



100 John West Way
Aurora, Ontario
L4G 6J1
(905) 727-3123
aurora.ca

Town of Aurora
Information Report
No. CA021-004

Subject: Update on the Aurora Cares Community Action Team

Prepared by: Eliza Bennett, Interim Manager of Communications

Department: Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

Date: May 18, 2021

In accordance with the Procedure By-law, any Member of Council may request that this Information Report be placed on an upcoming General Committee or Council meeting agenda for discussion.

Executive Summary

In accordance with Resolution 2020-04-28, the purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the actions taken by the Aurora Cares Community Action Team, and a summary of expenses incurred to date to support the Task Force's activities.

- The Aurora Cares Community Action Team was established in April 2020
- Council requested a report regarding actions taken by the Aurora Cares Community Action Team
- The Action Team has evolved in response to the changing needs of the community
- One of the areas of focus for the Action Team was food security
- One of the Action Team's largest projects was its iPads for long-term care residents initiative
- The Action Team was able to provide financial support and services in kind to those in need
- The Action Team came together to support the annual Christmas Dream Dinner and to respond to concerns of seniors' isolation
- Various Town divisions have actively supported the Action Team's work
- The Action Team continues to meet on an ad-hoc basis based on community need

Background

The Aurora Cares Community Action Team was established by Council in April 2020

The Aurora Cares Community Action Team was established in April 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of the Action Team is to assess the emerging needs of the most vulnerable and at risk in the community, such as citizens who may become homeless or who are homeless, seniors, disabled persons and those who rely on food banks, with the further intent of helping to fill in the gaps where needed. The Action Team was funded by earmarking \$25,000 from the Mayor's Charity Golf Classic Fund in 2020. These funds have been used to support the Action Team's initiatives, supplemented by direct donations where available.

Council requested a report regarding actions taken by the Aurora Cares Community Action Team

At their meeting of April 28, 2020, Town of Aurora Council transferred \$25,000 from the Aurora Mayor's Charity Golf Classic Fund to the Aurora Cares Community Action Team to support the Team's initiatives. At the same meeting, Council requested that a follow-up report be provided on outcomes achieved by the Team from the transferred monies.

Analysis

The Action Team has evolved in response to the changing needs of the community

Made up of 13 community leaders, including three members of Council, and supported by Town staff, the Action Team has met on a regular and then ad-hoc basis in response to emerging issues, and has evolved its actions to meet the needs of the community. The latest meeting of the Action Team was in early May 2021.

Initially, the Action Team focused on responding to large-scale issues in the community, such as homelessness, potential homelessness, food insecurity, financial need and services in kind, and community supports and resources.

One of the areas of focus for the Action Team was food security

With food insecurity as an emerging concern as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Action Team focused first on this issue. Several initiatives were undertaken, including:

- Development of an electronic resource guide with community resource information

- Campaign to encourage local restaurants to sponsor a community meal for the Welcome Table
- Creation of a sub-committee to compile a list of locations serving meals during the initial pandemic period, both in Aurora and in the surrounding area

One of the value-added elements of the Action Team was its capacity to serve as a conduit for various organizations wishing to provide support in the community. Examples of these include sponsorship of meals for the Welcome Table, fundraising for Welcoming Arms, and networks and connections made between potential sponsors and eligible programs and services in the community.

One of the Action Team's largest projects was its iPads for long-term care residents initiative

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the psychological health of many residents, with a particular impact on long-term care residents who were unable to receive visits from family. In response to this emerging need, the Action Team partnered with the Rotary Club to purchase ten iPads (at a 50/50 cost share) for use by residents in long-term care facilities to stay in touch with loved ones. Organizations are able to borrow the iPads for up to three months for the use of their residents; reservation length is also able to be extended if needed.

Town staff supported this initiative through the IT Division and the Town also pays any surplus data charges for the iPads on an ongoing basis.

