

**Environmental Advisory Committee
Annual Report - 2009
to
St. Albert City Council**

1. RECOMMENDATION

That the Environmental Advisory Committee's 2009 Annual Report be accepted as information and that the Environmental Advisory Committee continue to operate through 2010.

2. OVERVIEW

The Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) was established through Bylaw 29/2005 to advise Council on issues related to the environment. The purpose of the Committee is to assist City Administration and advise Council with respect to environmental policies, strategies and initiatives, especially where a public perspective is desirable. The Committee membership was adjusted through an amendment to Bylaw 29/2005 and currently includes six citizens at large and one member of council as voting members, and a representative of Alberta Environment, a representative of the Alberta Health Services and one representative from a post secondary institution as non-voting participants.

Direction and assistance to the EAC were obtained through involvement of the City's Office of the Environment (OE).

Council provided the EAC with four main priorities for 2009:

- i. Solid Waste Management Program Improvements – Communication Plan for Pay As You Throw Changes and Curbside Recycling
- ii. State of the Sturgeon River Report (with possible tie-in to Tourism Master Plan)
- iii. Evaluation of the River Edge Enhancement Project (REEP)
- iv. Involvement in the Community and Corporate Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Action Plan

3. MEMBERSHIP

The EAC's membership underwent several changes in 2009. Bylaw 29/2005 was amended on April 6, 2009 to appoint a sixth citizen member and to change the designation of the Alberta Environment, Alberta Health Services and Post-Secondary members to non-voting participants.

Additionally, two members resigned during 2009 for personal reasons. For administrative reasons, one vacancy was not immediately filled as interviews for new members (to begin terms in 2010) were near.

To allow proper staggering of committee appointments in future years, the terms of two new appointees (Nikolas Hill and Walter Vos) were chosen to end on December 31, 2009.

January 1, 2009 through December 31, 2009

- Wes Brodhead** Citizen-at-large First of two year term
- Jason Cooke Citizen-at-large First of two year term
- Carole Newton Citizen-at-large First of two year term
- Merv Rogan Citizen-at-large Last of two year term
- Dan Stoker§ Citizen-at-large Last of two year term
- Rasel Hossain Alberta Environment□
- Ludmilla Rodriguez Alberta Health Services□
- Wendy Vanderwel Post-Secondary□

• continued as Chair

** served as Vice-Chair from January 22

§ resigned from the committee for personal reasons April, 2009

□ position redefined as non-voting participant on April 6, 2009

May 19, 2009 through December 31, 2009

- Nikolas Hill§ Citizen-at-large One year term ending Dec. 2009
- Walter Vos Citizen-at-large One year term ending Dec. 2009

§ resigned from the committee for personal reasons August, 2009

Council Representation

Carol Watamaniuk continued as the Council representative, and Roger Lemieux continued as the alternate until October 27, 2009, at which point Len Bracko became the alternate.

City Administration Representation

Committee assistance was obtained from Leah Jackson and Meghan Myers of the Office of the Environment. Rachel Vincent and Linda Kuprys of Legislative Services recorded the minutes of the meetings and provided advice on legislative matters and protocol.

4. ACTIVITIES DURING 2009

The Environmental Advisory Committee met nine times during 2009, meeting monthly except in July, August and December; to accommodate member schedules, the October and November meetings were deferred from the usual meeting date and held shortly thereafter. A sub-committee of the EAC met with Council at the City's annual board meetings in November. No other meetings of the full committee with Council or the Senior Management Team were deemed necessary. The Chair (J. Cooke) met with the Mayor, Council's EAC representative (Councillor Watamaniuk) and members of City Administration to establish Council's four priorities for the EAC in 2009. Various sub-committees of the EAC met with City Administration during the year to work on specific issues.

Progress Made on Council's Four Priorities for the EAC in 2009

i) Solid Waste Management Program Improvements – Communication Plan for Pay As You Throw changes and Curbside Recycling

A sub-committee of the EAC (J. Cooke and L. Rodriguez) reviewed the City's communication plan for Pay As You Throw waste collection program changes and the introduction of Curbside Recycling and provided input and feedback to the Office of the Environment.

