SUBJECT: Authority To Enter Into Agreements With Green Venture (PED06144) (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

That Planning and Economic Development Department staff be authorized and directed to enter into agreements with Hamilton-Wentworth Green Venture, to deliver projects as outlined in individual project agreements, with each project agreement not to exceed $15,000, and with the total value of the agreements not to exceed the funding approved in the annual budget process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

For the past 10 years the former Region and the City have enabled delivery of many environmental projects that benefit Hamiltonians by providing funding to Hamilton-Wentworth Green Venture (Green Venture), a registered non-profit organization. This funding is approved through the annual budget process. Green Venture in turn, obtains additional funding from other agencies and levels of government to efficiently deliver projects such as EnerGuide for Homes, the Commuter Challenge, and Education for Elementary Students. The City’s recently revised purchasing procedure requires staff to seek Council’s authority to continue to enter into these long-standing agreements.

BACKGROUND:

In 1995 Green Venture was created by the former Region to implement environmental projects in the community and facilitate partnerships with other organizations and levels of government in practical, local projects to achieve sustainable community objectives.
ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:

The City’s purchasing policy now makes it necessary to seek Council’s authorization to enter into all agreements. The City has been partnering with Green Venture for many years and Green Venture has demonstrated the ability to consistently deliver quality programming that meets the goals of Vision 2020 and Council’s Strategic Plan. Staff is recommending that Council authorize the Planning and Economic Development Department to enter into agreements with Green Venture, utilizing funds that are approved during the annual budget process (i.e. no new funds are being requested). The amount of each of the projects will not exceed $15,000, except as expressly approved by Council. (One example of an exception would be the $40,000 Council approved in February 2006 for Green Venture to implement the Anti-Idling Campaign).

The total value of the individual Green Venture project agreements for 2005 was $40,000, and $47,000 in 2004. In 2006, anticipated projects total $24,000 for EnerGuide for Homes, Education for Elementary Students and the Commuter Challenge\(^1\). As partnership opportunities arise, additional projects are added to Green Venture’s list throughout the year with the total value of the City’s contributions for 2006 being limited by the funds available through Council’s budget process. For this reason, we are not attributing an exact dollar value for the project agreements in any given year.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:

Council has the option of requiring staff to issue a Request For Proposals for all projects over $5,000 as is the Corporate policy for recruiting “consultants”. This option would entail many hours of staff time in an administrative process that will not produce a better result for the City in Green Venture projects that typically entail joint contributions from many other organizations. It should be noted that partnering with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) does not have the same function as hiring consultants. NGO partnerships help to build community capacity to identify and solve problems, as well as leverage the City’s financial investment with funds from other agencies and levels of government.

Authorizing staff to enter into agreements with Green Venture is a form of “single sourcing”. However, in terms of fairness, any NGO can come forward to the City with a proposal for a possible partnership. A similar authority to enter into an agreement with that organization can be brought forward to Council at the time. In practice, the City has partnered with Green Venture, who recruits other organizations into the partnership to add value. An example of this was the recent Clean Air Hamilton Mobile Monitoring Study, where Green Venture assembled a funding and resource team that included Ministry of Environment, Clean Air Hamilton and the City of Hamilton. This is a very efficient and effective use of limited staff resources, and reduces the amount of time required to initiate projects.

\(^1\) This is in addition to the $40,000 Council approved in February, 2006 specifically for the Anti-Idling campaign.
FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Financial—there are no financial implications arising from Council’s authorization to enter into the agreements with Green Venture as the funding involved is already included in the annual budget process.

Staffing—approval of the recommendation will save staff time to concentrate on other program functions.

Legal—all agreements made with Green Venture and vetted through Corporate Counsel.

POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:

Council’s authorization to enter into agreements with Green Venture is consistent with the Purchasing Policy.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

Finance, Purchasing, Green Venture and Clean Air Hamilton have all been consulted. They have not expressed any concerns with the recommendation and their comments have been incorporated into the body of the report.

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No

The public are involved in the definition and development of local solutions. Partnerships are promoted—Partnerships between government and non-governmental organizations like Green Venture strengthen the ability to deliver quality programs to the citizens of Hamilton. A single drawback of this report would be that Council cannot authorize entering into agreements with all non-governmental organizations at this time, as each opportunity must be explored and evaluated separately to ensure that the City is receiving value for money.

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No

The programs being run by Green Venture provide environmental and health benefits. Examples include projects that promote reduced energy consumption, educate elementary school children on environmental issues and change behaviour towards more sustainable transportation choices for commuters.
Economic Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No

Short-term economic well-being is enhanced by enabling Green Venture to leverage City funding with funding from other agencies. Long-term economic benefits can be realized by reducing the burden on the tax levy by leveraging these other sources of funding, and through the results of the projects themselves. The agreements with Green Venture will help to maintain Hamilton's high quality environmental amenities which in turn, can help attract and maintain a skilled workforce and attract investment to the City.

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines?

☑ Yes ☐ No

The proposal for Council to authorize entering into project delivery agreements with Green Venture does create value across all three bottom lines, as noted above.

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants?

☑ Yes ☐ No

Partnerships with external organizations to enable staff to implement projects which benefit the community at a time when City budgets and staff levels are severely constrained. Having this ability empowers staff to feel like they are able to make progress.