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Item No. 15.1.3
Halifax Regional Council
June 20, 2023

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: June 9, 2023

SUBJECT: Youth Worx Program Job Experience

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

ORIGIN

December 7, 2021, Regional Council motion (item 15.3.1), MOVED by Councillor Russell, seconded by Councillor Blackburn.

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

1. Approve a new Youth Live job experience opportunity for a small-scale food service operation located at the Sackville Sports Stadium;
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to give notice to terminate the Youth Live Enviro Depot lease at 947 Mitchell Street; and
3. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to give notice to terminate the Enviro Depot operator's agreement with Divert Nova Scotia.
4. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to prepare a supplemental report on options to expand the Youth Live Program to additional locations, including one in the urban core. Options to consider for food service, but not limited to, include the Zatzman Sportsplex, Forum, and Public Gardens.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39, subsection 79A (1) provides:

Section 79A (1)

Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the Municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if:

- (a) The expenditure is included in the Municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality;

Section 58 (5)

The Council may make and carry out a contract, perform an act, do anything, or provide a service for which the Municipality or the Council is authorized by an Act of the Legislature to spend or borrow money.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to:

1. Expand the Youth Worx Program as described in the body of this report; and
2. Continue to develop the Café model as the preferred model for Youth Worx job experience.

BACKGROUND

The Youth Worx Program (formerly Youth Live) is a supportive work experience program that offers up to 24 weeks of workplace mentoring and development. Youth Worx focuses on life, leadership, and job development skills for youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who are not in school and are facing employment barriers which include but are not limited to: lack of job experience, non-completion of high school, learning disabilities, personal management challenges, criminal history, mental health concerns, and a history of addiction.

Youth participants in the program receive a stipend for their time, commitment, and willingness to learn. The program focuses on two main development opportunities: 1) business operations and 2) mentoring. Business operations include on-the-job training at the Youth Worx Warehouse at 1300 St Margaret's Bay Road and the Youth Worx Café at the Sackville Sports Stadium. The business operations include paper recycling services, green cart delivery/repair services, customer service, inventory control and cash management. Mentoring occurs at both locations and includes guidance and coaching from staff, as well as skill-building modules which are designed to prepare the participants for future employment.

The Youth Worx program's primary goal is to improve a participant's employability skills with a focus on the following nine employability skills: attitude, motivation, presentation, teamwork, time management, adaptability, stress management, accountability, and confidence. These nine skills build on one another during the participant's time in the program to prepare them for employment. Mentoring, coaching, and continuous support is provided by staff to assist in the growth and development of these employability skills. The low participant to staff ratio (three or four youth to one staff) provides staff with the opportunity to identify emerging customer service issues and to provide coaching to ensure the youth has completed all required tasks.

Depending on the opportunities within the municipality and the participant's progress within the program, a co-op placement may be offered. These co-op placements aim to give a four-week work placement outside of the normal Youth Worx operations and occur within municipal business units. The placements are usually administrative in nature and provide the participant with an opportunity to have an office environment experience. These special projects give participants exposure to unique situations which allow them to develop additional skills, other than those gained in the program. See attachment 1 for a list of the skills gained through the program.

DISCUSSION

On December 7, 2021, Regional Council directed staff to prepare a supplemental report on options to expand the Youth Live Program, now Youth Worx Program, to add additional food service locations, including within the urban core. Options to be considered included, but were not limited to, the Zatzman Sportsplex, Halifax Forum, and Public Gardens. Staff expanded the review by including the Emera Oval and Sir Sandford Fleming Park locations. As a result of the review, the Halifax Forum was not chosen due to the limited number of customers in the building on a consistent basis during daytime hours needed to run a successful program and business operation. The Public Gardens was considered but currently has a vendor under contract but it could be considered in future.

Determining factors in the assessment included start up costs, budgets, hours of operation, location, and transportation access.

In August 2022, The Café opened at the Sackville Sports Stadium (SSS) offering a small-scale quick grab and go food style service. The Café also offers a youth friendly space where youth may enjoy their time doing homework and socializing with friends in a youth friendly setting. In addition to the Café serving food, and providing a youth friendly space, it also provides the opportunity for program staff to gain employable skills within the food service industry such as inventory control, cash management, customer service, and food handling.

