



Staff Report

Administration – Communications

Report To: COW_Finance_Admin_Fire_Community_Services
Meeting Date: April 29, 2024
Report Number: FAF.24.042
Title: Informal Public Engagement Options
Prepared by: Tim Hendry, Manager of Communications and Economic Development

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report FAF.24.042, entitled "Informal Public Engagement Options";

B. Overview

This report provides Council with various options for informal public engagement opportunities with residents and stakeholders.

C. Background

At the November 20, 2023 meeting, Council supported a notice of motion from Councillor Maxwell that directed staff to consider various options for informal public engagement opportunities between members of Council, residents and stakeholders.

In 2019, the Town hosted a series of 'Meet the Mayor' meetings with former Mayor Alar Soever and various members of Council as an opportunity for open and informal question-and-answer discussions with residents throughout the community.

The meetings were held after hours on weekday evenings or on Saturday mornings at various locations. Meeting locations were distributed throughout the community and were selected based on accessibility, washrooms and parking.

Locations:

- Thornbury - Town Hall and at the Blue Mountains Public Library Branch
- Clarksburg - Royal Canadian Legion
- Lora Bay - Community Event Space
- Craigleith - Blue Mountain Resort and Craigleith Community Centre
- Ravenna - Ravenna Hall

Light snacks and refreshments were provided and a staff member attended to handle set up, clean up and take notes. A debriefing meeting was held between the mayor, CAO, and

communications staff the next business day following the meeting. The meetings were well received by residents, with typical attendance between 10 – 15 people. and they expressed their gratitude to meet and discuss issues with Council in a more informal setting.

D. Analysis

The following section of this report details options identified by staff with estimated costs and staff time requirements:

- 1. Meet the Mayor/Councillor Meetings** – Mayor Matrosovs and Council members could host community meetings similar to the 2019 Meet the Mayor series. Considerations should be given to ensuring that venues are accessible, that there is adequate parking and that public washrooms are available.

Estimated Cost: \$375 per event

- (includes estimated venue rental, refreshments and miscellaneous costs)

Estimated Staff Time: 12 hours per event

- (includes staff time for advertising, planning, set-up/clean up, debrief/follow up)

- 2. BBQ/Picnic with Council** – Council could host a free community bbq/picnic at a local community park. One location could be selected for a larger annual bbq/picnic event with family-friendly entertainment or this could be turned into a smaller event series that is hosted at various parks throughout the community.

Estimated Cost: \$1,000 per event

- (includes estimated venue rental, refreshments/food and miscellaneous costs)

Estimated Staff Time: 15+ hours per event

- (includes staff time for advertising, planning, site preparation, set-up/clean up)

- 3. Coffee with Council** – Council could host a 'Coffee with Council' meeting or series of meetings where the Town provides coffee, tea and light snacks in an open and informal setting to encourage a relaxed atmosphere for discussions and interactions.

Estimated Cost: \$375 per event

- (includes estimated venue rental, refreshments/food and miscellaneous costs)

Estimated Staff Time: 6 hours per event

- (includes staff time for advertising, planning, set-up/clean up)

- 4. Pop-Up Town Hall** – Council could attend community events and set up a Town booth as an informal opportunity to engage residents. Events could include Olde Fashioned Christmas, Beaver Valley Fall Fair, Thornbury Farmers Market, Clarksburg Children's Festival, Blue Mountains Arts & Craft Walk, Blue Mountain Film Festival, etc.

Estimated Cost: \$350 per event

- (includes estimated booth fee, promotional items and miscellaneous costs)

Estimated Staff Time: 6 - 8 hours per event

- (includes staff time for planning, event time, set-up/clean up)

- 5. Partner with Local Service Clubs / Organizations** – Council could make a request to local service clubs and organizations to attend and speak to their membership at scheduled events. This will provide Council the opportunity to engage local residents, volunteers and business owners. Examples include: Thornbury/Clarksburg Rotary Club, Beaver Valley Lions Club, Beaver Valley Royal Canadian Legion, Blue Mountains Chamber of Commerce After Six Events, etc.

Estimated Cost: \$0

Estimated Staff Time: N/A or Minimal

- 6. Storytime with Council** – Council could partner with The Blue Mountains Public Library to host storytelling sessions where Council members read children's books to young residents and their families, which would foster community connections in a family-friendly environment.

Estimated Cost: \$0

Estimated Staff Time: N/A or Minimal

- 7. Local Business Tours** – Council could partner with the Town's economic development staff to tour local businesses and learn about opportunities and challenges facing the local business community and to foster positive connections between Council members and business owners.

Estimated Cost: \$0

Estimated Staff Time: N/A or Minimal (Staff are already allocating time for this)

- 8. Participation at Town Led/Support Economic Development Events** – Council could continue to participate and attend various Town led and supported economic development events such as the Open Fields Farm Tour, annual business appreciation event, agricultural networking events, International Women's Day event, etc.

Estimated Cost: \$0

Estimated Staff Time: N/A (Staff time is already allocated through the Town's participation in the event)

The above ideas are presented in this staff report to Council as options to spark thought and consideration of creative ways to increase informal engagement opportunities with residents, businesses and stakeholders.

It's important to highlight that many of these ideas will require time to plan, coordinate, manage and set up/clean up. It's also important to highlight that many of the ideas are tied to events/activities that occur outside of the Town's standard business hours (Monday to Friday, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm), and would require budget to support staff overtime.

Additional expenses may include venue rentals (including for the use of Town parks/facilities), food, refreshments or snacks, and advertising/promotion costs (signage, newspaper ads, etc.).

E. Strategic Priorities

1. Communication and Engagement

We will enhance communications and engagement between Town Staff, Town residents and stakeholders

2. Organizational Excellence

We will continually seek out ways to improve the internal organization of Town Staff and the management of Town assets.

3. Community

We will protect and enhance the community feel and the character of the Town, while ensuring the responsible use of resources and restoration of nature.

4. Quality of Life

We will foster a high quality of life for full-time and part-time residents of all ages and stages, while welcoming visitors.

F. Environmental Impacts

No environmental impacts are anticipated as a result of this report.

G. Financial Impacts

No funds are included in the 2024 Operating Budget to support these initiatives.

No staff time allocation has been included in the Communications Teams Work Plans for these additional initiatives being considered by Council through this report.

If Council wishes to proceed with any of the presented options, sufficient budget should be allocated to cover venue rentals (including for the use of Town parks/facilities), food, refreshments or snacks, advertising/promotion costs (signage, newspaper ads, etc.), and applicable staff time and potential overtime to help with planning and set up/clean up.

H. In Consultation With

Shawn Everitt, Chief Administrative Officer

Sam Dinsmore, Acting Director of Finance

Allan Gibbons, Communications and Economic Development Coordinator

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has not been the subject of a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre as neither a Public Meeting nor a Public Information Centre are required. However, any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Tim Hendry, Manager of Communications & Economic Development communications@thebluemountains.ca.

J. Attached

None.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Hendry
Manager of Communications & Economic Development

Shawn Everitt
Chief Administrative Officer

For more information, please contact:
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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	FAF.24.042 Informal Public Engagement Options.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Apr 11, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Shawn Everitt - Apr 11, 2024 - 7:09 AM