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CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: January 4, 2007
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TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Director of Social Planning in consultation with the Vancouver Park Board, Vancouver Public Library and Vancouver School Board

SUBJECT: Report Back on YouthPolitik Program

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council receive this report for INFORMATION & defer approval and funding of recommendations B, C, D and E to the Interim Operating Budget;
- B. THAT YouthPolitik continue as an annual program supported by the City of Vancouver, based on the pilot project evaluation, with the next program scheduled for the fall, 2007;
- C. THAT Staff develop partnership opportunities with the voluntary sector to deliver future YouthPolitik programs;
- D. THAT Staff seek funding partners to assist in offsetting the costs of the program;
- E. THAT Social Planning re-allocate funds, if required, to support the program.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager notes that this initiative has received both corporate and community support and that it will be important to continue some level of City support including the support and oversight of the Social Planning Department.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager concurs that the City has a role in developing our youth as citizens. The City also has a role in developing, piloting and/or evaluating innovative approaches in partnership with other like-minded stakeholders, and in seeking sustainable service delivery models that stakeholders can collaboratively contribute to and support.

COUNCIL POLICY

On March 28, 1995, Council approved the Vancouver Civic Youth Strategy (CYS). It is a statement that fulfils the requirements of the City's Children's Policy, 1992, following Canada's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The CYS is a commitment to work in partnership with youth and the larger community to:

- ensure youth have a PLACE in the City;
- ensure strong youth VOICE in decision-making;
- promote youth as a RESOURCE to the City;
- strengthen the SUPPORT BASE for youth.

It also commits the City to involve youth and youth-driven organizations as active partners in the development, assessment and delivery of civic services having direct impact on youth, and including youth in broad spectrum consultations.

SUMMARY & PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council direction on the future of the YouthPolitik program, including funding and delivery models. Preliminary program findings demonstrate the success and positive impact of the YouthPolitik program.

This report includes:

1. Overview of the YouthPolitik program
2. Presentation of the YouthPolitik program findings
3. Recommendations for the future directions of the YouthPolitik program
4. Financial Implications

BACKGROUND

On February 14, 2006, Council approved a motion supporting the development of a "Civic Youth Council" (herein to be called "YouthPolitik"). YouthPolitik's long-term goal is to involve 500 youth through to 2010. The program has been supported by a Steering Committee, which includes representatives from the City's Social Planning Department, Vancouver Park Board, Vancouver Public Library and Vancouver School Board.

On July 18, 2006, Council approved this initiative, in principle, and also approved a one-time carry-forward funding of \$31,300 for an Auxiliary Youth Coordinator and Temporary Part-time Social Planner I to further develop the program and budget.

On September 12, 2006, Council approved the proposed pilot 2006 YouthPolitik program for a total budget of \$64,000, with a participation target of 100 youth.

DISCUSSION

Overview of YouthPolitik 2006

The purpose of the YouthPolitik program is to provide an opportunity for young citizens to continue to learn how civic government works and discover ways to become more involved.

The YouthPolitik program's initial target was 100, but due to time constraints only 75 youth were registered. Of this group, over 67 youth ages 13-20 (36 females and 31 males) consistently participated. The youth were from across the city (21 from the Westside, 40 from the Eastside and 6 from outside of Vancouver) and participated in a series of seven workshops and skill-building activities, such as group decision-making, debating, and public speaking. The program ran from October 26 to November 25, 2006, and culminated in a full day "youth council-type session" where youth presented their recommendations on issues of importance to elected/appointed officials from City Council, Park Board, School Board and Library Board.

For detailed program information, including participant statistics, outreach and communications, and workshops, please see APPENDIX A.

Program Findings and Evaluation

The program evaluation methodology included:

- a. Daily youth workshop evaluations;
- b. Final youth program evaluations;
- c. Final adult evaluations; and
- d. Debriefing sessions with youth participants and staff steering committee members.