The Action Team was able to provide financial support and services in kind to those in need

As part of the Action Team's work, eligibility criteria were established for those seeking financial support during the pandemic. A subcommittee was struck to review applications. In addition to financial support, other in-kind services were provided: food hampers, shopping cards, referrals to appropriate agencies, etc. One of the applicants to the subcommittee, for instance, was living at a local shelter. Another example of an in-kind service was the donation of thermometers to Chartwell Resthaven.

The Action Team came together recently to support the annual Christmas Dream Dinner and to respond to concerns of seniors' isolation

The Action Team met in November 2020 to help support the annual Christmas Dream Dinner (December 2020), which is usually hosted at the Legion but was not able to be due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the help of Welcoming Arms and support from the

Action Team, the Christmas Dinner was held at the Armoury, and was sponsored by a number of organizations:

- Green Side Up - \$7,000
- Neighbourhood Network – dessert
- Salvation Army – books and tissues
- Aurora Seniors Centre – knitted items
- Real Canadian Superstore – 10 turkeys and 10 bags of food
- Neighbourhood Network – take-out bags
- Sysco Foods – supported meals

Through the Action Team, the community was able to come together to support this annual event in a different format.

In January 2021, the Action Team met again to respond to concerns of seniors feeling isolated as a result of the ongoing pandemic and lockdown situation. The resource guide was updated to include relevant information and flyers were printed to advertise community resources and support for those feeling isolated.

Various Town divisions have actively supported the Action Team's work

The Action Team's work has been supported by a range of Town divisions, including Information Technology, Access Aurora, Finance, the Mayor's Office, and Communications.

The Action Team's ability to reach those in need has relied in part on effective communication. As such, the Town's Communications Division has been actively involved in the work of the Action Team since its inception. This has included: creation of the Aurora Cares Resources document, promotion of the Action Team and creative materials for social media targeting those who might need support from the Team, creation of promotional materials, newspaper ads, mobile signs, and other collateral. Support to the Action Team from other divisions include: provision of IT support, coordination of meetings and activities, fielding calls and inquiries, and financial systems support.

The Action Team continues to meet on an ad-hoc basis based on community need

The Action Team no longer meets on a regular basis; however, the Team does meet on an ad-hoc basis based on emerging issues in the community. As the need for support through this Team lessens, unused monies associated with the Action Team will remain within the Mayor's Charity Golf Tournament Fund.

Advisory Committee Review

N/A

Legal Considerations

None

Financial Implications

The Aurora Cares Community Action Team was originally funded by earmarking \$25,000 from the Mayor's Charity Golf Classic Fund. The Action Team received monetary donations totalling \$2,145, which was added to the total amount of funding available to the Action Team. The Action Team's account currently stands at a balance of \$19,472.33. The bulk of the expenses have been incurred for the purchase of and ongoing costs associated with the iPad program.

Payable	Amount Paid		
iPad purchase	\$	4,267.71	
iPad data charges – all	\$	1,405.50	
Various / miscellaneous*	\$	2,218.20	
			\$ 7,891.41
Donation – Rotary Club (original iPad purchase)			(1,995.00)
Donation - Resident			(150.00)
Ending Balance			\$ (19,253.59)

* Included in this category are expenses related to supporting those in financial need, Christmas Dream dinner, and other one-off expenditures

Communications Considerations

The Town of Aurora will share the outcomes and results of the Action Team by way of a media release once its activities have wound down. In addition, the Communications Division is a key partner in the Task Force and will continue to support its activities going forward.

Link to Strategic Plan

This report relates to the Strategic Plan through Pillar 1 (Community), Goal 1 (Supporting an exception quality of life for all), Objective 5 (Strengthening the fabric of our community).

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. Council may provide further direction.

Conclusions

The Aurora Cares Community Action Team has been in place since April 2020 to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic at the local level. The Action Team has been able to act on community needs and has achieved a number of tangible outcomes, as outlined in this report.

Attachments

None

Previous Reports

N/A

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on April 29, 2021

Approvals

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer