

2020 Special Council Meeting Report

BiodiverCity Advisory Committee

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Subject

May 04, 2020, Special Council Meeting focused on Boards, Commissions and Committees

Intent

On **May 04, 2020**, Calgary City Council is holding a Special Council Meeting focused on Boards, Commissions and Committees (BCCs). This is an opportunity for BCCs to highlight their accomplishments over the past year, and advise of their work plan for the coming year.

This year, City Clerk's office has asked each BCC to complete a short summary of work that has been completed or in progress. The summary should be no longer than two pages and cover the questions listed below. Attachments may be included for questions two and three. The summary will be part of the agenda for the May 04th meeting and is due to City Clerk's on **April 27, 2020** via email to BCCAdministration@calgary.ca.

1. Number of meetings in the last year.
2. Summary of initiatives, projects or work completed or ongoing in the last year.
3. Outline of 2020 work plan.
4. Challenges to fulfilling mandate.
5. Additional information you would like to highlight with Council.

Content

1. Number of meetings in the last two years.

The Committee meets once every month, not including August.

11 Committee meetings in 2018*

10 Committee meetings in 2019*

4 Literacy Sub-Committee meetings in 2018

1 Conservation Sub-Committee meeting in 2018

2 Literacy Sub-Committee meetings in 2019

1 Conservation Sub-Committee meeting in 2019

2018/19 total meetings = 29

** Includes ½ day workshop to develop the annual work plan*

2. Summary of initiatives, projects, or work completed or ongoing in the last two years.

See attachment 1

3. Outline of 2020 work plan.

See attachment 2

4. Challenges to fulfilling mandate.

The Committee's mandate is to provide,

"...Council and Administration with strategic advice on matters affecting urban biodiversity in The City of Calgary. The Committee advances the commitments and procedures identified within *Our BiodiverCity, Calgary's 10-year biodiversity strategic plan* and *The Durban Commitment: Local Governments for Biodiversity*."

The Committee acts as a conduit between Council and Administration to advance biodiversity conservation and awareness. There have been challenges fulfilling this mandate. In brief they are:

- a) The targets to monitor the efficacy of implementing strategic plan are incomplete.
- b) Capital funding is not allocated within The City's current budget for a naturalization/restoration program, which is foundational to increasing biodiversity in Calgary.
- c) Understanding Calgarians' need for biodiversity conservation and awareness.
- d) Biodiversity conservation requires cross-corporate coordination and thus prioritization among City business units. Generally, this work has been associated with Calgary Parks, but needs to be embraced cross-corporately for success.
- e) Reduced staffing and budgetary support to Calgary Parks, the lead business unit responsible for the BiodiverCity Action Plan, continues to have adverse effect on the timeliness of document and plan delivery to the Committee, as well as implementation on biodiversity-related projects. In turn, this limits what the Committee can review and bring its expertise to bear on.

In response to the previously listed challenge to the Committee's fulfillment of its mandate, the Committee has:

- a) Reviewed and improved Administration's targets and key actions on biodiversity Public Awareness and Stewardship (Ecological Literacy program area) within the BiodiverCity Action Plan. Other targets are progressing.
- b) Raised concerns with Administration that unless an appropriate level of funding for restoration work is established and ongoing, the fundamental restoration target (20% open space restored by 2025) of the Council-approved BiodiverCity Strategic Plan will not be achieved. Furthermore, if this funding is not forthcoming, Council will need to consider revising the target.
- c) The Committee is ensuring that City Administration stays current with new opportunities for Calgarians to participate in biodiversity stewardship and coordinate communications in support

of biodiversity conservation with external initiatives such as the City Nature Challenge, Urban Biodiversity Monitoring Hub (UHUB), and the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute.

- d) Discussed Council-directed Corporate Habitat Restoration Project Framework with Administration and received an update on its purpose and status.

Recent public safety precautions pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic have negatively affected the Committee's 2020 work plan timelines and meeting effectiveness, specifically:

- migration of the March Committee meeting to online review of the BiodiverCity Action Plan,
- conversion of Literacy and Conservation Sub-Committee in-person working sessions to phone and email document exchanges

These impacts were partially offset by City Administration support in providing virtual meeting space for the March Committee meeting so that Committee could continue to convene to move the 2020 work plan forward.

