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Item No.
Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee
September 10, 2014

TO: Chair and Members of the Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee

SUBMITTED BY: Original signed

Jane Fraser, Director, Planning & Infrastructure

DATE: August 14, 2014

SUBJECT: HRM's Potential Participation in the Earth Hour City Challenge 2015

RECOMMENDATION REPORT

ORIGIN

ESSC February 6, 2014: Request staff report to consider the costs and implications of participating in Earth Hour City Challenge 2015.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

HRM Charter, Power to Spend Money 79 (r) salaries, remuneration and expenses of the Mayor, councilors, officers and employees of the Municipality

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax not participate in the Earth Hour City Challenge in 2015/16.

BACKGROUND

Dr. Robert Rangeley from the World Wildlife Federation gave a presentation to the Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee on February 6, 2014. As part of the presentation, Dr. Rangeley invited HRM to consider participating in the Earth Hour City Challenge in 2015.

DISCUSSION

The Earth Hour City Challenge (EHCC) is an international year-long competition among cities to promote climate change mitigation and renewable energy. Cities can register and compete against each other on their greenhouse gas reduction and sustainability commitments, actions and performance.

Last year, the Earth Hour City Capital was the City of Cape Town, South Africa and Canada's national Earth Hour Capital winner was the City of Edmonton. In total, 11 of the 163 global cities taking part in the Challenge were from Canada - Ajax, Calgary, District of Saanich, Edmonton, Greater Sudbury, Montreal, North Cowichan, the City of North Vancouver, Pickering, Surrey, and Vancouver.

Some of the incentives cited for local governments participating in EHCC include:

- **Credibility:** Reporting promotes transparency, accountability and comparability of local climate action;
- **Visibility:** Increase awareness and support among the public, policy makers, investors, companies, and the media at local, national, and global levels;
- **Recognition:** Be recognized as a leading community that publically shares its commitments, progress, and actions;
- **Inspiration:** The reporting database contains thousands of entries. Find action examples, get ideas from others, and accelerate your own local action plan; and
- **Feedback:** This year all cities will receive qualitative feedback on their plans.

The EHCC currently operates on a May-to-March annual cycle and works through five key phases:

1. **Submit city data:** To become an EHCC candidate a city needs to report at minimum at least one mitigation action and one commitment. ICLEI and WWF hold joint monthly webinars to explain the reporting and evaluation processes, highlighting good practices.
2. **Pre-screening:** Once the reporting window closes, the information provided in the carbonn Cities Climate Registry (cCCR) will be analyzed to identify up to three finalist cities per country. The shortlisting process consists of a rigorous evaluation of cities data. The main criteria at this stage consist of five mainly quantitative elements:
 - i. Commitments:
 - a. Emissions reduction
 - b. Renewable energy
 - c. Energy efficiency
 - ii. Impact of mitigation impacts:
 - a. CO₂ impact
 - b. Section and action types coverage
 - iii. Increasing renewable energy:
 - a. Renewable energy shift actions
 - b. Energy production impact
 - iv. Driving energy efficiency:
 - a. Low carbon shift actions
 - b. Efficiency actions
 - v. Moving investments:
 - a. Investments in renewable solutions
 - b. Action budgets

All cities data are firstly grouped on the basis of their countries so comparisons are made within national boundaries. Data submitted by cities is screened for level of completion amongst highly relevant data points. Each city is then assessed on "Impact" and "Vision" indicators towards achieving a low carbon economy. Impact indicators are broadly based on actions reported while those for Vision are broadly based on commitments and strategies. Both sets of indicators assess quantitative and qualitative data reported, with weighting favoring quantitative data in the initial shortlisting process.

Scores for each city are plotted across an evaluation matrix, and cities that are closest to achieving a successful combination of strategic vision with low carbon actions are preliminarily short listed and presented at consultation calls with local experts. The local expert consultations are held to act as a final quality check on the shortlisted cities before they are presented as national finalist cities to the international jury.

