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| TO: | Members of the Student Representative Assembly |
| FROM: | Maanvi Dhillon, AVP Municipal Affairs |
| SUBJECT: | SRA 20K Report |
| DATE: | November 25th, 2020 |

Dear Members of the SRA,

I hope you’re all doing well as we reach the end of the semester! I have had an interesting first few weeks in my role as AVP: MA; it was challenging but exciting to get up to speed on this portfolio and dive into our projects for the year. The committee has done excellent work so far, and while some timelines for projects needed to be adjusted as we figured out a feasible pace for work, I am feeling confident about our ability to achieve the year’s goals. Since we had a late start, most of our work in the past few weeks has been on projects that will carry into the Winter semester. I will outline our activities and other work I’ve been up to below.

**PROGRESS ON YEAR PLAN**

* Enhance off-campus lighting, promote active and sustainable transportation, and monitor the implementation of the Landlord Licensing Pilot Project
  + These three platform points largely relate to our work with Councillor Wilson and the Ward 1 office. We met with the Councillor and Ward 1 staff twice this semester to follow up on these priorities. The lighting survey report from last year’s MA Committee was received and reviewed by Councillor Wilson’s office and while some streets’ lighting cannot be improved in the near future, others may be, provided that we follow up with the City’s Public Works staff. We will identify and prioritize the eligible streets and then set up a meeting with City staff next semester to find out how they can make the requested improvements. Councillor Wilson is supportive of transit investment and will continue to advocate for long-term transit investments on Council. However, the pandemic has impacted the City’s willingness to invest in transit, so we will keep an eye on budget deliberations and communicate with the Councillor as needed. We are also advocating for transit in several of our budget recommendations, such as investing in the HSR and bike infrastructure, and will be discussing this with many City Councillors. Finally, Councillor Wilson informed us that the Landlord Licensing Pilot has been delayed past the initial target of the upcoming spring, but is expected to proceed eventually and so we will wait for more updates and lobby on the point if needed.
* Affordable housing research
  + This is one of the projects the MA committee has taken up, and we have made good progress. They have been working to narrow down the subtopics within this area–for example, barriers to development around campus, or comparisons to other universities’ involvement in off-campus housing–and we have already conducted some consultations with related University staff. We also had a productive discussion about this with Councillor Wilson, and she made useful recommendations that we may include in our final report. The process of meeting with stakeholders has been slower than I expected, so we will continue consultations in the new year and hope to complete the report writing by mid-February in order to lobby based on the recommendations.
* 2021 Your City Survey
  + This is another project the MA committee is working on. We have finished an initial draft of the 2021 YC Survey, but encountered difficulties given the fact that many students may not be eligible to complete it this year due to online school. Our plan is to shift things so that several of the questions are answerable for students who are not living in Hamilton, such as the factors they desire in a livable city. We will also be meeting with staff within the MSU to develop promotional strategies.
* Reduced funding for Hamilton Police Service
  + We submitted a request to delegate at a Hamilton Police Services Board meeting. The board will consider our request during their December meeting and get back to us. If approved, we will have the opportunity to communicate directly to the board about our advocacy interests such as reducing HPS funding. We will also discuss this point with Councillors during budget meetings.

**PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES**

* Municipal Budget Submission
  + We finalized our advocacy points and finished writing the submission text for the 2021 City of Hamilton Budget. While the process of lobbying councillors will occur later than last year due to some scheduling conflicts, we are still confident we will be able to communicate our priorities to them in time for the key decision-making dates for the 2021 budget. I am working with Ryan (VP Education) on scheduling meetings, and we already have several confirmed for the first two weeks of December.
* MSU Representation on local associations and committees
  + I have attended my first meeting of both the Hamilton Transit Alliance and the Hamilton Youth Steering Committee. It was great to meet partners that we work with throughout the year, and to build on our relationships with organizations that have similar interests to us, like Environment Hamilton. I have also attended events such as the Hamilton Center for Civic Inclusion’s event on the 2021 budget process and Councillor Nrinder Nann’s weekly online Q&A sessions.

**UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES**

* For the Your City survey explained above, the timeline has been adjusted because we had to make more changes to previous questions, and formulate more original questions, than expected. The survey will run in January and will be promoted to all SRA members.

**CURRENT CHALLENGES**

* One challenge I have faced is staying updated on municipal issues, which is due to several factors. Sometimes these issues move quickly, and so continuously checking social media, news sites, and the City website is required. Also, there are many different information sources that are not always easy or accessible to consult–for example, accessing Spectator articles or searching through long videos of committee meetings to find relevant information. Finally, having institutional knowledge and familiarity with the City’s governance structures, processes, and political history is crucial for understanding many updates on municipal issues. I found this particularly difficult with the budget, which has lots of specific terminology to learn. However, these challenges have gotten easier with time and I think it’s simply a matter of experience. I will keep paying close attention to local media and community leaders’ social medias, as well as research the concepts and terms relevant to my work.

**VOLUNTEERS**

* The MA committee members have been active and engaged in our projects. We have had four meetings so far (meeting weekly since we began in late October) with good attendance, which I am really grateful to our members for. For this semester, the group split into half and one group is working on the Your City survey design while the other is working on research to write an Affordable Housing report. Members have been very helpful in contributing ideas to shape both of those projects. We had some meetings with stakeholders regarding the Affordable Housing research that members attended with me, and I will work to provide more opportunities for them to join on lobbying and consultation.

**SUCCESSES**

* We have had preliminary success in demystifying concepts surrounding the (confusing) topic of housing supply, housing bylaw enforcement, etc. We identified useful stakeholders to consult on this topic, and have been productive with our research to locate areas for improvement.
* Despite the late start in the semester, our committee got to work quickly and I am happy with what we achieved in this short period of time.
* While I’m still getting comfortable with the demands of my role, I feel much more settled now and have greatly enjoyed the work!

Thanks everyone! I hope you all have a relaxing December break.

Best,

Maanvi Dhillon

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