

Staff Report

Presented By: Mark Paoli, Director, Development Services
Meeting Date: October 27, 2025
Subject: Analysis of Environmental ad-hoc Advisory Committee Recommendations
Attachment(s): None

Recommendation

That Council receive the Analysis of Environmental ad-hoc Advisory Committee Recommendations report for information.

Report Summary

In Q4 of 2024, the Environmental ad-hoc Advisory Committee provided a report to Council with a series of recommendations towards advancing environmental sustainability in Saugeen Shores. Council referred the Committee's recommendations for a report back on the implementation. This report summarizes the analysis that has been carried out with regard to recommendations about community engagement on the environment. Previous reports have dealt with the Committee's recommendations about the urban tree canopy and climate change.

Background/Analysis

The 2024 Environmental ad-hoc Advisory Committee established a Sub-Committee which recommended that the Town establish and ad-hoc Environmental Community Engagement Committee that would be stood up annually from November 1 to May 31, with the following responsibilities:

- promote environmental sustainability annually during Earth Month (April) through a broad level of community engagement, perspectives and experiences, communications and awareness of initiatives;
- administer the Environmental Champion Awards Program; and
- collaborate with staff and existing external partners to consider, develop, and implement Earth Month activities.

The rationale behind creating the Committee included survey and anecdote evidence that many residents, including seasonal residents, have limited awareness of the environmental programs available In Saugeen Shores.

It was envisioned that the Committee would include members of the public and two Council members. It was also recommended to place a priority on a varied demographic, including secondary students who live in the municipality and representatives of Saugeen First Nation.

Ad-hoc Environmental Community Engagement Committee Resource Analysis

In analyzing the resource implications of implementing this Committee, the following points were considered:

- For the Committee to start its work on November 1st 2026, the recruitment of members would need to take place by August 2026 to provide lead time for Striking Committee in September, member orientation, and preparation of the first meeting agenda.
- Town resource complement would consist of:
 - o a member from the Clerk's Division for administrative support (agendas, minutes and procedural guidance to the Chair);
 - o a member of Development Services in an advisory role;
 - o a member from Communications on an as needed basis.
- Although the Sub-Committee recommendation is to establish the Committee annually, noting the anticipated level resources noted above, a one-year pilot is recommended and reporting back to Council on the resources required for an ongoing commitment.
- One method to reduce internal workload is the activation of Sub-Committees as Sub-Committees would not require the same level of support as the main Committee. This structure worked well for the Environmental ad-hoc Advisory Committee in 2024.

Noting the anticipated level of staff and Councillor involvement, it is recommended to try a one-year pilot and report back to Council on the resources required for an ongoing commitment. The workplan would reflect the need to begin the recruiting process in the spring.

Environmental Champion Awards Resource Analysis

One of the mandates of the proposed Committee would be to administer an Environmental Champions award program. More specifically, the Sub-Committee envisioned annual Environmental Champion Awards recipients in the following categories:

- Youth,
- Individual,
- Business,
- Service Club or Organization,
- Agricultural Practitioner, or
- Other as designated by an ad-hoc Environmental Community Engagement Committee

The objective would be to recognize individual(s) or group contributions to the protection, conservation, and enhancement of environmental sustainability in the municipality. Consideration would also be given to creating a "community hero tree" planting initiative in Town parks; this could also exist as a public memorial or recognition program. In analyzing the resource implications of implementing this Committee, the following points were considered:

- There would be some initial costs in the design of the award(s)
- The Town would need to work through the process of developing a corporate policy for the program and criteria for the awards, similar to what is in place for the Heritage Conservation Award. This would entail development of the policy and Council approval of the policy and criteria

- The program could be almost entirely administered by the Committee thereby reducing the need for Town resources; however, as a memorial or recognition program, the “community hero tree” component would be too resource intensive. This is based in part on experience with the memorial bench program.
- The program would entail some level of promotion activity by Town Communications.

To summarize, the Champion Awards program would involve some up-front Town resources to support the award policy and criteria process and incidental costs to design the awards. Once up and running, the Committee could do the program administration, while it is not recommended to include the “environmental hero tree” part of the initiative. Noting the intent to issue the awards during April (i.e. Earth Month) the workplan would target winter 2027 for implementation.

Earth Month Resource Analysis

Another Committee mandate would be to create a Community-Led Event to promote citizen action on the environment, with a focus on developing and implementing Earth Month and other initiatives which could include:

- a series of communications regarding existing sustainability initiatives such as waste management practices (recycling initiatives, hazardous waste disposal, Rotary Shredder, Urban Tree Canopy Plan-related initiatives, Lake Huron Coastal activities on local beaches, energy management, etc.);
- annual community cleanup;
- annual tree sale;
- public-speaking competition involving local schools and local partners;
- poster contest for local children and youth;
- an environment-focused event involving a guest speaker; and/or
- recognition of Environmental Champions (see above) awards presented at Town Council meetings.

The Sub-Committee’s rationale for the above is that environmental sustainability can only be realized with changes to current practices by some residents and must include visitors and tourists through education and awareness.

Noting that the intent is that this would be community-led, and that the work proposed is beyond the capacity of the current staffing complement, this objective would be feasible only if the volunteers are “doers” who can take on the majority of the work with minimal Town support and assuming incidental costs for items such as cleanup materials, facility rentals and advertising. It should be noted that the Town already leads a Spring Cleanup Week and a tree sale and that the seasonal Parks crew is not fully activated until the end of April / early May.

In order to coordinate the timing with the Champion Awards, the workplan would target winter 2027 for preparation and planning with implementation in April 2027.

Summary

The analysis above is summarized in the table below:

Objective	Timing	Resource Impact	Budget Impact
Ad-hoc Environmental Community Engagement Committee	- Recruit spring-summer 2026, Committee first meeting November 2026 - One-Year Pilot	Support from Clerk and Development Services, subject matter experts as needed	\$5,000
Environmental Champion Awards	Policy approval and program/award design winter 2027, Awards in April 2027	Support from Clerk and Communications	Incidental expenses
Earth Month	Coordination and promotion winter 2027, implement April 2027	Volunteer-led with Town support from multiple departments	Incidental expenses

The Committee recommendations are proposed for implementation on a one-year pilot basis. As the 2026 Business Plan and Budget is prepared, the funding of the ad-hoc Environmental Community Engagement Committee in 2026 would be included as an item for consideration as a Proposed Amendment.

Linkages

- Strategic Plan Alignment: Pillar 4: Fostering a Vibrant Place to Live and Visit
- Business Plan Alignment: Development Services Division Highlight

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding

Estimated costs of \$5,000 associated with this program will be included in the 2026 Business Plan for Council consideration to be funded from the Tax Stabilization Reserve.

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Approved By: Kara Van Myall, Chief Administrative Officer