Participants were asked what they liked about the program and what they would change to improve the program. Overall, program findings demonstrate the positive impact of the YouthPolitik program. Preliminary outcomes include:

- Youth identified a better understanding of the mandate and workings of civic government;
- Youth committed to being more active through direct participation in future City and community programs and consultations;
- Both youth and adults demonstrated a positive change in attitude to working in partnership on City issues;
- The program increased knowledge of civic issues and shifted attitudes towards municipal issues; and
- Contributed to the development of skills amongst participants.

Pre/post program survey results: The majority of youth entered the program because they wanted to learn more about municipal government; to become more involved in City issues;

to express opinions; to help their community; and to meet new like-minded friends. As one youth participant articulated: *"Having the opportunity to meet with different councillors and commissioners was extremely valuable. Rarely do citizens -- especially youth -- have the opportunity to sit down and discuss issues with our elected officials. Secondly, it was a great opportunity to meet like-minded people and build lasting connections and friendships."*

On exiting the program, participants said they learned about political processes and how the municipal system works; how to speak out and give their opinions; how council works and the challenge of making decisions; and that there are many issues that youth care about and can do something about. *"If there is something I disapprove of or would like to see changed, then I have to be the one to speak up and make sure my voice is heard. Nothing has ever been accomplished by sitting and complaining. We must take action."* - Youth participant

90% of participants expressed a desire to continue to be involved. Participants listed deliberate actions they intended to take. Examples included: starting a small YouthPolitik club in individual schools and neighbourhoods; offering presentations to social studies classes and youth groups on what they learned in YouthPolitik; engaging more youth in City decision making by getting more involved in City events and encouraging their peers to attend with them; applying to the City's advisory committees; getting involved in their community planning processes; and joining a political party. Most participants were very interested in becoming part of a YouthPolitik Alumni and are in the process of helping to identify the roles and responsibilities that this group could play. As alumni, participants have said they would like to become a member of the YouthPolitik working group; to mentor the incoming youth; to plan alumni social events; and to assist with facilitating workshops.

Select participants will be periodically surveyed over a two-year period in order to determine the type of impact the program had on their level of involvement in civic issues. The purpose is to track levels of civic involvement over the long term and identify the multiple factors that encourage or inhibit active citizenry among Vancouver's youth population.

Program Recommendations for YouthPolitik

Evaluation of the YouthPolitik program demonstrates concrete successes, as well as opportunities for improvement. Overall, YouthPolitik seems to have left a positive impact on the lives of participants.

Participants said that the opportunity to meet elected officials on a number of occasions was most beneficial. In addition, learning how decisions are made at the municipal level and having the opportunity to experience those lessons first-hand seemed to be monumental.

It was also noted that changes could be made to the program to enhance the experience for future participants. There was overwhelming support to lengthen the program, either by several months, or to develop a program that operated year-round. There was also interest in receiving more information on the municipal system, particularly those issues that the youth decided to focus on (e.g. housing and homelessness, substance abuse, youth rights, etc.).

A wealth of energy and recommendations were put forward by the youth participants for the improvement of the YouthPolitik program itself, as well as on the eight specific thematic areas that the participants presented on. It is suggested that City staff, elected officials and the youth work together to give them an opportunity to pursue their ideas (e.g. presenting to

City committees, as appropriate, offering preference to advisory committee applicants who participated in the program, linking youth to community projects and the Outreach Team).

RECOMMENDATIONS to Council:

- B. THAT YouthPolitik continue as an annual initiative supported by the City of Vancouver, based on the pilot project evaluation, with the next program scheduled for the fall, 2007.

The goals and outcomes of YouthPolitik are an appropriate fit within the City's Civic Youth Strategy policy, as well as within the present directions of youth related work in the City. The evaluation of the pilot project has demonstrated a number of positive outcomes as well as recommendations for improvement.

- C. THAT Staff develop partnership opportunities with the voluntary sector to deliver future YouthPolitik initiative.

