



**SUBJECT: 2019 status update on community engagement**

**TO: Corporate Services, Strategy, Risk & Accountability Cttee.**

**FROM: Corporate Communications and Government Relations**

Report Number: CC-02-20

Wards Affected: All

File Numbers: 170-101-02-2

Date to Committee: March 12, 2020

Date to Council: March 30, 2020

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**Recommendation:**

Receive and file corporate communications and government relations report CC-02-20 providing a status update on community engagement.

**PURPOSE:**

**Vision to Focus Alignment:**

- Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture
- Deliver customer centric services with a focus on efficiency and technology transformation

To provide committee and City Council with a status update of the city's engagement activities for the last few months of 2018 and all of 2019.

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**Background and Discussion:**

The Community Engagement Charter (Engagement Charter) was approved by City Council in April of 2013. The Engagement Charter was created by citizens with support from city staff and it is an agreement between and among Burlington City Council and residents concerning community engagement with City government and establishes the commitments, responsibilities and fundamental concepts of this relationship.

To ensure the continued success of the Engagement Charter, the City invited members of the Charter team to help develop an Engagement Charter Action Plan. This team of

community members and staff is known as the Charter Action Team (ChAT). The Action Plan aims to bring the Engagement Charter to life and to embed engagement into everyday practice at the City of Burlington. The Charter Action Plan was approved and adopted in April 2014.

Along with Vision to Focus alignment, community engagement is part of the strategic direction “An Engaging City” in the 2015-2040 Strategic Plan. This strategic direction or pillar clearly demonstrates the city’s commitment to including residents in decision making.

## **Discussion**

Prior to the adoption of the Engagement Charter and Action Plan, staff connected with people in the community to make them aware of projects, files, studies and upcoming decisions to be made and to obtain public opinion and input to help shape decisions. Some of this community engagement and involvement was legally required under things such as the Planning Act, while other community engagement and involvement was part of department business practices. Previously, staff practices were not consistent in terms of approach, methodology, training and tracking. Through the efforts of city staff and the Charter Action Team, many changes and practices have changed so that there is a consistent approach and standards to community engagement. Examples of this includes:

- Using IAP2 (International Association for Public Participation) model and spectrum for community engagement. The city has trained over 100 staff and 7 community volunteers in the 5-day IAP2 program and 31 senior staff and Council members in IAP2 for Decision Makers.
- Use of a standardized checklist for community engagement. This checklist is used each time staff initiates engagement in the community and asks probing questions such as “what is the decision to be made?”, “how much input can the public have on the decision?” “what are goals for engaging the community?”, “who may be impacted by the decision?”, “how will the loop be closed with the public?” etc.
- In June of 2018, the City of Burlington launched a new online engagement portal called “Get Involved Burlington”. Standards on the portal include identifying where on the IAP2 spectrum the project is, the key milestones of the project, contact person, closing the loop and letting the public know how input was/wasn’t used and next steps etc.
- All surveys are reviewed by key engagement staff to ensure survey standards are met and that plain, clear language is used.
- Engagement and Communications staff work closely to create engagement and communications plans for projects.

## **Financial Matters:**

2018/19 operating budget included funding for:

- Online engagement portal software
- Training for staff in the area of engagement and survey writing.
- Outreach for things such as the Food for Feedback event (public outreach on various topics requiring public input) and the Engagement Marketplace (internal event to showcase, tools, tips and resources available to staff to assist with public engagement).

## **Total Financial Impact**

Funding to support community engagement has been approved within the base budget in the 2018 and 2019 Operating budget.

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## **Climate Implications**

Community engagement regarding the climate/environment is an important practice. In 2018/19 the community has provided input on items such as the Community Energy Plan, the Climate Action Plan, Cycling Plan, Integrated Mobility Plan to name a few. The City has been involved in initiatives such as McMaster Climate Change Summit, Bay Area Climate Change Forum and the Urban Cooperation Program with Vaxjo, Sweden.

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## **Engagement Matters:**

This report and appendix have been developed in collaboration with city staff and the offices of Council. Citizen Advisory Committees submit their own status reports and work plans to Council and are not reflected in this report.

**Engagement highlights are found in “Appendix A” of this report and outlines:**

- Engagement statistics from the online Get Involved Burlington portal and social media
- Awards/Conference Presentations/Studies and Webinars that Burlington has been part of
- New or innovative engagement approaches
- Training
- Delegation and municipal election statistics

- Projects and topics the public was consulted on
- Internal (staff) project consultations
- Decisions made based on public feedback

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## **Conclusion:**

Burlington has been and continues to be a leader in the area of community engagement. In 2017, the City of Burlington was awarded “Organization of the Year” in Canada by IAP2 (International Association for Public Participation). The City is regularly invited to present on panels, be keynote speakers or a featured guest on webinars in the area of community engagement.

In the 2019 Community Survey, there were significant gains made in the area of engagement:

Percentage indicates a rating of “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree”

<b>STATEMENT</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2019</b>
Residents have enough opportunities to provide input into decision-making about city projects and services	64%	77%
I would like to provide input to the City for the purpose of influencing decision-making about city projects and services	63%	76%
The City does a good job of engaging residents in decision-making about city projects and services.	54%	72%
The City would welcome my opinion when making decisions about city projects and services that impact me	57%	71%
The City uses input from residents in decision-making about city projects and services	50%	70%
The City’s decision-making about projects and services is reflective of the voice of the majority of residents	46%	63%

Although we have made some significant strides in the area of community engagement, there is always room for continuous improvement. Through the efforts of staff, council, members of advisory committees, ChAT and the many passionate and engaged residents of Burlington, we will continue to work together to build capacity so that the best decisions are made. Together, we will continue to work to make Burlington one of the best cities in which to live, work, play and retire in.

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Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Dwyer

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**Appendices:**

- A. CC-02-20 Community Engagement Activities for 2018/2019

**Report Approval:**

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Council. Final approval is by the City Manager.