

NO: R016

COUNCIL DATE: January 22, 2018

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council** DATE: **January 16, 2018**

FROM: **General Manager, Planning & Development** FILE: **1850-20**
General Manager, Finance

SUBJECT: **Young Agrarians 2018 Land Matching Program**

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning & Development Department and the Finance Department recommend that Council:

1. Receive this report as information; and
2. Approve a grant of \$10,000 from the Council Initiatives Fund in support of the Young Agrarians 2018 Land Matching Program.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to seek funding approval for the Young Agrarians to support their Land Matching Program for 2018.

BACKGROUND

Young Agrarians is a program established in 2012 by the non-profit society FarmFolk CityFolk with a mission to grow the next generation of farmers and food lovers in Canada. They have adopted a program successfully implemented in Quebec which offers a tested land matching methodology to address the main barrier for new farmers: access to land. Young Agrarians operates year-round and focuses on practical and cost-effective solutions, including:

- Supporting a land access program that works to link useable land with interested young and new farmers;
- Supporting an online community via a blog, website, social media and resource U-Map;
- Providing networking opportunities with the local farming community; and
- Offering business mentorship between start-up farmers and experienced farming mentors.

In early 2016, Young Agrarians partnered with the City in a land matching pilot program to secure land matches between land owners who wanted their land farmed and new or young farmers who wanted to begin farming. This pilot program was supported by the City through in-kind staff resources, and was funded through grant programs offered by VanCity, the Real Estate Foundation, Metro Vancouver and the Ministry of Agriculture through their Growing Forward 2 Program.

The pilot project resulted in the launching of Surrey's "Farmable Now" website, which provides information related to business planning, production and land for new farmers as well as a link to the Young Agrarians U-Map where land and farmers can connect to each other within Surrey and throughout the region. The website and land matching service work hand-in-hand. The website offers the farming information, map and links, and the land matching service, staffed by Young Agrarians, administers and operationalizes the matching of land owners with the new farmers.

In order for Young Agrarians to continue to support its Land Matcher staff position, it is looking to secure additional funding for 2018. This position is the key contact not only with the finalized matches already made within Surrey, but also for pending matches that, due to the complexities of agriculture as a business, can take 1-2 years to secure and complete.

DISCUSSION

The Young Agrarian Land Matching Program fills the gap between policy and implementation. Surrey has strong policy framework that includes goals to increase farming by focusing on under-utilized farm land in the Official Community Plan, Surrey's Climate Adaptation Strategy and Surrey's Agriculture Protection and Enhancement Strategy. The Young Agrarian's Land Matching Program would assist Surrey in implementing this goal through resources that are solely dedicated to matching new farmers with land owners. As well, the Young Agrarians provide expertise with preparation of leasing agreements between two private parties.

The original partnership pilot with Young Agrarians required a review of the program at the end of 2017 to determine whether Surrey wanted to remain engaged with the project. Meetings were held in 2017 (Metro Vancouver Regional Food System Action Plan Municipal Forum and Municipal Land Matching Project meeting) and were attended by multiple local government representatives, the Ministry of Agriculture and Metro Vancouver staff. The meeting discussion focused on ways in which municipalities can continue to advance and protect food security and to determine if financial assistance is available to expand the partnership initiated with Surrey to other local governments.

Young Agrarians is pursuing a financial model where there is collective financial support shared by local governments; a similar model is used successfully in Quebec for their land matching program. This funding model focuses on seeking nominal amounts from several sources to share the costs of the initial \$70,000 per year program on a regional scale. To that end, the Young Agrarians appeared before Council on January 8, 2018 to request \$10,000 in financial support to continue the Land Matching Program. The City of Richmond and the Township of Langley have also been approached for a funding request of \$10,000 per municipality. Funding has already been secured from the Ministry of Agriculture in the amount of \$25,000, with a funding announcement anticipated from Metro Vancouver in early 2018.

Additional non-government funding sources will also be pursued by Young Agrarians as they become available. As the program expands, additional municipalities will be asked to participate and share the costs of not only supporting the existing single Land Matcher position but expanding it to include additional Land Matchers so that capacity for the program can increase and additional lands can be connected to new and young farmers.

This funding request of \$10,000 is for the year 2018 in order for the Young Agrarians to continue with existing land matching processes (1 of which is expected within Surrey) and to pursue new land matches in the region. Young Agrarians is in the process of determining how long-term

funding can be secured for their program but their first step is to partner with local governments in the region. This amount is proposed to be accessed from the Council Initiatives Fund, the status of which is provided in Appendix “I.”

POLICY & SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Partnering with Young Agrarians to support the continued operation of their Land Matching program assists in achieving several policies in Surrey’s Official Community Plan, Climate Adaptation Strategy and Agriculture Protection and Enhancement Strategy as follows:

Surrey Official Community Plan

Theme E: Economy

- Policy E3.13 – Support programs that help new farmers overcome financial and other barriers to accessing land (includes but is not limited to incubator farms).

Surrey Climate Adaptation Strategy

Ag and Food Security Section

- Policy 3.6 – Investigate the feasibility of a farm incubator program to ensure farmers are able to enter the industry.
- Policy 4.4 – Consider an agriculture co-ordinator position to help build capacity for the development of agriculture and sustainable food systems within the City.

Surrey Agricultural Protection and Enhancement Strategy

Strategy 1 – Land Base

- Policy 5 – Develop policy and programs that support and expand food production and opportunities for farming operations.

Strategy 2 – Innovation

- Policy 5 – Support programs that connect farmers with business expertise in developing business plans for new or innovative ideas.

Strategy 4 – Agri-Urban Connections

- Preamble – The City can help to foster positive connections between ag and urban land uses and communities by...making it easier for young prospective farmers to gain access to land, technology, information, expertise and mentoring opportunities.
- Policy 5 – Consider implementing an ‘Ag One Stop’ system that provides information and assistance to farmers and prospective farmers seeking to start or grow their business.

Strategy 5 – Sustainability and Resilience

- Preamble – Concepts of diversity and resilience extend to human resources as well. Sustainability includes training and supporting a new generation of farmers and food producers to ensure continued stewardship of the land and access to healthy local food.
- Policy 5 – Develop feasibility of a farm incubator program, using City-owned ALR land, to support young farmers seeking ag training and initial access to land.

Strategy Implementation

Policy 5 – Support feasibility studies and pilot projects on a number of key aspects including...a farm incubator program supporting young farmers.

The Sustainability Charter 2.0 was endorsed by Council in 2016 and includes Desired Outcomes (DO) and Strategic Directions (SD) that support the proposal in this report, such as:

Built Environment and Neighbourhoods

SD12: Encourage and enable opportunities for community-based food production and capacity-building programs.

Economic Prosperity and Livelihoods:

DO4: Surrey's economy is diversified with a mix of service, industrial, agricultural and innovation-based businesses.

DO8: Economic activities recognize the importance of, and have minimal impact on, the natural environment.

DO11: Food production and food enterprises of all scales are an integral part of the local economy.

SD9: Expand the sharing economy opportunities in Surrey.

SD10: Support the development and growth of key sectors including health technology, clean technology, advanced manufacturing, agri-innovation and the creative economy.

Health and Wellness:

DO11: Community-based and small scale commercial food growing and preparation opportunities are available throughout the city.

SD9: Support residents, neighbourhoods and organizations in growing, preserving, preparing and sharing food.

SD11: Promote design and development that incorporates spaces for food growing, at the neighbourhood and site level.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information provided in this report, it is recommended that Council approve a grant of \$10,000 from the Council Initiatives Fund in support of the Young Agrarians 2018 Land Matching Program.

Original signed by
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