The full committee discussed several aspects of the City's Solid Waste Management Plan at meetings throughout the year. In response to Council discussion of possible biweekly collection of refuse, the EAC provided unrequested written advice to Council (summarized in Appendix I).

ii) State of the Sturgeon River Report (with possible tie-in to Tourism Master Plan)

Due to changing priorities at the Office of the Environment, this EAC mandate was deferred to 2010.

iii) Evaluation of the River Edge Enhancement Project (REEP)

A sub-committee of the EAC (N. Hill, C. Newton and W. Vos) met with representatives from City Administration to conduct a review and evaluation of the River's Edge Enhancement Project (REEP).

The sub-committee presented a report that was endorsed by the full committee at the EAC's December 11, 2009 meeting. The report was presented to Council at its January 18, 2010 meeting by sub-committee chair C. Newton, and is summarized in Appendix II.

iv) Involvement in the Community and Corporate Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Action Plan

Due to changing priorities at the Office of the Environment, this EAC mandate was deferred to 2010.

Environmental Initiatives Grant Program

In addition to the four priorities identified by Council for 2009, the EAC continued with its other major function, namely reviewing applications submitted under the City's Environmental Initiatives Grant Program (EIGP) and providing funding recommendations to Council. Two rounds of applications were held for the EIGP in 2009 in the spring and fall in accordance with existing Council policy.

Additionally, at the request of Council, the EAC conducted a review of the EIGP program. In cooperation with the Office of the Environment, several changes were recommended to improve the program's Administration and delivery. The recommendations were received and accepted by Council at its regular meeting on January 18, 2010; the comments that accompanied Administration's agenda report are provided in Appendix III.

Relevant Motions:(EAC13-2009) Moved by M. Rogan

That the Environmental Advisory Committee recommend to Council that the following Environmental Initiatives Grants be awarded:

Society of Friends of the St. Albert Public Gardens (purchase of mulcher/shredder)	\$5,000.00
Neil M. Ross Catholic School (Environmental Awareness project, recycling supplies)	\$500.00
TOTAL	\$5,500.00

CARRIED

(EAC32-2009) Moved by C. Newton

That the Environmental Advisory Committee recommend to Council that the following Environmental Initiatives Grants be awarded:

Muriel Martin School (to assist with establishment of natural space for an outdoor classroom)	\$3,500.00
École La Mission (to assist with some naturalization of school grounds)	\$1,000.00
Albert Lacombe School (From Seed to Salad or Soup program)	\$474.00
Leo Nickerson School (for collection bins and a 6-month pilot project for recycling bin rental)	\$2,240.00
Sir George Simpson School (for collection bins and a 6-month pilot project for recycling bin rental, plus devices to promote energy efficient practices)	\$2,573.41
BLESS (for Fixed Viewing Binoculars for Platform at Big Lake)	\$3,900.00
St. Albert Christmas Bird Count Committee (for 2009 Bird Count)	\$350.00
Lorne Akins School (to establish resource centre providing materials on environment-related subjects)	\$927.91
Neil M. Ross School (to purchase collection bins to establish a recycling program)	\$760.00
Sir Alexander Mackenzie School (to obtain a wider range of environmentally themed library materials)	\$1,000.00
Richard S. Fowler School (to enable some naturalization of school grounds)	\$3,200.00
Wild Rose School (to assist with establishment of natural space for an outdoor classroom)	\$4,000.00
TOTAL	\$23,935.22

CARRIED

Relevant Motion:

(EAC36-2009) Moved by C. Newton

That the EAC recommend to Council that Policy C-EUS-02 Environmental Initiatives Grant Program be amended in accordance with the proposed Policy provided in the agenda package dated December 10, 2009.

CARRIED

EAC Sub-Committees During 2009

The following sub-committees were either struck during 2009 or continued work that began in 2008:

EAC Bylaw Review (J. Cooke, L. Jackson, R. Vincent)

The sub-committee was tasked with reviewing Environmental Advisory Committee Bylaw 29/2005 and to incorporate revisions and modifications that were deemed necessary/appropriate, taking into account the experiences of the committee since its inception. After ratification at the March 26, 2009 EAC meeting, the Committee's joint recommendations with Administration were presented in an agenda report at the April 6, 2009 Council meeting.

Relevant Motion:

(EAC10-2009) Moved by J. Cooke

That the EAC recommend to Council that Bylaw 9/2009, being Amendment 3 to Environmental Advisory Committee Bylaw 29/2005, be enacted and that a sixth citizen member be appointed.

CARRIED

Solid Waste Management Communications Plan (J. Cooke, L. Rodriguez)

The sub-committee reviewed the City's communication plan for Pay As You Throw waste collection program changes and the introduction of Curbside Recycling and provided input and feedback to the Office of the Environment. It is expected that the sub-committee may continue similar work in 2010, and remains active.

