

Meewasin Update

ISSUE

In mid 2020, the City of Saskatoon and Meewasin Valley Authority (Meewasin) signed a formal updated Master Agreement to lay the foundation for our working together on programs, services, and initiatives. This report provides an update on some recent undertakings and some highlights on projects anticipated for 2021 and into future years.

BACKGROUND

The City of Saskatoon (City) and Meewasin conduct many projects and initiatives with an aligned vision and purpose. The City has had an agreement with Meewasin since 1982. The original agreement was primarily focused on facility (trail and amenity) maintenance. In 2019, it was mutually decided that a new Master Agreement (Agreement) with an expanded scope and focus would further help improve the relationship, communication, and performance between the two organizations, with the ultimate goal of improving quality of life and benefits to the community.

At its meeting on August 31, 2020 City Council unanimously supported the recommendations to approve the terms of a new Master Agreement with Meewasin.

CURRENT STATUS

Steering Committee and Subcommittee Structure

Since the signing of the new Master Agreement, the Steering Committee has been meeting and the two Administrations have been formalizing the subcommittee structure and purpose.

The current focus is on the establishment of 3 primary subcommittees, namely:

- i. Policy and Governance – to facilitate policy to ensure proper, safe, and balanced use of the river valley corridor; and to ensure the partners engage in meaningful, and timely long-range planning, and multi-year budgeting.
- ii. Applied and Technical – building and operating. To guide the delivery and operate elements which promote balanced, equitable, and sustainable development and use of the river and adjacent areas; To facilitate and apply safe, and balanced use of the river valley corridor: i.e. safety enforcement, policies, water and trail safety regulation development, river access studies and facilities, amenity, and trail development, and to ensure the partners engage in life-cycle cost.
- iii. Teaching, Learning and Community Enjoyment - to promote, enhance, and elevate education, awareness, and enjoyment of the natural, environmental, and social components of the river valley corridor; ensure effective internal communication between partners.

In addition to these more formal subcommittees, there continues to be several adhoc working groups as well as formal working groups. Some consideration may be made to confirm if all the formal working groups are required once the City-Meewasin subcommittees are in place. To ensure we have an efficient and streamlined approach to working together, further work is also required, to process map the relationship between the Steering Committee, the subcommittees and Meewasin's formal committees.

One primary area of focus is work on Green Infrastructure, where Meewasin has been involved most recently as a key stakeholder in the natural asset valuation pilot, completing the work on a natural assets inventory and now providing valuable input towards the Green Infrastructure implementation planning. Leading up to the completion and delivery of the Green Infrastructure Strategy in February 2020, Meewasin contributed extensively in strategy and stakeholder meetings and in assisting to develop the work so that it is consistent with the natural areas within the Conservation Zone.

These efforts have contributed to progress the goals of the Green Strategy in the spirit of the Master Agreement. Meewasin values the work and the importance the City has placed on the Green Infrastructure Strategy and how it advances goals to conserve and manage natural assets within this region and is in line with Meewasin's 100 year plan. The Sustainability Department will be providing an update report on Green Infrastructure implementation to the Standing Policy Committee on Environment Utilities and Corporate Services at the upcoming June meeting.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Capital Campaign and Planned Trail Upgrades/Expansions

Meewasin informed Administration of plans to launch a formal capital campaign to support a number of areas of focus for the organization, primarily related to trail expansion/upgrades, education and conservation initiatives, and the construction of a new greenhouse facility to support Meewasin's stewardship in the river valley.

Of the areas of focus for Meewasin's capital campaign, the greatest area of connections to the City would be education and conservation initiatives, and most significantly, the trail expansion/upgrade projects for sections of the trails that are within City owned parks, and that once completed, the new trails are ultimately under the care and maintenance of the City. For the immediate future, four primary areas of trail upgrades include: Meewasin Park in River Heights neighbourhood; Kinsmen Park near Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan; Downtown (from Shakespeare to the festival site) and adjacent to Circle Drive south near the Gordie Howe Bridge.

Part of the capital campaign for the trail expansion work relates to providing sponsorship and naming recognition for key donors. And since the majority of the planned trail segments and/or trail side amenities will ultimately become City owned assets, any consideration for donor recognition and/or naming rights would need to comply with the City of Saskatoon Sponsorship Policy C09-028. This policy applies to

all City owned facilities, land, equipment, services and programs, and for the purpose of this policy, Meewasin functions as a Civic Partner.

In order for Meewasin to achieve objectives of the capital campaign, Meewasin is requesting consideration to proceed with a program for donor solicitation and recognition. Meewasin's intent with onsite recognition would be to work within the current City Sponsorship Policy No. C09-028 where recognition will, as a general principle, support the goals and objectives of the City and be compatible with, complimentary to, and reflect the City's values. With this approach to donor solicitation, it is expected that donors, whether corporate or individual, would be appropriately recognized for any donations made toward the projects.

Regarding major donations, Meewasin anticipates several donations exceeding \$100,000 (which as outlined in Policy C09-028 requires City Council approval) and would be looking to get approval from the City to streamline the processes for all donations exceeding \$100,000. As noted earlier, Meewasin is bound by City policies governing sponsorship and donations.

In a future report, Administration would work with Meewasin to bring forward, the method and degree of any such recognition anticipated for donor recognition, for Committee and City Council's approval.

And lastly, Meewasin has confirmed that during the design and construction phase of all trail extensions they have already or will at the appropriate time consult with, and seek approval from, the applicable City departments impacted by this project, on the physical aspects of the trail development.

Meewasin's Government Relations

As highlighted during a presentation to Governance and Priorities Committee at the April meeting, Meewasin provided a detailed update on some recent developments for their organization. Over the last three years, Meewasin has established strategy, goals and objectives, enhanced and formed new and existing relationships and worked to educate all levels of government on how Meewasin aligns and benefits goals of governments. To ensure plans are 'shovel ready' to act upon funding opportunities, much of Meewasin's work has been to prioritize goals in all their mandate areas: conservation, development, and education and experiences.

In addition to annual support from Meewasin's three participating parties, Meewasin has recently secured \$4,352,400 in new federal and provincial funding to support trail infrastructure, a digital app, habitat evaluations and tourism experiences. Meewasin continues to meet regularly with multiple ministries of the provincial and federal governments seeking on-going and one-time support to programming, infrastructure, and land securement. As further opportunities arise and are confirmed, Meewasin will continue to keep both City Council and City Administration informed.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications of this information report.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There no privacy, legal, social, or environmental implications identified.

Sponsorship Policy No. C09-028 (Policy) provides guidelines to facilitate and support opportunities for entering into sponsorship agreements and naming rights agreements for City-owned assets for the purpose of enhanced financial sustainability. Meewasin is requesting a slight departure from the current Policy guidelines and recognize this will be subject to City Council approval; that will be presented in a future report. The Policy indicates that City Council is to provide concept approval for: a) all sponsorship arrangements that are of a sensitive nature or with the total value in excess of \$100,000; b) all naming rights arrangements; and c) sale of naming rights before sponsors are approached or agreements made. The Policy further states that there be a fixed term of up to a maximum of ten years. City Council has the authority to approve an exception to policy as outlined in this report.

NEXT STEPS

Next steps will be to continue to work with Meewasin on applicable projects and initiatives, and to report back on the planned capital campaign and recognition program to ensure any considerations related to Sponsorship Policy or policy implications are reviewed and approved by Committee and City Council.

REPORT APPROVAL

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