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**Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee
June 5, 2014**

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

Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY: 
Brad Anguish, Director, Community & Recreation Services

DATE: May 30, 2014

SUBJECT: Hope Blooms Greenhouse Project

ORIGIN

Hope Blooms Youth Social Entrepreneurial Ventures Inc. (a federal not-for-profit corporation) has requested to expand its community garden at Murray Warrington Park to include a greenhouse that will be open to the public.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Subsection 61(3) of the *HRM Charter* says “The property vested in the Municipality, absolutely or in trust, is under the exclusive management and control of the Council, unless an Act of the Legislature provides otherwise.”

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Environment & Sustainability Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council authorize and direct staff to CAO, or his delegate, to negotiate and execute an agreement with Hope Blooms in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in Table 1 respecting the operation of a greenhouse to be built at Murray Warrington Park.

BACKGROUND

Based on a staff report, dated April 21, 1998 (Section 3.2.12), at Committee of the Whole, Council approved the Community garden Project at Murray Warrington Park (2346 Brunswick Street, Halifax) in principle which allowed the community group to design, construct and sustain a community garden.

Since 1998, Hope Blooms has been operating a community garden at the Murray Warrington Park site. Hope Blooms is a federally registered not for profit organization (number 874493-9).

Hope Blooms engages at-risk youth and the community at large in building positive environments that foster personal empowerment and healthy communities while creating inclusive, diverse, flourishing spaces that foster potentials being actualized and build sustainable sources of health and wellbeing through active citizenship.

The community is involved in every aspect of this garden. There are 4 local schools involved, 5 local organizations that Hope Blooms partners with for workshops and food distribution and over 70 community volunteers, including 42 youth ages 5 through 15 years old and over 30 adults. The garden has 27 family plots on one side and 3 large communal plots that the youth use on the other side.

The garden is run largely by community members, including 9 youth garden leaders. Workshops at the garden are developed in partnership with community members; there is a youth mentorship component to the community gardening efforts; food is grown by community members and harvested by community members. During the 2013 growing season, Hope Blooms grew over 2000 pounds of vegetables and fruit, thereby having a direct positive impact on community food security.

Hope Blooms is now seeking to expand its community garden at Murray Warrington Park to include a greenhouse. This greenhouse project is meant to help the community expand the amount of food they produce each year, which will help to increase local food security in the community, and to expand community inclusion by means of mentorship and youth-at-risk programming.

DISCUSSION

Hope Blooms received monetary support from the Dragons Den in November 2013 to build a greenhouse to support their work. Build Right Nova Scotia (a cooperative of unionized contractors and tradespeople), subsequently offered to contribute all the supplies and labour necessary to build the greenhouse, allowing Hope Blooms to reinvest the funds from the Dragons Den back into the operations within the community. The greenhouse is being architecturally designed using the latest in green technology and incorporation of sustainable materials in its construction. Through discussions with Build Right Nova Scotia and Hope Blooms, HRM staff is recommending a model whereby HRM will own the greenhouse and Hope Blooms will manage the operations, maintain the structure and deliver youth-at-risk programming and other barrier-free offerings using its Community garden and the greenhouse. Build Right Nova Scotia is responsible for obtaining all construction related permits and approvals associated with this project. The land is designated as Park & Institutional and the greenhouse would be incidental to its use as a public park and used as a meeting place for education and social activities by the community as is contemplated under section 67(1) of the Land Use By-Law for Halifax Peninsula.

Hope Blooms intends to use the greenhouse to provide a space to extend the growing season into the fall and early spring. The space will be open to the public to come and learn, teach youth about how the greenhouse operates, how plants grow and how to successfully contribute to community food security.

Hope Blooms has requested that the greenhouse be built next to their Community garden at Murray Warrington Park. Through the management agreement, Hope Blooms will be required to operate the greenhouse once built, maintain it during the term of the agreement and run specific programming out of the greenhouse.

Mayor’s Conversation on a Healthy Liveable Community

Local food production and promotion is one of the key outcome areas for this report. The greenhouse project with Hope Blooms helps to meet the need of this goal in the Halifax area. The greenhouse will help increase the amount of food that can be produced and it will help to extend the growing season making the food more accessible at certain times of the year that don’t normally lend itself to optimum growing conditions.

Hope Blooms was a stakeholder in the Mayor’s Conversation on a Healthy Liveable Community and consider themselves an active and successful part of the local food security in Halifax.

Healthy Communities Outcome Theme

Council’s Priority Outcome Theme is Healthy Communities. As part of this outcome, it mentions the following: *“A healthy community is a physically active community and HRM’s recreation services strive to provide access to facilities and natural assets that enable a range of choices for structured and unstructured leisure and recreation activities.”* Community Gardening is an unstructured leisure activity. The Greenhouse will help provide residents access to a facility that will support education regarding this unstructured activity.

Continued support of the Hope Blooms community garden and construction of the greenhouse will deliver upon several areas of Community & Recreation Services Business Plan:

1. C&RS 1.4 Healthy Communities - Local Food Production

“Operational programs, policies, and regulations in support of local food production and promotion will be reviewed.”

2. C&RS 6.1 Healthy Communities – Recreation and Leisure

“Expand barrier-free program offerings”

3. C&RS 6.5 Healthy Communities - Local Food Production

“Review vending services and Community Garden program to ensure alignment with Local Food Production and Promotion strategy”

Terms and Conditions of the Management Agreement

Table 1: TERMS AND CONDITIONS	
Property Address/PID#	2346 Brunswick Street, Halifax / 00148635
Owner	Halifax Regional Municipality

Operator	Hope Blooms Youth Social Entrepreneurial Ventures Inc.
Building Area	1,122 sq.ft., subject to final measurement
Term	Five (5) years
Renewal Term	5 years, at HRM's sole option
Management Fee	N/A
Key Terms	<p>Hope Blooms will be required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) operate the greenhouse in a manner that delivers on community and educational (e.g., youth-at-risk programing) objectives aligned with HRM's priorities;b) ensure the use of the greenhouse is compatible with the use of the site as a municipal park, including making the greenhouse accessible to the public during a reasonable part of day-light hours or normal business day hours (allowing for staff breaks/periods of leave), subject to maintaining a safe and secure facility;c) demonstrate continuing efforts to consult with the community;d) obtain permission from HRM before undertaking any significant construction on the facility or site;e) maintain and repair the facility and site as instructed by HRM;f) comply with all applicable policies of HRM; andg) participate in any social or financial audits (and other reporting features) of the management of the site. <p>The agreement will have standard terms regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) corporate status;b) appropriate indemnities to be provided by Hope Blooms;c) insurance coverage to be provided by Hope Blooms; andd) termination of the agreement.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Entering into the proposed management agreement with Hope Blooms does not create financial implications for HRM.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

If the project is approved, staff proposes to host a public information meeting in collaboration with Hope Blooms prior to the start of construction.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The greenhouse project meets all Council approved Environmental Policy.

ALTERNATIVES

The Standing Committee could recommend that Regional Council not allow the building of a greenhouse on HRM property but allow the continuation of the community garden as it has

operated since 1998. This would not be recommended based on the community support and minimal impact to the surrounding environment. This project will also help increase local food security, local food production and contribute to the health and well-being of the surrounding neighbourhood.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/index.html> 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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