

April 7, 2024

To: Mayor Meed Ward and Members of Council

Re: BurlingtonGreen input regarding **various** April 8, 2024 Committee of the Whole agenda items

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## 1. Item 6.8 - Corporate Zero Waste Policy update (EICS-09-24 )

City staff reports regarding the important issue of zero waste are rare and thus BurlingtonGreen welcomes this opportunity to provide input with recommendations:

### Corporate Zero Waste Policy & Guide & Green Procurement Policy

- **Recommendation: implement a regular monitoring and evaluation process for the policy** along with recognition of positive uptake by staff with educational training for those who do not follow policy requirements.
- **Recommendation:** if not the current practice, **conduct regular waste audits** at city facilities including parks to assess successful sorting practices and provide transparent reports regarding diversion rate data along with a proposed action plan to minimize contamination of waste streams.
- **Vision to Focus alignment** does not mention safeguarding human health, the causation between plastics and a host of health issues from cancer to birth defects is becoming increasingly evident.
- BurlingtonGreen **does not support the inclusion of flavoured waters and enhanced plastic water bottle sales in city facilities.**  
**Recommendation:** explore the switch from plastic containers to aluminum and/or tetra-pack products. Educate city facility staff and those who rent city facilities about the negative environmental impacts of single-use plastics including bottled water.
- **Eliminate the bottled water exemptions** for the Beachway food concession, Tyandaga Municipal Golf course, and large indoor events with more than 1,000 participants.  
**Recommendation:** the Beachway food concession can sell compostable paper cups for people to use the adjacent water refill station. An education and awareness campaign at the golf course can encourage use of reusable drink containers. And indoor events with more than 1000 participants don't need a bottled water exemption(why?). Consider also removing the exemption for outdoor events organized by third parties.
- Other than a small supply for emergency purposes, **discontinue issuing plastic water bottles to volunteers.** **Recommendation:** replace single-use plastic bottled water with bulk water dispensers and paper cups for those who do not bring a refillable container.
- Ensure any branded **city giveaway items** (key chains, lanyards, lip balm, stationary, etc.) are all in alignment with this policy.

- **Community education/lead by example:**
  - additional signage is needed at City parks to explain the waste diversion process for the Moloch bins.
  - include "Towards Zero Waste" branding at ALL city events and functions. Include eco-tips with all event promotions (bring your own reusable containers, bike, walk, transit, carpool, put waste in the correct place etc.,.)
  - all city print materials should include a watermark indicating eco-friendly paper stock and if eco-friendly inks were used.
- Conduct annual all-department staff information sessions on this policy providing user-friendly 'full-circle' training pertaining to green procurement, execution, evaluation, and communications, etc., Consider the implementation of a "Towards Zero Waste Champion" to acknowledge at the training sessions to model behavior.
- Climate Implications (page 5) of the Corporate Zero Waste Policy update report can include the potent global warming gas, methane, released when compostables go to landfill.
- **Green procurement:**
  - guidance documents should include reference materials for disposable items purchased in the highest volume and with the largest potential environmental impact.
  - purchase order forms and materials, including online forms should have the green procurement guidance cited, including prompts with information such as the ability to spend an additional 10% for a greener option, with links to available reference guides about specific purchase choices.
  - implement accountability checklists that must be submitted by staff in procurement, food service, etc. as part of the internal purchasing process.
- **Misalignment of Policy to Bylaw:** Cigarette butts are made of plastic, break down into microplastics, leach toxic chemicals into water and soil and they pose a threat to wildlife and can cause fires.

Countless hours are spent by city staff and community volunteers collecting cigarette butts from various parks, particularly the beach area. A helpful solution that educates the community while providing a receptacle for the butts where they can be sent for proper recycling is pictured here (from another city).

As per an email communication from City of Burlington Parks Operations management **unfortunately a collection canister is not allowed at Burlington beach** (where BurlingtonGreen can manage the unit):



*“By-Law No. 40-20 prohibits smoking and vaping in public places within the Regional Municipality of Halton, specifically in public parks. These receptacles encourage people to smoke in the park and contravene this regulation and we do not provide these receptacles in parks.”*

BurlingtonGreen disagrees with the assumption that these receptacles encourage smoking, and counter that this procedure contradicts the intent of the City’s Zero Waste Policy, while also being a tremendous missed opportunity.