YouthPolitik addresses several areas of youth development, participation and education, which reflect the mandates of several youth-serving voluntary sector agencies in the City. Creating partnerships with these service providers and involving community groups in program delivery will be explored as a viable option for the continuation of YouthPolitik. A partnership such as this could generate more interest from diverse groups of youth and create additional opportunities for participants to become involved within City processes, as well as the community. With this option, Social Planning and other City stakeholders would continue to participate on a steering committee in support of the program.

- D. THAT Staff seek funding partners to assist in offsetting the costs of the program.

YouthPolitik 2006 received a contribution of \$10,000 from the Telus Community Foundation. Corporate in-kind support for the program was \$6,000 for space, food and supplies. Staff will follow up with Telus and are currently pursuing leads regarding other funders as well as additional corporate in-kind support. It is estimated that fundraising initiatives will take approximately six months and up to 100 hours of staff time.

- E. THAT Social Planning re-allocate funds, if required, to support the program.

In the absence of sufficient fund-raising, the Social Planning Department will re-adjust the activities once the service delivery model is finalized and costed and other funding sources secured and may re-allocate funds to cover a portion of the outstanding costs. The current youth program budget will be revisited and up to \$51,000 may need to be re-allocated to support the YouthPolitik initiative.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The actual budget for YouthPolitik 2006 is \$51,000 (see table below). The figures are based on piloting the program with 75 young people (25 participants less than the original proposal of 100 participants and \$62,000 budget). Listed in the table are also one-time development

costs associated with starting a new program (in 2007 and beyond, costs associated with creating new material and graphics would be minimized).

While there are fund-raising efforts underway, staff note there is a risk of up to 50% that the \$50,000 fund-raising target may not be met. So far, there is a history of one donation and staff have several expressions of interest for follow-up. In the absence of sufficient fund-raising, Social Planning would readjust the Youth Politik program once the service delivery model is finalized and costed. Additional funds needed will be re-allocated from Social Planning to cover program costs (up to \$51,000). In this instance, staff suggest the following:

- Scaling back and/or elimination of COV Youth Awards up to \$35,000: This is an annual event that recognizes the positive contributions that youth, adult allies, and youth service providers make toward creating a healthier and more vibrant place for young people to live, learn and play.

Should further re-allocation be required, there are two other possible sources of funds:

- Elimination of Vancouver Youth Week - \$5000: An internationally celebrated event, Youth Week provides an opportunity for Vancouver to promote and recognize youth for their positive contributions in communities. The City's \$5,000 contribution funds a Youth Coordinator to promote and support the development of approximately 30 youth events in the City where thousands of young people participate. This is a partnership with the Park Board and Vancouver youth organizations. If eliminated, Vancouver would be the only municipality in the Lower Mainland to not host a Youth Week celebration.
- Impacts on core Social Planning/Youth Outreach Team work - \$11,000: Generally, scope of projects and initiatives would be reduced, including Social Planning/Youth Outreach presence in the community; the ability to plan and respond to issues; potentially lost opportunities for partnerships and collaborations; reduced participation in key planning processes including youth participation in the City's Social Development Plan and community planning and consultation processes. Staff participation in the GetOut Program coordination would also be impacted.

YouthPolitik Budget 2006 - Actual

Item	Cash	In kind	Total Cost
Program Staffing: Temporary Social Planner I Auxiliary Youth Coordinator	\$31,300	Support from Social Planning Child and Youth Social Planner, Youth Outreach Team, Director and staff steering committee	\$31,300
Youth Working Group Costs: Honoraria Bus tickets, Food	\$2,500	\$0	\$2,500
Participant Costs: Materials, food Workshop venues	\$5,900	\$2,500	\$8,400
Communications: Printing & Graphics	\$900	\$3,500	\$4,400
Training: Youth Facilitation Other training	\$800	\$0	\$800
Closing Ceremony: Photo, Certificates Decorations, Food	\$3,600	\$0	\$3,600
Total Budget	\$45,000	\$6,000	\$51,000

The draft budget for 2007 is listed below. In-kind and staff resources will still be required from internal partners (e.g. evaluation, venues, supplies and food). An inter-departmental approach to fundraising, as well as on-going program support, is a key element to the success of such a program.

