

Riverdale Farm Business Plan

Date:	May 25, 2012
To:	Executive Committee
From:	Jim Hart, General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
Wards:	Ward 28
Reference Number:	P:\2012\Cluster A\PFR\EX21-061212-AFS#15802

SUMMARY

This report highlights the work completed by the Riverdale Farm Coalition towards the development of alternative sources of funding and revenue for operation of the Farm, as requested by Council on September 26, 2011. Since that time, the Coalition has conducted extensive research and community consultations, including a community survey, town hall meeting and partner roundtable discussion, towards putting forward a business plan that outlines an alternative vision and funding model for the Farm.

The Riverdale Farm Coalition reported back to the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division with a business plan summarizing numerous opportunities for revenue generation, including fundraising, sponsorships, and on-site revenue opportunities (Attachment 1). In the context of the business plan, the Coalition also envisions the Farm as a centre of excellence in food and urban agriculture, a "rural embassy" in the City, a catalyst for social enterprise operations and venue for diverse programming.

In order to move forward with raising funds to offset the operating costs of Riverdale Farm as per the ideas presented in the Riverdale Farm Business Plan report, the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division is recommending that City Council authorize the acceptance of donations from the Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation, request staff to develop a terms of reference for the new Riverdale Farm Stewardship Group, and support the community's fundraising efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division recommends that:

1. City Council authorize the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to accept donations from the Parks and Trees Foundation of funds raised by the Riverdale Farm Coalition through activities outlined in the attached business plan for the purposes of offsetting the operating costs of Riverdale Farm;
2. City Council request the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to work with the Riverdale Farm Coalition to develop a terms of reference for the Riverdale Farm Stewardship Group, including defining roles and responsibilities for the City, organizations, and residents;
3. City Council support and encourage the Riverdale Farm Coalition's efforts to raise funds in support of the ongoing operation of the Farm, such as permitting the use of the Farm for fundraising events; and
4. City Council direct Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff to include in the 2013 budget process any expected net operating budget impacts as a result of the fundraising activities.

Financial Impact

Riverdale Farm operations are funded within Parks, Forestry and Recreation's 2012 Net Operating Budget for \$493,900. The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation will report through the operating budget process in 2013 and subsequent years on any net operating budget impacts as a result of the fundraising activities by the Riverdale Farm Coalition.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

On September 26, 2011, City Council met to discuss the Core Service Review and make decisions on service level adjustments. Council unanimously passed a motion directing the Riverdale Farm Coalition to engage the community to develop a partnership model for operation and requested that the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division report back to Executive Committee in the spring of 2012:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.EX10.1>).

The Coalition submitted a Business Plan report to the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division on May 15, 2012. This report presents the Business Plan to Executive Committee at the June 12, 2012 meeting.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The City of Toronto reviewed options for cost reductions in 2011, as presented in the Core Service Review conducted by KPMG. One of the recommendations of the KPMG report was to eliminate farm and zoo operations as non-core services, despite being "enjoyed by many Toronto residents" (see KPMG final report: <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2011/pe/bgrd/backgroundfile-39537.pdf>).

In response to community support for the Farm and a proposal from the Riverdale Farm Coalition, City Council decided to allow the Riverdale Farm Coalition to research and present options for an alternative operating model using external sources of funding. The Coalition has since produced the Riverdale Farm Business Plan.

COMMENTS

The Riverdale Farm Coalition completed a significant amount of research to present the options for alternative funding, revenue and the future vision presented in the report. The Coalition, comprised of members of various community groups in the Cabbagetown area, worked closely with the Ward Councillor, the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, and the Toronto Office of Partnerships to undertake their research.

More specifically their research was comprised of:

- a. An extensive review of relevant literature and Internet data to produce a brief discussion paper on the relevance of urban agriculture for the City of Toronto and the Farm;
- b. A town hall meeting for approximately 50 people to gain input on the future of Riverdale Farm;
- c. A review of similar farm/urban agriculture operations within the City of Toronto and in other cities to generate program and funding ideas;
- d. An on-line survey about a vision for the Farm, revenue potential and program opportunities, completed by 782 respondents; and
- e. A partner roundtable discussion of 23 individuals, from a broad range of food sector interests, to review the potential for creating a public education hub on food issues and agriculture at the Farm.

Research Results

The results of this research identified key issues and information worth noting:

- a. Riverdale Farm is highly valued for passive recreation and the serenity it offers as an urban oasis in the local neighbourhood and for all Torontonians and visitors to the City.

- b. Recommendations were made for increasing the revenue potential for the Farm including donations, membership fees, sponsorships/partnerships, expanded fee-based programming, food and beverage services, facility rentals, fundraising and exploring operational efficiencies.
- c. Significant interest was expressed in focusing the direction of the Farm on sustainable agriculture, food security education and creating food growing opportunities for Torontonians.
- d. The Farm was identified as a potential incubator of social enterprise.

Moving Forward

The Business Plan focuses on next steps for realizing many of the options and recommendations within the document over the next four years. The specific timeline is 2012 to 2016, with cost and revenue projections made over that period of time. With the endorsement of City Council, the Coalition will transition to a Riverdale Farm Stewardship Group, in order to pilot and carry out future plans.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Jim Hart
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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Riverdale Farm Business Plan