**Recommendation:** pilot the installation of an educational sign with a [Terracycle cigarette butt container](#) (provided by BurlingtonGreen) at the Burlington Beach near the pump house.

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## 2. Item 6.10: Update to the Corporate Energy and Sustainable Buildings Policy (EICS-07-24)

**BurlingtonGreen fully supports the updated Corporate Energy and Sustainable Buildings Policy to guide the City in reaching its goal of being net carbon neutral in its operations by 2040.**

- We concur with the report author Tom Pedlar that the implementation of sustainable building and carbon reduction measures **should not be dependent** on external funding sources to achieve the City's carbon neutral climate resilient goals. The City must make the necessary investments to address the escalating implications of the climate emergency with the speed and scale required.
- **Recommendation:** 'bring this policy to life' for the Burlington community helping them to 'connect the dots' between action on climate change and the positive advancements the city is making in corporate energy initiatives and sustainable building projects. Consider the widespread implementation of "Take Action Burlington" branded labels to post on relevant facility entrance doors, thermostats, air-source heat pump units, bike racks, bus stops, and more. **Community awareness and education are essential to the advancement of the collective efforts required to tackle climate change and all environmental issues.**

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## 3. Item # 11.1: Urban Forest Master Plan update (RPF-02-24)

**BurlingtonGreen congratulates City Forestry staff for their long-term extensive efforts to facilitate the production of this new, well-researched, comprehensive, 'made in Burlington' Urban Forest Management Plan. We have also appreciated the various engagement opportunities welcoming community and stakeholder input to the development of the Plan. Burlington is fortunate to have the expertise, passion, and dedication of all Forestry department management and staff.**

- **We fully support the Vision**, worthy to restate here: *Burlington's urban forest is healthy, sustainable, and resilient to climate change. The trees and woodlands of Burlington's urban forest will be equitably maintained and enhanced for the long term, in recognition of the valued environmental, social, and economic services urban forest assets provide. The City will work with its partners and the community to ensure that this essential resource is managed to maximize tree canopy cover and health, retain large healthy trees, increase urban tree diversity and employ native species where appropriate, minimize risks to public and property and contribute to climate adaptation, environmental sustainability, and quality of life in the community.*
- Particularly given that woodlands contribute 65% of Burlington's total canopy cover, BurlingtonGreen is **thrilled to see the inclusion of a Woodland Management Strategy** in the new and improved UFMP.
- **We like the 12 guiding principles of the plan** such as 'Protect our existing urban forest' and 'Protect and enhance biodiversity' to name a few. The approach of integrating climate change considerations throughout the Plan is a good one. **Recommendation: consider adding the guiding principle of "Authentic Indigenous consultation"** supportive of the Plan's reference to work with local Indigenous people toward identifying opportunities for reconciliation and the integration of traditional knowledge.
- As stated in the report, various studies have found that an urban tree canopy is often inequitably distributed within communities, and yet we know that everyone should have access to the various environmental and health benefits trees provide. It is good to see that **Burlington's UFMP has**

**identified tree equity as an important area to address in the Plan.**

- Particularly given the escalating impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss, we are **concerned that the canopy coverage target timeline has been extended by 20 years to 2060** versus the previous target of 2040, and we wonder if implications to the City’s climate adaptation plan goals have been reviewed as a result of this extended timeframe.
- We concur that a canopy cover target alone can put greater emphasis on tree planting practices at the expense of other equally important urban forest strategies. **The importance of the preservation of trees and woodlands in Burlington cannot be overstated and must be a priority in the timely execution of the UFMP.** Unlike threats to the canopy due to pests and climate change, the City has control over land use planning where implications to significant mature tree loss due to intensification development and local quarry operations can be mitigated.
- A strategic, integrated and fully funded framework of tree **PROTECTION - PLANTING - MAINTENANCE is essential** to the success of realizing the vision and objectives of the UFMP, as is widespread ongoing **community/sector education** particularly given that most of the tree canopy exists on private or non-City owned lands. Private land tree protection and planting with a ‘Right tree, right place, right function’ lens will be essential, and BurlingtonGreen would be pleased to continue to provide recommendations to enhance the City’s tree giveaway program.
- Although ambitious, the identified requirement of the planting of 4,600 new trees per year, plus 2 Ha of restoration annually is essential to achieve the UFMP objectives. **Effective community tree planting projects play a role in this area as do TLC (Tree Loving Care) educational maintenance projects that BurlingtonGreen has been pleased to initiate in the city.** A coordinated framework is key and BurlingtonGreen’s extensive experience partnering with the City’s Forestry Department to coordinate safe, educational, rewarding and fun experiences for all participants has contributed to the success of many tree-planting projects over the years. We are only a few weeks away from our spring Green Up community tree planting on April 20th at Pathfinder Park, and we are eager to potentially introduce a second tree-planting project this fall to grow our partnership contributions to a minimum of 1000 trees per year.
- The funding and accelerated advancement of the UFMP can be considered a reflection of the City’s commitment to the climate emergency declaration of April 2019. And unlike the more ‘hidden’ climate initiatives of corporate energy & sustainable buildings, and integrated transportation advancements, etc, the green infrastructure of Burlington’s urban forests is highly visible with far-reaching benefits to all life. Trees are why many people are attracted to and choose to live in Burlington. They alone cannot solve the climate crisis but they are an essential part of addressing it.

**It is critical that the report recommendation of “Option One (Preferred) – Implement the UFMP by funding 5 Focus Areas” be fully funded to achieve the identified target and goals.**

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**4. Item #11.7: Discussion for a future Festivals and Events Policy (RCC-06-24)**

Future Festivals & Events policy:

Given the **significant environmental footprint of large festivals and events**, we share the following recommendations and considerations:

- We are pleased to see that the criteria for approving events includes a goal of minimizing the environmental impact or providing environmental benefits to the community.

**Recommendations:**

- Event sustainability should be centered as one of the stated and explicit objectives of the new Festivals and Events policy to ensure all events are as sustainable as possible, rejecting applications that don't meet a minimum sustainability threshold while assisting event organizers in achieving attainable sustainability goals.
- Reflective of the City's declared climate emergency, prioritize and more heavily weigh the sustainability criteria for the development of the policy and associated permit assessment process.
- Since environmental impacts and benefits can be complicated to assess, we recommend the policy be explicit in how the environmental impact of a proposed (or significantly changed) event will be assessed. This could potentially be done in consultation with the City's Sustainability department with support from BurlingtonGreen.
- Establishing a limit on the number and size of events is recommended, possibly within an established 'budget' for carbon emissions and waste, taking into account both onsite direct impacts as well as indirect factors such as supply chain for food and supplies, transportation by attendees, disposal of waste, etc.
- Determination of the number and location of events held annually in Burlington must prioritize environmental impact while factoring the economic and social benefits of events. Traffic congestion, foot traffic, and other intensive activities impact natural infrastructure/heritage in our green spaces, which provide an essential service to the health and wellbeing of our community, and must be protected.
- Consider amending the descriptions of the levels and types of events to include the environmental impact of each level of event, ie energy use, increased traffic emissions, waste generated, pressure on municipal waste services, etc. Environmental impact would be included in the proposed event classification descriptions and the event classification chart (page 7).
- The new F&E policy might also describe a desired 'constellation' of events to guide decision-making. This vision might include factors such as the maximum/target # of major and signature events and identified locations for those, maximum/target # of "community events" and identified locations, maximum/target # of "neighborhood events" and locations, etc.
- Re: page 9, step 6 - Consider the addition of "green vendor agreement and event greening plan" to the list of requirements that may be included for the Special events Timeline & Requirements.
- Consider amendment of step #10, Event Debrief, adding that City of Burlington events staff will assess compliance with requirements including event greening and green vendor requirements, and factor into their recommendations for continuing or discontinuing the event.
- Establish an annual sustainability criteria information/Q & A session as an attendance requirement for all event permit holders.
- Celebrate and showcase sustainability efforts for event organizers that exceed established permit sustainability criteria. Implement a 'green champion' recognition award to be presented at the above-referenced annual information session, incorporating a valuable mentoring opportunity for event organizers to be inspired by and benefit from the leadership in sustainability.
- City festivals and events provide a tremendous opportunity to demonstrate leadership in sustainability to the Burlington community, visiting tourists, sponsors, vendors, and performers.

Profile event sustainability expectations and eco-tips in all advance promotions, and include profile 'green event' branding/signage at all sizes of events and festivals. Share the post-event eco-action results (full bike racks, waste diversion rate, etc.) broadly via media releases, social media, etc.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Schnurr". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Amy Schnurr**

Co-Founder / Executive Director

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**Burlington Green**

Together we make a difference