3. **Jury meetings:** Based on the selection of finalist cities, an international jury of experts will identify a national Earth Hour Capital for each country and in a later meeting, one global Earth Hour Capital. For the awards, the jury will be looking for cities that demonstrate an inspiring, ambitious and credible agenda to move towards a renewable and sustainable economy with pace and a clear strategic connection between actions and targets. Actions that contribute to a shift of money flows from fossil to renewable energy solutions will be particularly favoured. Engagement in multi-city initiatives at the international level, such as the Covenant of Mayors or the Mexico City Pact, or at the national level, such as the U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement, will also be considered a positive attribute in the evaluation procedure.

In order to level the playing field, the jury will take into account differences in resources and starting points; the Earth Hour City Challenge is not about having the most hi-tech actions or plans, but about commitment and innovative thinking that focuses on renewable and sustainable solutions to the benefit of both people and the planet.

The international jury will be particularly looking for cities that are:

- Moving toward a low carbon economy and strongly promoting the use of renewable energy solutions. Reported actions, commitments and inventories will be evaluated to assess to the extent to which the cities are strategically shifting from a fossil fuel dependent to a renewable and energy efficient economy.
 - Taking ambitious and strategic actions to meet commitments. City actions will be assessed for level of ambition and ability to target the areas where change is most needed in order to meet their mitigation targets while also meeting human needs in a sustainable way - particularly in housing, energy, mobility and food.
 - Integrating actions into coherent strategies for sustainability. Action and engagement information will be analyzed to find cities with the most comprehensive strategies to meet their climate targets, including multiple sustainability challenges such as adaptation and also engaging the public.
 - Innovation and thinking outside the box. Where relevant, the jury will look for actions and strategies that include transboundary approaches.
 - Significant leadership and credibility with respect to local context. The degree of leadership and credibility will be assessed in terms of analyzing the level of commitments and actions reported in relation to the size of the challenges faced by the city, including the availability of resources and mandate to act.
4. **Public engagement:** Both finalist cities and Earth Hour Capitals will be announced and celebrated through social media, the web, films, and at the EHCC awards conference in the run up to Earth Hour and onwards. Up to three finalist cities per country will be promoted in a social media based campaign aimed at increasing engagement amongst the general public about issues of urban sustainability. Last year, this campaign, through its We Love Cities platform (welovecities.org), received over 300,000 votes from the general public for their favorite cities.

The platform also asked citizens to submit suggestions for making these cities more sustainable and received thousands of responses, which were forwarded and appreciated by the profiled finalist cities.

5. **EHCC Capital Awards:** The national Earth Hour Capitals that are selected for each country, and the global Earth Hour Capital, will be celebrated at a global award ceremony hosted by the previous year's Earth Hour Capital, taking place close to Earth Hour in March. Previous conferences have included local site visits to highlight best practice examples of actions and exclusive seminars with international experts on key urban sustainability issues such as access to financing.

HRM has been encouraged to enter this competition based on some of the great work we have done on climate change mitigation.

Rationale:

- HRM's most recent corporate greenhouse gas inventory is from 2008 data, and most recent community greenhouse gas inventory is from 2009 data. HRM plans to update the corporate inventory in 2015/16 in order to assess progress towards our target of a 30 percent reduction from 2008 levels by 2020.
- The level of effort required is estimated at three months of staff time, and does not align with the methodology of current activities and priorities. The estimated financial implication of the program is approximately \$25,000, made up primarily of estimated staff effort equivalent to approximately three months of a full time employee, and external costs.
- The outcome, of climate and environmental awareness, aligns highly with the service delivery and offering of Clean Foundation. Building capacity with the relationship with Clean Foundation may be a more effective and efficient route to achieving climate change and environmental awareness.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no costs associated with the recommendation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Applying for EHCC allows HRM to be promoted through the competition's social media networks. No community engagement is required for HRM to apply for EHCC.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

If anything, positive environmental outcomes can be expected should HRM choose to enter the EHCC. Should HRM rank highly, it will be marketed as being a leader in climate change and energy work. Environmental commitments made by HRM and realized would increase the municipality's efforts in this area. There are no environmental implications should HRM choose not to enter the EHCC.

ALTERNATIVES

HRM could participate in 2015/16 in spite of capacity issues. HRM could choose to consider EHCC in a subsequent year.

ATTACHMENTS

None

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/index.php> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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