

STAFF REPORT: Administration

REPORT TO: Council
MEETING DATE: July 11, 2011
REPORT NO.: CEDC.11.16
SUBJECT: Support for Agricultural Initiative
PREPARED BY: Lisa Kidd, Communications and Economic Development Coordinator

A. Recommendation

THAT Council receive Report CEDC.11.16, "Support for Agricultural Initiative" and;

THAT Council approve funding for a local Environmental Farm Plan in the amount of \$5,000 through the Economic Development Initiatives Budget.

B. Background

In 2011, Council approved a budget of 20,000 for Economic Development Initiatives. The purpose of this budget is to fund initiatives which are aligned with "Red Hot and Blue", the Town's Economic Development Strategy. The strategy was endorsed by Council August, 2010.

Staff anticipates a future steering committee playing an instrumental role in identifying the needs of the community with respect to economic development initiatives. This steering committee would work in partnership with Staff and Council to propose future allocation of these funds. In the interim, Staff has been working with various community partners to identify tangible economic development actions. One of these partners is the Agricultural Advisory Committee.

Last week, Staff met with the Agricultural Advisory Committee to discuss the agricultural goals and actions contained in "Red Hot and Blue" and identify potential projects which may support local agricultural economic development and which could be funded through the economic development initiatives budget.

The Committee unanimously recommended that Staff bring forward a request to Council for funding in the amount of \$5,000 as an enhancement for projects completed under the Environmental Farm Plan.

Staff is of the opinion that this initiative closely aligns with and meets objectives outlined in "Red Hot and Blue", namely, "Maintaining and enhancing prosperous

sustainable agriculture” and “Protecting, enhancing and preserving our ecosystem”.

The local Environmental Farm Plan funding would be made available to farmers in The Blue Mountains to carry-out operational changes to improve and protect the natural environment. This funding would enhance the existing Canada-Ontario Farm Stewardship Program, providing an additional 20% reimbursement for projects approved under the Environmental Farm Plan. Farmers in The Blue Mountains could receive up to a maximum of \$1,500 of Town contribution.

As part of this, the Town would ensure that all local farmers would receive notice of this funding opportunity. A concentrated communication effort would be applied to the smaller farming operations in the area.

The program would be administered by Grey Agricultural Services, a highly credible organization in the County, described as a “grass-roots, farmer-driven initiative and not-for-profit organization created to fulfill the needs of the local farm community.”

Recipients of the funding would also receive a letter from the Town congratulating them on receiving their funding and thanking them for contributing to the economic viability of agriculture and protection of the environment.

C. The Blue Mountains’ Strategic Plan

3.0 Preserving and enhancing natural and environmental features, and cultural heritage of the community.

D. Environmental Impacts

If approved, this initiative will have a positive impact on the environment by creating efficiencies and improvements to the land through improved waste management and erosion control, and reduction in silt run-off into the watershed.

E. Financial Impact

This will have an impact of approximately \$5,000 on the Economic Development Initiatives Budget. The Economic Development Initiatives Budget was approved as part of the 2011 Budget.

F. Attached

None.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Kidd
Communications and Economic Development Coordinator