



SUBJECT: Civic recognition update

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

FROM: Office of the City Clerk

Report Number: CL-02-22

Wards Affected: N/A

File Numbers: 130-02

Date to Committee: April 6, 2022

Date to Council: April 19, 2022

Recommendation:

Direct the City Clerk to report back in Q3 2022 on potential (draft) criteria, a formal process for nominating community members to be recognized and a plan for a recognition event to take place in 2023; and

Direct the City Clerk to work with the Manager of Engagement and Volunteers to plan and implement an engagement campaign regarding civic recognition in Q2 2022.

PURPOSE:

Vision to Focus Alignment:

- Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture

Background and Discussion:

Civic recognition has been done in a variety of ways throughout the years and has evolved and changed to include an assortment of ways to celebrate and recognize volunteers in the community. A program started in 1965 called Civic Recognition as a way to celebrate significant contributions to the community by volunteers. Over the years the program evolved to include multiple awards in several categories and included a volunteer committee to evaluate nominations and decide on the recipient of the awards and in 2012 was rebranded and became Burlington's Best. Burlington's Best continued from 2012 to 2019 when the following staff direction was approved at

the City Council meeting of January 28, 2019, as an amendment to office of the city clerk report CL-01-19:

Direct the City Clerk to explore partnerships with other recognition programs across the City in order to establish one event program that celebrates the recognition for volunteerism and report back to Council by Q3 of 2019.

Subsequent to this staff direction the following recommendation was approved at the City Council meeting on April 20, 2021 as part of office of the Mayor report MO-04-20:

Report back on options for resident recognition programs and/or events, and exploring, among other possibilities:

- a) revised/rebranded Burlington's Best/Civic Recognition/Inspire Burlington;**
- b) partnership with the Key to the City program; and/or**
- c) incorporating recognition into the annual Burlington Day festivities being developed by the mayor's office in partnership with the recreation services department to launch in 2021.**

Strategy/process

In order to fully understand what Council members wanted/expected in a civic recognition program moving forward, staff conducted interviews with each member of council individually to gain insight on their specific expectations. The following questions were asked of each member of Council individually:

1. For clarity, do you see the volunteer recognition program focusing on people who volunteer with the city or city-wide?
2. Who do you see the City partnering with for a recognition program?
3. How do you feel about a recognition program partnering with the Key to the City initiative or Burlington Day festivities, or another City event?
4. What did you think about the Burlington's Best Awards in 2019?
5. How might a volunteer recognition program look moving forward?
6. If we had an event, how would that look?
7. How could we do civic recognition differently?

The following is a high-level summary of the key themes/results that the majority of members shared:

No Gala - the feedback received was that the gala format was not necessary or expected from award recipients. The gala format was enjoyed for a time, but it was felt that it had run its course and the cost to attend could be a barrier to some residents.

Free event – most members expressed that they thought the event should be free to attend for everyone. The idea of a free BBQ was suggested by several Councillors as a way to celebrate community volunteers.

Potential partnerships – most Councillors did not have any suggestions on potential partnerships in the community. A couple of areas discussed were service clubs and consolidation of ward specific awards. Councillors who are already giving out awards to those making a difference in their individual wards do not want to give this up and feel their awards are more about celebrating the extraordinary people, organizations and businesses that keep their wards strong.

No winners/losers – feedback received from several members of council was that there should not be a winner. Having a ‘winner’ by default makes the other nominees ‘losers’ which is not a great feeling and should not be happening when the point is to recognize the amazing contributions these citizens have made to the City of Burlington. This feedback led to discussion on how residents would be picked to receive a civic award if there are to be no losers. Would that mean everyone nominated would receive an award?

Criteria needed – all members of Council felt even if there are no ‘winners’, there still needs to be a clear set of criteria in order for someone to receive recognition. This program is meant to be for those making ‘significant’ contributions to the community and those creating change. There was a lot of discussion on how this could be done in a way to ensure all submissions would receive an award so there are no ‘losers’.

Some members thought that a citizen committee could still be used to review the nominations, others thought it could be done by staff.

Some members thought that instead of categories there should be leveled or tiered award criteria, but all agreed that there shouldn’t be categories like there has been in the past with Burlington’s Best. Some volunteer activities and community contributions do not fit into a predetermined category.

Partnering with another event – most Councillors had positive feelings to partnering with another city event, but had questions on what that would look like specifically and how a reception could be done? Overall, partnering with a Burlington Day celebration or Canada Day event was thought to be a good idea.

Key to the City – it was felt by most councillors that the Key to the City initiative could be incorporated into a civic recognition program as the most significant/highest level of recognition. It was felt by most that there needs to be very clear criteria for this prestigious honour and it should be limited to those who have created a unique and meaningful legacy and positively impacted the City of Burlington.

Other ways to recognize – the following ideas were provided by council members when asked about other ways to recognize citizens for community involvement: certificates, recognition at a council meeting, walk of fame or wall of fame which would be a permanent art installation. All members of council agreed that a video should continue to be produced and released on the city website with social media highlighting

those who are being recognized, regardless of what the outcome of a civic recognition program looks like.

New name ideas – Inspire or Inspiration awards, Burlington Together, Shine Awards, Community Champion (this has been done by Recreation, Community and Culture), Inspire Burlington.

Municipal Scan

In addition to the one-on-one meetings with members of Council, staff also researched what surrounding municipalities do for civic recognition. Some of the municipalities looked at were Kitchener, Niagara Falls, Oakville, Hamilton, Grimsby and Ottawa.

Potential Criteria

Regardless of what the final recognition/award/program ends up looking like, there will need to be criteria to determine who will receive recognition. The following is criteria that could potentially be incorporated into the nomination process:

- Citizens who have achieved Provincial, National or International Recognition and, in doing so, have brought honour to the City of Burlington.
- Citizens who have completed special projects, voluntary in nature, that have brought favourable publicity to the community or that have contributed positively to the Burlington community.
- Citizens who have contributed significantly to the quality of life in the community through their volunteer efforts.
- Citizens who have made their work sustainable (in other words, how will the benefits of the nominee's contribution continue when the nominee is no longer involved).
- Citizens who have identified and addressed a priority in the community.
- No remuneration or payment has been received for the effort.

The following areas could be used to assess nominations and points would be awarded for each of the areas to determine who receives an award:

Impact - refers to the depth of the nominee's contribution. For example, has the nominee identified and addressed a priority in their community and has the contribution made a lasting difference in the community?

Reach –who has benefited from the nominee's contributions (for example, individuals and/or specific groups)?

Engagement –how has the nominee's contributions sparked teamwork to address social challenges and how did the nominee engage others?

Challenges – what challenges (personal, social or other) did the nominee have to overcome to make a contribution in their community?

Inspiration - did the nominee become a role model in their community or in their organization?

Financial Matters:

Not applicable.

Total Financial Impact

The total financial impact will depend on what the program ends up looking like. A detailed budget will be submitted once a final recognition program is approved.

Source of Funding

The office of the city clerk has money budgeted for a recognition program. Currently in the 2022 budget there is \$3,990 allotted to this initiative.

Other Resource Impacts

Staff from several departments could be impacted by the delivery of a recognition program including office of the city clerk, recreation, community and culture and corporate communications and engagement.

Climate Implications

Not applicable.

Engagement Matters:

All members of council were consulted and asked for feedback. This report is recommending doing further community engagement to get feedback from residents on what they would like to see in a civic recognition program.

Conclusion:

Civic recognition is an important initiative that needs to be well thought out, planned, and implemented in a respectful way to honour the incredible contributions made by residents to better the communities we live in. Staff are looking to engage the community over the next few months for feedback on what civic recognition looks like in their minds. Staff look forward to coming back with a complete civic recognition

program including potential (draft) criteria, a formal process for nominating community members to be recognized and a plan for a recognition event.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Gillies

Committee Clerk

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Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.