Council Direction:
On January 16, 2012, Public Works Committee directed staff: “To liaise with the Hillfield Strathallan College Environment Club and report back to the Public Works Committee on requirements to make the City of Hamilton a “Blue Community”.

Information:
Blue Communities
On January 16, 2012 Mr. Hamaz Khan representing the Hillfield Strathallan College Environment Club made a presentation to Public Works Committee with respect to the Blue Communities Project as overseen by the Council of Canadians.

The Blue Communities Project is a joint initiative between the Council of Canadians and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) that furthers the work of local Water Watch Coalitions across Canada. The principles of the Blue Communities Project recognize the “immeasurable importance to Canada’s environment, economy, public health and identity”.

Documented principles of the Blue Communities Project include the protection and provision of a safe, adequate supply of clean water for basic living needs as a human right, public ownership and operation of municipal water and wastewater systems, environmental protection and the promotion of water as a public trust.

In order for a community to be recognized as a “Blue Community” City Council would adopt a water commons framework that recognizes and takes steps (which includes passing a resolution) to put into action the following items:

1. Recognizing water as a human right;
Vision: To be the best place in Canada to raise a child, promote innovation, engage citizens and provide diverse economic opportunities.

Values: Honesty, Accountability, Innovation, Leadership, Respect, Excellence, Teamwork

2. Promoting publicly financed, owned and operated water and wastewater services; and

3. Banning the sale of bottled water in public facilities and at municipal events.

According to the Council of Canadians - Blue Communities website “Blue Communities” to date include: Burnaby, BC (March 22, 2011), Victoria, BC (June 24, 2011), Tiny Township, ON (September 12, 2011); Ajax, ON (December 12, 2011).

The Public Works Committee directed staff to report back on “the requirements to make the City of Hamilton a “Blue Community”.

In order for Hamilton to be recognized as a “Blue Community” City Council would be required to pass resolutions that support items #1-3 above. Staff believe that the drafting of a resolution that satisfies requirement #1 would be possible and at the direction of Council could proceed. Previously the City of Hamilton adopted a strategy to reduce the sale of bottle water that staff believe would satisfy requirement #3.

Item #2 above makes reference to financing, ownership and operation of water and wastewater facilities. To ensure that current approaches to funding from senior levels of government and specifically the City of Hamilton’s ongoing PPP Canada biosolids management business case development did not conflict with Item #2 staff discussed the issue with representatives of the Blue Communities Project. These discussions concluded that indeed current or future PPP Canada style initiatives relating to water or wastewater services would result in a retraction of the Blue Communities Designation.

While many of the goals of the Blue Communities Project are consistent with the objectives of the City of Hamilton, current and future funding opportunities available to the City would likely jeopardize the ongoing designation and as such it is not recommended that the City pursue the issue any further.