5. Additional information you would like to share with Council.

One of the three 2025 targets identified in the BiodiverCity Strategic Plan is to restore 20 percent of Calgary's current open space to increase biodiversity. Habitat restoration is a type of land management activity intending to recover a degraded habitat to initiate or accelerate its succession towards a habitat with increased biodiversity such as replacing turf grass with native grasses and wildflowers. In this regards the Committee applauds Council's recent decision to provide funding to the Calgary Roads restoration pilot project for restoring a portion of the 16 Ave NE boulevards. The Committee agrees with Calgary Roads and Calgary Parks that restoration is considered cost-effective in the long run, recognizing that the initial cost to restore land will be recouped via decreased ongoing management costs.

Attachments

Attachment 1: 2019/20work summary

Ongoing work

- Expert advice

The Committee continues to provide review and advice to Calgary City Administration to advance Council-approved Our BiodiverCity, Calgary's 10-year Biodiversity Strategic Plan (referred to below as BiodiverCity Strategic Plan). The working document, BiodiverCity Action Plan, provides a structure for Calgary to meet the biodiversity commitments in the BiodiverCity Strategic Plan. The Committee supports The City with moving forward each of the four biodiversity principles outlined in the BiodiverCity Strategic Plan: Ecological Literacy, Ecological Resilience, Collaboration, and Integration. The Committee has also adopted a leading role to ensure appropriate targets, performance measures, indicators and key actions have been developed within the BiodiverCity Action Plan to ensure Calgary's biodiversity commitments are addressed. The BiodiverCity Action Plan contains a roadmap for how The City achieves biodiversity conservation outcomes through various programs, initiatives and collaborative partnerships. Within the Plan, decision-making tools, work plans, and a progress monitoring approach using key indicators are outlined.

The other key area of work that the Committee remains keenly engaged in is The City's restoration target of 20 percent of Calgary's open space by 2025, as outlined in the BiodiverCity Strategic Plan. Habitat restoration is a type of land management activity intending to recover a degraded habitat to initiate or accelerate its succession towards a habitat with increased biodiversity such as replacing turf grass with native grasses and wildflowers. On public lands, restoration is a primary tool for biodiversity conservation and is considered to be cost-effective once site preparation and restoration action has been implemented, reducing the need for ongoing management inputs over the long-term and, in many cases, eliminating the need for costly hard infrastructure (e.g. riparian area flood resilience, storm water mitigation). The Committee has concern that City Administration will be unable to meet Calgary's BiodiverCity Strategic Plan 2025 target for habitat restoration.

- Standing Policy Committee on Community and Protective Services reports

The Committee was established by Council in October 2015. As guided by its Terms of Reference, it advances the commitments and procedures identified within the Council-adopted Biodiversity Policy (CSPS037). The Committee presented its first annual progress report in May 2016. Since that time, The Committee continues to pursue three categories of work: engaging stakeholders, communications and reviewing City policies related to biodiversity. The outcome of this work has been to advance biodiversity awareness within the Corporation and to support Calgarians fostering more resilient, biologically diverse communities.

March 2019 – March 2020 Work

- Calgary Youth Science Fair

Since 2017, the Committee has attended and supported the Calgary Youth Science Fair event through judging and presentation of awards for projects in three age classes that align with Calgary's BiodiverCity Strategic Plan principles of ecological literacy, ecological resilience and collaboration.

Photos from the Calgary Youth Science Fair include (clockwise from top left corner): 2019 biodiversity award winners receive their prizes from Biodiversity Advisory Committee Chair, John McFaul (pictured right); Senior award-winning biodiversity project, *Rail Kill: What Can Be Done?*; Intermediate award-winning biodiversity project, *Mealworms: A Way to Reduce Styrofoam*; Junior award-winning biodiversity project, *What Material Makes the Best Biodegradable Fishing Nets?*



- City Nature Challenge

The Committee received a presentation in March 2019 from City Nature Challenge organizer for Calgary, Matt Wallace, with a request to support Calgary inaugural year as one of three Canadian cities participating in an international bioblitz event where urban biodiversity can be catalogued and documented. In 2019, Calgary participated alongside 158 other cities in the 2-week biodiversity event with 143 individuals logging more than 4,000 observations of 628 local species. The stated goal for the April 26-29, 2020 City Nature Challenge was to double the inventory collected into the associated iNaturalist application from the previous year's totals. Both 2019 and 2020 City Nature Challenge events were given support through City Environmental and Parks communications at the recommendation of the Committee. This type of organized event aligns with BiodiverCity Strategic Plan and Committee goals for furthering ecological literacy through citizen stewardship action.

- Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute (ABMI)

In September 2019, the Committee was introduced to new and ongoing initiatives of ABMI through a presentation by Stakeholder Engagement Coordinator, Brett Campbell. Not-for-profit organization, ABMI, tracks changes in Alberta Wildlife and their habitats on a province-wide scale. Brett discussed several ABMI programs that focus on species monitoring, citizen science, knowledge translation and reporting around biodiversity, as well as tools developed by ABMI to help with biodiversity planning and impact evaluation (e.g human footprint and land use monitoring, land cover and habitat mapping). The Committee identified similar initiatives that are going on within The City and discussed potential collaboration with ABMI around information collection and exchange.

- Urban Biodiversity Monitoring Hub (UHUB)

The Committee requested information from UHUB Steering Committee member, Jennifer Rae Pierce. In her December 2019 web presentation, Empowering Local Governments to Plan with Nature, Jennifer shared information on UHUB's goal of "promoting measurable biodiversity actions in cities around the world" (uhub.org), and discussed the processes and web tools that the UHUB team is developing for local governments to measure, track and share biodiversity information, as well as monitor the progress of their municipal biodiversity strategies. The Committee recommended The City explore the use of UHUB to track and report on biodiversity program indicators.

- City Administration Work on Biodiversity

The Committee also received several updates and presentations from City staff working on biodiversity-related projects and programs, and provided feedback on these initiatives. Included in City staff updates were:

- City of Calgary Biocontrol Program (Alex Pepperdine, Calgary Parks Integrated Pest Management)
- Municipal Development Plan (Shane Gagnon, Environmental and Safety Management)
- Inglewood Bird Sanctuary Restoration Plan & Tour (Sarah Kellett, Calgary Parks Operations)
- Biodiverse Communities Initiative, and Habitat Restoration program updates (Jason Weiler, Calgary Parks Urban Conservation)
- Resilient Cities 100 and Natural Infrastructure (Heather Galbraith, Resilience and Infrastructure and Jillian Curley, Environment and Safety Management)
- BiodiverCity Action Plan updates (Chris Manderson, Calgary Parks Urban Conservation)

- Committee Recruitment

The committee recruited 3 new public members to replace those leaving the committee. The committee also has three new administration personnel.

Attachment 2: 2020 work plan

2020: BiodiverCity Advisory Committee (BAC) - Annual Work Plan				
Project / Initiative / Activity	Biodiversity Program Area	Biodiversity Program	Start Date	End Date
Develop work plan for 2020	NA	NA	Q1	Q1
Annual report to SPC CPS (4 May 2020)	Ecological literacy	Staff awareness	Q1	Q2
Review on an ad hoc basis applicable City of Calgary policies and strategies	(all)	(all)	Q1	Q4
Review the BiodiverCity Action Plan (v2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conservation sub-committee meeting (input review) - Literacy sub-committee meeting (input review) 	(all)	(all)	Q1	Q2
City SME presentations to BAC (e.g. wetland habitat restoration, ecological connectivity)	Ecological literacy	Public awareness	Q1	Q4
Support the Calgary Youth Science Fair; biodiversity awards	Ecological literacy	Stewardship	Cancelled Covid-19	
Finalize communication strategies (council, public/stakeholders)	Ecological literacy	Staff awareness, Public awareness	Q2	Q3
Review BAC TOR (as required every 2 years)	NA	NA	Q2	Q2
Review updated appendix 3 of the BiodiverCity Action Plan – specific actions, targets, metrics and timelines	(all)	(all)	Q3	Q3
Restoration site visit (understanding site selection and process)	Ecological resilience	Habitat restoration	Q3	Q3
Review Pest Management Implementation Plan	Ecological resilience	Invasive species	Q3	Q4
Onboard new BAC members	NA	NA	Q4	Q4