



Date 3 July 2012

City Council Committee Report

To: Mayor Canfield & Members of Council

Fr: Karen Brown

Re: Youth Council First Term Review

Recommendation:

That Council hereby directs administration to review the terms of reference for the Kenora Youth Council based on a review of the first term and make recommendations related to the structure and membership of the Kenora Youth Council while exploring opportunities to tie appointments to the Kenora Youth Council in to local government week activities in the fall of each year; and

That Council hereby approves holding any appointments to the Kenora Youth Council pending said review; and

That Council hereby directs the Clerk to advise any members of the first Kenora Youth Council that have indicated their interest in continuing on as a member of that Council as to next steps in the process, together with a thank you for their interest in continued participation; and further

That an amended terms of reference for the Kenora Youth Council be brought forward to Council for approval by the September Council meeting.

Background:

As the first term of the Kenora Youth Council comes to a close, it is time to reflect back on how things worked, what worked well and what could be improved upon.

The City had the opportunity to work with eight, enthusiastic youth over several months between winter and spring 2012. In first establishing this committee and its structure, the decision was made to leave the direction and mandate of the Committee very much to the youth, with a Council representative as well as City and Northwestern Health Unit staff members participating strictly as resources to the group. The intent was to allow the youth to determine their own priorities and not lead them in any manner, recognizing that it was really under the initiative of the youth that the City first developed this new Youth Council.

There is no question that there were successes for this group. One of the things developed early on by the youth was a logo for the Youth Council, as well as Mission and Values Statements. These are attached to this report for your reference. Additional activities included a survey developed to obtain additional information on local youth, school presentations developed and some work done developing a layout for a Youth Council website. There was also a lot of discussion by this group with regards to moving forward on establishing a youth drop in centre. One of the members did a lot of research for information for a potential youth council orientation package, and some members have volunteered to continue to work over the summer months on an orientation for the next term of Council in conjunction with the City's Recreation Manager, Colleen Neil.

In reviewing the first term, however, it is clear that the City needs to provide more structure and guidance to this committee. Independently, the youth had expressed a desire to participate more closely with Council, preferably at the Council table.

It is also worth noting that the intent of the Kenora Youth Council, when established, was to develop a group of youth who would work with elected officials to strengthen the youth standpoint in the community and help illustrate the current everyday issues. The vision was to develop a platform that would allow positive and meaningful input into City decisions on items that mattered to the youth, engaging them in issues related to the community and allowing them to make a difference. While the first term should be considered a valuable experience in its own right, it fell short in allowing youth the opportunity to provide that input and voice directly to our elected officials.

Since the Youth Council was first established, the City has been made aware of other alternatives for youth councils run by other municipalities. In particular, the Town of Marathon has developed a Student Councillor Program in conjunction with Local Government Week in an attempt to engage the youth of the community. Under that program, the student councillors attend at least one scheduled meeting of Council per month from October to June. While the student councillors cannot vote, they do participate in discussion on all current business of Council, with the exception of in-camera business. This structure has been endorsed by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Similarly, last fall, Kenora participated in local government week activities, and this resulted in one Youth Mayor and two Youth Councillors being appointed and attending the November Committee of the Whole meeting. Interestingly, none of these individuals made application to participate on the Kenora Youth Council when that was established a few months later.

Looking at a similar structure to the Town of Marathon would enable the City to provide more structure and direction to the members of the Youth Council. It would also mean, however, that there would be significantly fewer members of the Youth Council, as they would be participating directly with City Council in discussions. City Clerk, Joanne McMillin, has spoken with the Town of Marathon with regards to their program, and they have indicated that they are quite pleased with it. It is recommended that the City review options as to what is being done in other communities, such as Marathon, with the vision to tying the selection of the Youth Council members into local government week, and that the new structure be done for a one year trial, and then reviewed to determine whether further changes would be recommended.

Budget:

The youth would participate in the monthly Committee of the Whole. Any recommendations brought forward to the Council table through a Youth Council member would need to be considered by Council on a case by case basis.

Communication Plan/Notice By-law Requirements:

The terms of reference would need to be amended to reflect a new structure, similar to that used by the Town of Marathon.

Any Youth Council members from the first term who have indicated an interest in participating in subsequent terms of the Youth Council would be advised as to next steps and invited to participate in the process through the local government activities in the fall of 2012.



Mission

Through an environment that welcomes all, we provide opportunities for positive moral growth and sustainable life skills development for youth in the City of Kenora.

Value Statements

Leadership: To encourage innovation, creativity, and initiative.

Service: To be fair, friendly, and helpful.

Reputation: To stress excellence, integrity, accountability, and honesty.

Human Resources: To recognize that our Youth are our most valuable resource.

Community: To respect and promote our community.

Stewardship: To consider the long-term consequences of actions,

think broadly across issues, disciplines and boundaries and act accordingly