.
- c. **Greenhouse low water plant stickers:** Stickers have been placed on low water, low maintenance plants at both the Salisbury and Greenland greenhouses.
- d. **Annual rain barrel & composter event:** The County currently offers a one-day event promoting the use of rain barrels and composters where a limited amount of rain barrels are available for purchase. It is a very popular event with supplies quickly selling out.
Recommendation: The EAC recommends that if feasible, the event to be expanded to two or three days instead of one, or for the event to be put on multiple times a year.
- e. **Utility bill notes**
Recommendations: The EAC recommends that they review current relevant policy and coordinate with Utilities to suggest relevant changes. The EAC recommends that the utility bill be improved for residents to visualize consumption by including a graph indicating peak hours/annual usage, a comparison of the average use statistic for the area, and/or an one-line ‘translator’ of units to liters. The EAC recommends that the flat rate for water consumption be reviewed and compared to the possibility of offering a tiered or fluctuating rate for residents to offer an incentive for water conservation.
- f. **Water conservation messaging:** The EAC learnt about how current Design and Construction Standards work towards landscapes that help conserve water use. Discussion around residential use of water raised concerns about the need to educate the public about water conservation and alternatives to chemical fertilizer. The Lawn Care digital ad was put into circulation for the summer months. The EAC were updated on the Pond Parties and were invited to attend the three 2016 events.
Recommendations: The EAC recommends that a timely stuffer be included with the utility bill to advertise “Water Conservation Week”.

6. Litter

Concerns were raised surrounding litter, dog waste, construction waste, and garbage and ash receptacles. Compost, winter sanding and the blue bag program were also discussed. Administration explained the current Design and Construction Standards and described the current initiatives. The EAC was invited to share specific concerns using County Connect. The possibility of working with the Chamber of Commerce to provide more prevalent ash receptacles was discussed. The EAC was invited to volunteer in the annual Pitch In event.