The table below is a draft annual budget, based on 75 participants, and 2006 actuals. If participant numbers increased and/or program expanded, the program budget would need to be modified.

YouthPolitik Annual Budget - Draft Option

Item	Cost
Staffing	\$30,000
Working Group	\$3,000
Participant Costs	\$10,000
Communications	\$3,000
Training	\$1,500
Closing ceremony	\$4,000
Total	\$ 51,500

CONCLUSION

YouthPolitik has proven to be a positive experience for youth and adult participants alike. The goals of the program were to provide an opportunity for youth to learn about civic government and to become further involved in the issues that they care about. YouthPolitik is in line with the City's current approach to involving youth and is another mechanism for youth to participate and interact with the City's decision makers and processes. It is believed that this is the only program of its kind at a municipal level and one of the few programs that include youth development, youth leadership, and civic awareness components necessary for youth to participate fully in all aspects of their city.

Staff are proposing to build community partnerships for delivery of the program and undertake fund-raising to support a community-based delivery model program. Should fund-raising targets not be achieved, staff have identified re-allocation options within Social Planning's Youth budget.

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Program Information

Youth Working Group

In September, 2006, the 2 part time youth coordinators recruited 16 young people to join the YouthPolitik Working Group. The youth ages ranged from ages 16 to 23. Out of the 15 working group members, 5 youth applied to participate in the YouthPolitik program. Responsibilities of the working group included:

- Outreach and communication
- Recruitment
- Documentation
- Program planning and development
- Workshop facilitation
- Decoration for closing ceremony

Number of hours volunteered equalled approximately 250 hours.

Outreach & Communications

In order to reach a large and diverse group of participants, a number of outreach and communications methods were employed, including:

Email: Youth Outreach Team sent out YouthPolitik email announcements with via the youth email distribution list. Approximately 500 individual youth, schools, community centres, libraries and youth organizations received information.

Print: Designed, printed and distributed 2000 24x15 colour posters, 1000 logo posters, 500 rack cards and 500 applications.

Distribution of print materials: Staff and youth working group delivered YouthPolitik information packages to all high school counselors (72 packages); to all high school community school coordinators; too all youth workers in community centres and neighbourhood houses; to Vancouver Public Libraries; to 7 private schools; and 3 post secondary institutions. The material was also distributed to youth organizations, at presentations and around the city where youth may frequent (i.e. bus stops, café's).

Presentations: 18 high school hallway noon presentations, 4 high school individual class presentations, 1 presentation to the Britannia Community Centre Youth Group, as well as presentations to the Vancouver Park Board, Vancouver School Board, Vancouver Library Board and Vancouver Police Board.

Media: 3 media releases were distributed through the City's Corporate Communications Department; 4 print newspaper media; 3 radio stations covered the program; 3 television stations; and 1 journal.

Websites: YouthPolitik was also available in the following websites: Youth Outreach Team; Citywire Spotlight; City of Vancouver Social Planning; Non-Partisan Association; One Day; Children as Partners; and Taking It Global. YouthPolitik also appeared in several youth-blogging websites.

Youth Participants

Over 75 young people ages 13-20 registered for the YouthPolitik program.

Throughout the program there was consistent participation from 67 youth.