Since opening, the Café serves on average 75 customers per day, with the majority of the customers being youth from Sackville High School. Due to the number of students from Sackville High School who use this service, staff have concluded that there are enough customers to support operating the Youth Worx program through the months of September to June. However, July and August months likely do not have enough customers to keep the program participants engaged and occupied with opportunities to learn and gain customer service skills and therefore, staff are recommending expanding The Café locations to include Sir Sanford Fleming Park (The Dingle) during the months of June to September.

Staff and program participants operating at The Café in Sackville will move to this new location as there will be more customers to keep the program participants engaged and will help avoid any behavioural and attendance challenges, they may face from being bored. The Café in Sackville will remain open during this time and will be staffed with casual staff who will continue to provide food service to Sackville Sports Stadium participants/members, residents, and day camp participants.

Sir Sandford Fleming Park

In 2015, the Dingle Canteen located within Sir Sanford Park (The Dingle) closed. It was a well-known attraction near the Dingle Tower and the Dingle beach which provided an additional amenity for park users.

Based on the previous demand at Sir Sandford Fleming Park during the summer, reopening a canteen at this site would be a great opportunity to bring this experience back to the community. The establishment will be named the “The Canteen” Powered by Youth WORX and will operate as a quick grab and go food service and ice cream.

The building “the Canteen” will be operated out of is owned and operated by HRM and has recently undergone capital improvement, including a new metal roof, electrical upgrades, solar panels, and a heat pump. The building houses public washrooms as well as storage for HRM’s Adventure Earth Centre’s programs.

The Canteen will operate the food service seven days a week, during daytime hours from late June until mid September by the Youth Worx program participants. Weekend hours of operation would be staffed by HRM casual employees, including past program participants. The food service would offer pre-made and/or ready-to-serve products which would support a non-complex food operation and minimize food preparation.

Start up costs for equipment can be covered within the existing Youth Worx operating budget. Ongoing operating costs are already a part of the Youth Worx Budget as the program will move from The Café in the Sackville Sports Stadium to the Fleming location.

Additional Locations

Staff are investigating a phased approach to opening additional locations in the short term. Two locations are recommended, one at the Emera Oval (Halifax) and one at the Zatzman Sportsplex (Dartmouth). The expected timeline to open the additional food service locations, if approved, would be June/July 2023 for the Emera Oval location, and Spring 2024 for the Zatzman Sportsplex location. The proposed start dates for both locations will allow for new program participants to receive food handling and first aid training, as well as adequate experience of setting up and operating a food service operation.

Phase 1: Emera Oval Pilot Project - Background & Operating Costs

The Emera Oval is a skating rink/speed skating track in the winter months and a cycling, roller blading, roller skating, scooter etc. track in the summer, which opened in December 2010 on the Halifax Common and hosted the 2011 Canada Games. Currently, the Emera Oval sees approximately 150,000 people visit the location annually.

With the high usage, a central location easily accessible by bus and the opening of the Common Pool in the summer of 2023, staff determined that The Emera Oval would be an ideal location for the expansion of the Youth Worx Program. Staff would convert one of the existing hut style buildings onsite at the Emera Oval into a small scale prepackaged snack food canteen as a pilot program during the summer of 2023. Where the location does not currently offer a food service option, this decision was based on combining a food service option like the Youth Worx Café at the Sackville Sports Stadium and the current Youth Worx partnership with the Emera Oval of skating monitoring and bike repair program. Start up costs to update the onsite hut are estimated at \$5,000 for minor building upgrades, including installing electrical outlets and lighting, a freezer for ice cream and a fridge for beverages. The existing Youth Worx operating budget will cover the cost of the Youth Operations Workers and the program participant stipends.

Staff will monitor the progress of the canteen during the 2023 season and then complete an assessment near the end of August 2023 to determine the costs and benefits of continuing the operation of this canteen for future years. If the pilot is a success, additional repairs to the hut will be required to sustain business operations within the current structure.

Phase 2: Zatzman Sportsplex – Background & Operating Costs

The Zatzman Sportsplex went through a major renovation and reopened in 2019. The renovation included installing a café equipped with a small kitchen and an open concept customer service area located adjacent to the gym, within the core of the building. Staff have reviewed the café location and consider it to be a suitable space to mirror and expand the Youth Worx Café concept operating at the SSS. The café area is well equipped with an accessible workspace for participants and patrons and could provide consistent food services for students, Zatzman Sportsplex participants and the community. Zatzman Sportsplex is on a major Halifax Transit route making it accessible for Youth Worx program participants who rely on public transportation.