Smart Growth (C. Newton, M. Rogan)

After receiving two presentations on Smart Growth from City Administration, the sub-committee was tasked with formulating a statement to capture the EAC's position on the Smart Growth initiative. As the presentation of the Smart Growth plan to Council was postponed until 2010, the sub-committee did not deliver its report, which is now anticipated in early 2010.

Evaluation of REEP (River's Edge Enhancement Project) (C. Newton, N. Hill, W. Vos)

The sub-committee met with City Administration and toured various sites in the Sturgeon River valley before preparing a report for Council assessing the current state of the REEP project and its future prospects. The report is provided in Appendix I, and was presented to Council on January 18, 2010.

Wildlife Guidelines (W. Brodhead, M. Rogan, W. Vanderwel)

Council requested that, with input from the EAC, Administration prepare a set of guidelines relative to matters of wildlife within the City limits. The sub-committee was tasked to work with City staff in this regard. At the close of 2009, Administration was still assembling information for the sub-committee to review, and it is expected that this work will take place in early 2010.

Three-Spined Stickleback Issue (W. Brodhead, C. Newton, M. Rogan)

Following the announcement of the City's intention to treat the Riel ponds with rotenone to eliminate the invasive, non-indigenous three-spined stickleback fish species, a sub-committee was formed to further investigate the issue and to address concerns that had been voiced by EAC committee members. At the close of 2009, the issue was still under investigation and the sub-committee anticipated reporting back to the full committee in early 2010.

Other Issues Before the EAC in 2009

- Received information on the City's progress towards achieving the goals set in the Environmental Master Plan (2009);
- Received quarterly reports from the Office of the Environment on e-mail correspondence from residents on topics of environmental relevance;
- Received presentations from the public relating to Environmental Initiatives Grant Program (EIGP) applications and additionally received a follow-up presentation made by St. Albert High School students reporting their findings on biodiversity of the Sturgeon River (using equipment obtained in part from EIGP funding);
- Continued to receive information on the AltaLink Transmission Line crossing the Riel ponds and Sturgeon River. Following AltaLink's decision to install "Firefly Flapper" marking devices to reduce incidents of avian collision, the Chair wrote a letter to AltaLink's Environmental Advisor marking the EAC's recognition of this important step;
- Received information and provided input on the education campaign supporting the Idle-Free Bylaw;
- In addition to providing input on the communications plan, continued to receive information relating to operational aspects of the Solid Waste Management System Review and plans for further changes/enhancements to the City's waste management programs;
- Received information on the Sturgeon Watershed Initiative;
- Received information regarding the City's policies and practices regarding encroachment on the riparian zone of the Sturgeon River by adjacent landowners;
- Received a presentation from Mr. A. Landals (Director, Parks Resource Management Coordination, Alberta Tourism, Parks & Recreation) regarding the long-term plans for Lois Hole Provincial Park;
- Received information regarding the City's involvement in the One Simple Act program.

5. YEAR 2010 EAC ACTIVITIES

In 2010, it is anticipated that the Environmental Advisory Committee will continue to provide input and advice as requested from Council especially related to issues where public consultation is necessary. The EAC anticipates that it will continue to work closely with the Office of the Environment in evaluating the City's progress towards achieving the stated targets and goals for the Environmental Master Plan (2009).

In addition to the above, issues, topics and other needs that may require specific involvement of the EAC could include, but are not limited to:

- Assessment of grant applications on behalf of Council for the Environmental Initiatives Grants Program;
- Participation in the development of Wildlife Guidelines for the City of St. Albert;
- Involvement in the preparation of the State of the Sturgeon River Report;
- Taking part in the establishment of a green house gas inventory for the City of St. Albert;
- Participation in the development of the Parks and Open Spaces Management Plan (POSMP) and possible further consideration of the Tree Protection Bylaw;
- Liaison with City departments on matters of environmental importance.

6. CONGRATULATIONS EXTENDED TO CITY

The Environment Advisory Committee wishes to congratulate the City on its innovative programs that encourage citizen participation in environmental responsibility as exemplified through implementation of the Environmental Initiatives Grant Program. Efforts to openly involve and encourage public input and involvement in improving our environment must be applauded.