M/F:

- 36 females
- 31 males

Age range included:

- 7 thirteen year olds
- 10 fourteen year olds
- 13 fifteen year olds
- 15 sixteen year olds
- 14 seventeen year olds
- 4 eighteen year olds
- 2 nineteen year olds
- 2 twenty year olds

Geographic:

- 21 residents from the west side
- 40 residents from the east side
- 6 outside of Vancouver city limits

Participants were asked in their application to identify how they heard about the program. Participants listed multiple responses including:

- 18 - Presentations from YouthPolitik Working Group
- 7 - Flyer / poster
- 7 - School counsellor
- 6 - Socials teacher
- 5 - City of Vancouver Youth Website
- 4 - Community centre youth worker
- 4 - Public announcement (radio)
- 3 - School Librarian
- 3 - School newsletter/announcement
- 2 - Friend
- 1 - Career Prep teacher
- 2 - Community Youth Council
- 1 - Ranger
- 1 - Pathfinder
- 1 - Miss Canada Teen Global
- 1 - Parent works at City of Vancouver
- 1 - City of Vancouver One Day

Program Events

There were 6 preparatory youth workshops, 1 adult orientation workshop, 1 full day “youth council” session, and 2 debriefing sessions, totaling 10 sessions. Total hours, (including group presentation preparation that took place outside of workshop time) equaled approximately 30 hours.

The majority of workshops were hosted in the evenings for 3 hours each session. Meeting venues were located at Park Board Community Centres, Schools, the Downtown Public Library and City Hall.

The following section offers an overview of each YouthPolitik workshop, including objectives and brief details:

Event #1: YouthPolitik Opening Session

Objective: To become familiar with the YouthPolitik program goals, to get to know the other participants, and to begin identifying the issues in the city that they care about.

The opening session was primarily an opportunity to communicate the goals of the program, discover the intentions of the participants and set the agreements of working together in the month long program.

The goals of the program that youth participants identified included:

- To build an understanding of the political system and of each other
- To empower ourselves
- To identify issues we care about
- To take action
- To have fun!

The intentions of youth to participate in the program included:

- Love
- Making a difference
- Learning about the city
- Improving the community
- Knowledge
- Experience
- Caring and compassion
- Bringing people together
- Initiating change
- Giving back
- Interested in politics
- Speaking up
- Positive change
- Transforming pain
- Wanting all people to be happy
- Striving to improve healthy living

- Contributing
- Empowering youth
- Equality
- Responsibility
- Moving the world forward
- Being the change I wish to see

Community agreements are “rules” in which the youth created and agreed to participate by throughout the program. Examples include:

- Cooperating
- Working together
- Take a risk
- Shout out
- Be open to learning
- Trial & error
- Honesty
- Helping people feel comfortable
- Establish a relationship
- Speak from your experience
- Not putting people down for their ideas
- Check yourself (Let others talk)
- Take care of ourselves
- Communication
- Taking initiative
- Build on what we start
- Not giving up
- Love
- Listen
- Trust

Through an activity named “Step into the Circle” participants were asked to speak about the issues in the city that they cared about. This activity, as well as the responses in participant applications, served as the basis for choosing the top 8 themes.

Event #2: Citylicious

Objective: To explore the leader in us all and to begin to understand the structure of our local government.

Citylicious was a fun and interactive session. The participants were asked to identify the qualities in a leader they admired, as well as what type of leader they thought they were and wanted to become. Participants then rotated through 6 youth facilitated stations. At each station, the youth learned something about the municipal government and also had an opportunity to share their own experiences. The stations included: 1) names and roles of mayor & council; 2) city neighbourhoods; 3) municipal jurisdiction; 4) council terms and definitions; 5) principles of a good government; and 6) role of young people in the local government.

Event #3: Confused, Frustrated, Connected!

Objective: To review the roles and responsibilities of Mayor and Council, Park Board Commissioners, School Board Trustees, Police and Library Board members; and to begin working on choosing the top 8 themes and recommendations for each.

Confused Frustrated, Connected invited officials from each of the areas of local government to speak to the youth participants about their role. The top 8 themes were decided upon and youth participants put themselves into groups to be working on preparing their recommendations. The 8 themes included:

1. Arts & Culture | Sports & Recreation
2. Environment | Transportation
3. Libraries | Schools
4. Housing & Homelessness
5. Youth Engagement
6. Violence | Racism
7. Substance Abuse
8. Child & Youth Rights

Event #4: Exploring the City

Objective: To learn from the stories of youth involved in issues that are important to them, and to transfer that information into creating group plans for action under each of the 8 themes.