Since the Zatzman Sportsplex is equipped for a canteen style food service with required equipment currently installed within the space, start-up costs would be minimal, as opposed to an opening of a new location. In the Fall/Winter of 2023, staff would begin to purchase any required equipment and to prepare the space with current operating funds. The food service operation would offer pre-made and/or ready-to-serve products which would support non-complex food operation and minimize food preparation.

Staff have had preliminary discussions with the management at Zatzman Sportsplex and would work with them on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to have Youth Worx provide food services within the facility.

Future Phases & Opportunities

In future, staff will explore opportunities to employ Youth Work graduates at Café locations around the municipality. This has several benefits including:

1. Employing program graduates at Cafe locations provides them with valuable work experience. This can help build their skills and increase their employability for future job opportunities.
2. Graduates who are employed at cafe locations can earn a steady income and gain financial independence, which is an important aspect of personal growth, supports food security and reduces homelessness.
3. Provision of amenities helps to increase the length/quality of visits to recreation facilities and parks, particularly where financial margins may not be sufficient to attract private sector providers.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Net proceeds of sales from the new Café/Canteen locations will be deposited into the Youth Worx operations sales of service account S233 5250. The costs associated with the opening of the new locations outlined within this report can be accommodated within the approved 2023-2024 operating budget found within S233 6701.

If the pilot locations are a success, staff would return to Regional Council in the fall of 2023 for consideration of funding to support a permanent location at the Emera Oval Canteen location, and to expand The Café at the Zatzman Sportsplex location.

RISK CONSIDERATION

The Youth Worx program has procedures and policies that staff adhere to which would mitigate the risk associated with youth behaviours, cash management, and to ensure food safety. Youth Worx has a low participant to staff ratio (three or four youth to one staff) to ensure proper supervision. The risk of behavioural matters from participants when engaging with the public is low due to the low participant-to-staff ratios and training modules offered to the youth. No participant will be deployed to a customer service area without first being properly trained. Facility signage will also aid in the awareness of the program to inform customers that it is a learning environment; encouraging customers to show patience and support, as participants gain experience.

There is risk during the initial start up of the food service establishment that planned revenue may be lower than anticipated until there is awareness of the service. This associated risk is mitigated through monitoring of sales, inventory management and delivery of a communication plan.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Information provided in this report was obtained through a program engagement survey that was completed by past and current participants. Additionally, eight local employers were consulted on what skills they would look for in a potential candidate.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no negative environmental implications to the report recommendations. Staff will be environmentally responsible when sourcing packaging for the canteen items to ensure they adhere to the Municipality's Corporate Guidelines for Greening Meetings and Catering Requirements, where applicable.

ALTERNATIVES

Regional Council could choose:

1. Not to approve the recommendation to expand the Youth Worx Program as described in the body of this report or to approve with modifications,
2. Not to continue to develop the Café model as the preferred model for Youth Worx job experience.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Youth Worx Transferable Skills

A copy of this report can be obtained online at www.halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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Youth Worx Transferable Skills

Transferable skills are a core set of skills and abilities which can be applied to a wide range of jobs and industries. They are usually learned over time, and can be gained from previous employment, volunteer work, hobbies, or even while at home. Youth Worx operations promote the following set of transferable skills:

Transferable Skills by Operation					
Operation:	Green Cart Delivery & Repair	Paper Recycling	Small-scale Food Service	Admin Co-op Opportunities	Special Projects
Teamwork Skills	X	X	X	X	X
Safety Awareness Skills	X	X	X		X
Time Management Skills	X	X	X	X	X
Leadership skills	X	X	X	X	X
Organizing Skills	X	X	X		X
Customer Service Skills	X	X	X		X
Data Entry/Collection Skills	X	X	X	X	
Material Moving Device Experience	X	X		X	
Critical Thinking	X	X	X		X
Resilience	X	X	X	X	
Sorting Product Experience			X		
Scheduling Skills	X	X		X	
Repair Skills	X				X
Tool Handling Skills	X				X
Navigation Skills	X				X
Cash Management Skills			X	X	
Advanced Cash Experience			X	X	
Mathematic Skills			X	X	
Warehouse Experience	X				X
Safe Food Handling			X		
Hospitality Training			X		
Supply Ordering			X	X	
Problem Solving Skills			X	X	X
Organization Skills			X	X	
Technology Systems Skills			X	X	
Literacy Skills			X	X	
Phone Etiquette				X	
Sorting & Filing				X	
Social Media Engagement			X		