

To: COUNCIL

Meeting Date: 4/15/2025

Subject: 25-042-CD – WR Community Energy 2024 Progress Report

Submitted By: Bob Bjerke, Chief Planner

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Report No.: 25-042-CD

File No.: C11

Wards Affected: All Wards

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. 25-042-CD WR Community Energy 2024 Progress Report be received as information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Purpose

- To share the WR Community Energy (WRCE) 2024 Progress Report with Council for information.

Key Findings

- WRCE is a collaborative partnership between the Region of Waterloo, the Cities of Cambridge, Kitchener, and Waterloo, Enova Power Corp., GrandBridge Energy, and Kitchener Utilities.
- WRCE is in its fifth year as an initiative and became a non-profit in 2024. WRCE is currently focusing on local thermal energy development.
- The 2024 Progress Report shares a vision of local energy generation and highlights two projects: High-Performance Development Standards and a Low-Carbon Thermal Strategy.

Financial Implications

- Since 2023, the City of Cambridge has provided annual funding to WRCE.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:

☒ Strategic Action

Objective: RESILIENCY - Use a future-oriented, proactive approach to climate action and emergency preparedness

Strategic Action: Take action to combat climate change

OR

☐ Core Service

Program: Not Applicable

Core Service: Not Applicable

WR Community Energy's collaborative work on the energy transition supports the City's Strategic Action to take action to combat climate change.

BACKGROUND:

WR Community Energy (WRCE) is a collaboration between the Region of Waterloo, the Cities of Cambridge, Kitchener, and Waterloo, Enova Power Corp., GrandBridge Energy, and Kitchener Utilities. WRCE plays an important role in coordinating strategic energy investments in Waterloo Region.

In 2024, WRCE incorporated as a non-profit as its role as an independent voice and energy transition facilitator became clearer. This new structure allows a focus on deepening partnerships, evaluating systems-wide benefits, and ultimately driving investments.

The energy transition is a critical priority related to community resilience and affordability. The key to navigating the complexities of a successful energy transition while responding to innovation and the need for community affordability lies in leadership from senior municipal and utility staff in WRCEs governance, and strategic participation and investment from other sectors. Hardy Bromberg, Deputy City Manager, Community Development represents the City of Cambridge on the WR Community Energy Advisory Committee.

WRCE is in its fifth year as an initiative and is currently focusing on local thermal energy development.

ANALYSIS:

This WR Community Energy 2024 Progress Report (<https://wrcommunityenergy.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/WRCE-2024-Report.pdf>) focuses on:

1. Sharing a vision of generating half of distributed energy from local, clean, and equitable sources (based in several years of studies, discussions, and analysis).
2. Demonstrating how to align local energy supply with demand.
3. Highlighting two local projects:
 - High-Performance Development Standards (HPDS)
 - Low-Carbon Thermal Strategy

By leveraging existing technologies, scaling them across the community, and aligning with economic development trends, the region's collaborative and innovative spirit can make this vision a reality and help our community meet its 2050 climate targets (reducing greenhouse gas emissions 80% below 2010 levels by 2050).

EXISTING POLICY / BY-LAWS:

This collaborative initiative implements Waterloo Region's community climate change plan to meet the Council-adopted target of 80% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Consideration will be given to include policies on climate change as part of the next Cambridge Official Plan update.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The City of Cambridge provides annual funding to WR Community Energy, along with the other municipal and utility partners. Funding from the City has been approved as part of the operating budget in the following amounts:

- 2023 – \$19,300
- 2024 – \$25,000
- 2025 – \$43,420

PUBLIC VALUE:

Sustainability:

This project will support sustainability by aiding in the transition to a low-carbon future to help our community meet its 2050 climate targets.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE INPUT:

Not applicable.

PUBLIC INPUT:

Posted publicly as part of the report process.

INTERNAL / EXTERNAL CONSULTATION:

Not applicable.

CONCLUSION:

This report summarizes the work of WR Community Energy and their 2024 Progress Report.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: **No**

By-law: **No**

Budget Amendment: **No**

Policy: **No**

APPROVALS:

This report has gone through the appropriate workflow and has been reviewed and or approved by the following as required:

Director

Deputy City Manager

Chief Financial Officer

City Solicitor

City Manager