Exploring the City invited 6 youth who are actively involved in their community. They were asked to share their story with youth participants in small group round table sessions. Youth storytelling recognises and respects the expertise that people have in their own lived experience. Participants were asked to consider how the stories connected to their own lives and the themes that they have begun to work on.

Youth participants were then asked to get back into their groups and to create their dream map. A dream map is where the groups listed the challenges that exist in relation to their particular theme, brainstorm their ideal world, and then connect the 2 by finding solutions to get from the challenges to their dream world.

Event #5: Political Speed Dating

Objective: To connect young people and elected officials and learn more about one another in a fun environment.

Political Speed Dating is based on conventional speed dating and involves the participants moving around the room and having short 'dates' with each of the elected officials. Each 'date' lasts about 10 minutes in which time the young people can ask as many questions as they like in relation to their theme they've been working on. 9 elected officials joined the youth to participate in Political Speed Dating.

Event #6: Presentation and Council Preparation

Objective: To provide an overview of what to expect at the “youth council session” and to prepare recommendations and presentations.

Youth participants were encouraged to select 1 or 2 top recommendations and to prepare a creative presentation for the final event. Participants also selected the elected officials that they would represent (i.e. The Mayor, a Council member, School Board Trustee, etc.)

Event #7: Adult Orientation

Objective: To provide an overview of what to expect at the “youth council session” and to take on the role of mentor and partner on the final day.

The adult session did not take place this year due to low registration. It is suggested that in future years, this session is held at the beginning of YouthPolitik.

Event #8: YouthPolitik “Youth Council” Session

Objective: To educate youth participants on Council procedure and to connect youth and elected officials to dialogue and debate some of the issues that are important to youth.

Youth participants presented a series of recommendations based on 8 themes to their peers, the media and to elected officials and staff.

The recommendations included:

1. Environment & Sustainability: a) Create a Fareless Square; b) Issue personal backyard compost containers for every household
2. Substance Abuse: a) Create clinics that are accessible and utilize unused and abandoned buildings for shelters that are open for all people to receive treatment; b) Create youth friendly education for youth to teach young people about the realities of substance abuse
3. Homelessness: a) Create employment centres that offer free and relevant training to those who are homeless. These centres will provide all of the necessities that people need to prepare them for work (i.e. hygiene, healthcare and education); b) Educate students in schools about the realities of homelessness so youth have a better understanding of the issues.
4. Discrimination: a) Create the program “Random Acts of Kindness” to battle intolerance against others
5. Youth Engagement: a) Create a Youth Council (e.g. on-line forums, training and work together with Councillors)
6. Child & Youth Rights: a) “Youth United for Change” program: opportunity for youth in the city to come together to create youth policy to combat a range and diversity of important pressing issues facing the youth of our city.

7. Libraries & Schools: a) Healthy snacks in vending machines and in school cafeterias;
b) Practical education in schools to deal with real-world issues that youth are facing in the city (e.g. how to do your taxes, balance a household budget, etc.)
8. Arts & Culture: a) Create a Youth Night Club; b) Affordable and accessible extracurricular and alternative activities for youth

For the afternoon session, participants broke into groups with elected officials and prioritized the list of recommendations in order to decide on how \$1 million dollars could make the most impact. This was followed by a debate and then a vote in a simulated council activity.

The day concluded with a closing ceremony where food, music and certificates were enjoyed.

Event #9 & #10: Youth Debrief

Objective: To review the YouthPolitik program and to identify what worked and where the program could be improved. The Youth Debrief was also a chance to list opportunities for youth involvement in the future.

2 sessions were devoted to specifically identifying how the YouthPolitik program could be improved and how participants could continue to stay active and involved.