Appendix I – Written Advice Submitted to Council Biweekly Garbage and/or Blue Bag Recycling Collection

Basis for EAC Advice

The EAC has been involved in the development of the Solid Waste Management System Review (SWMSR) with City Administration and *sonnevera international corp.* The EAC therefore considers itself to be well informed on the general subject of current and future waste management plans for the City.

EAC Perspective on Biweekly Garbage and/or Blue Bag Recycling Collection

The EAC believes that an efficient waste management system is not only measured in terms of cost to residents, but also must take into account issues such as ease of use and/or ease of adaptability for residents. Biweekly garbage or blue bag recycling, particularly during the high volume summer and fall months, would have the immediate negative impact of doubling the refuse/recycling storage requirements of all residents and might have the consequence of creating negative public perception of what otherwise has been a successful and progressive change to St. Albert's waste management system.

The EAC also notes that an automated garbage/recycling/compost collection system is recommended as St. Albert's next major change to its waste management practices, and that the attendant review may be needed as early as 2011. An important part of this process will be consideration of weekly curbside collection of organic waste; if adopted, this practice would naturally lend itself to biweekly collection of the remaining non-organic garbage.

As such, the EAC believes that consideration of biweekly garbage collection in particular should be deferred to be part of the evaluation of the automated collection concept. Biweekly blue bag recycling may be feasible but would likely only be acceptable to the public if significant savings could be demonstrated to compensate for the loss of service and attendant inconvenience of storing recyclable material for longer periods.

Further, the EAC reiterates its advice to **make curbside collection of compostable yard waste the next interim improvement in the waste management system**, as a prelude to considering full curbside organic collection as part of an automated refuse collection system. If this step is taken, the City should ensure that the toters that are purchased are completely compatible with a full organics program. This would avoid a costly and wasteful change from yard waste-only to full organic toters in the future.

Appendix II – Written Advice and Presentation Made to Council Review of the River Edge Enhancement Project (REEP)

EAC sub-committee members Nikolas Hill, Walter Vos, Carole Newton

REEP began in 2005 with the goal of improving the environment along the edge of the Sturgeon River in St. Albert. The project began with an inventory of the riparian area along several portions of the Sturgeon River, followed by specific recommendations for biodiversity and aesthetic improvements for each. From a selection of priority ranked “enhancement sites” several successful planting events of native trees and shrubs have taken place since 2005 with the common effect of increasing the biodiversity of the river’s edge. This initiative also demonstrates the success of community partnerships between City of St. Albert staff and public volunteers.

The St. Albert Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) has reviewed the activities and reports on REEP and due to the success of its initiatives, recommends that Council continue endorsing the program while encouraging the continued community involvement and support of volunteers and local businesses. In order for the City to continue the successes of REEP, the EAC has several recommendations:

- Native species plantings should continue to be planned for identified areas to reduce physical impacts such as bank erosion, biological impacts such as invasive species or non-native species, and reduce the need to maintain mowed turf in the riparian zone.
- Monitor and measure progress of previous plantings by assessing sites for survivability in order to learn which species are best to use in river edge rehabilitation projects.
- Address maintenance issues such as competition with invasive, non-native species (‘weeds’), accidental mowing, and beaver impacts to REEP planting sites.
- The current beaver guidelines are solid, however, there is need for more monitoring and updating of the wire meshing around certain trees along the length of the river.
- Extend REEP guidelines and recommendations for planting in areas East of Boudreau and West of the train trestle bridge.
- Community involvement is a key element in the success of this initiative, and as such stewardship of these areas by citizens should be encouraged with specific sites being ‘adopted’ by groups to plant, weed and further maintain planting sites.
- Continue the collaboration with BLESS as the key partner in the REEP program.

In conclusion, the success of REEP initiatives has contributed to our watershed health in addition to increasing awareness and building the capacity for action in our community. To accomplish the goals set out by REEP and to continue the progress towards improving the environment along the Sturgeon River in St. Albert, this must be a shared vision that includes strong collaboration between the City and the community.

Appendix III – Environmental Advisory Committee Comments Environmental Initiatives Grant Program (EIGP) Policy Review

The Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) congratulates the City of St. Albert for continuing to show a strong commitment to the environment by funding community-based projects through the Environmental Initiatives Grant Program (EIGP). The EAC believes that the program has been highly successful to date, and endorses the recommended changes to the EIGP policy and procedures. The proposed changes were arrived at jointly between Administration and the EAC with the hopes to make the program easier to administer, both for applicants and for city staff, and to further clarify the criteria for eligible and successful projects.