



Minutes

The Blue Mountains, Economic Development Advisory Committee

Date: April 12, 2024
Time: 10:00 a.m.
Location: Virtual Meeting, Teams
Prepared By:
Carrie Fairley, Executive Assistant Committees of Council

Members Present: John Ardiel, Patti Kendall, Michael Thompson, Deputy Mayor Peter Bordignon, Councillor Gail Ardiel, David Thomson

Members Absent: Paul Sandiford, Pamela Spence, Councillor Paula Hope

A. Call to Order

A.1 Traditional Territory Acknowledgement and Moment of Reflection

We would like to begin our meeting by recognizing the First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples of Canada as traditional stewards of the land. The municipality is located within the boundary of Treaty 18 region of 1818 which is the traditional land of the Anishnaabek, Haudenosaunee and Wendat-Wyandot-Wyandotte peoples.

A.2 Committee Member Attendance

Deputy Mayor Bordignon welcomed the new committee member, David Thomson to the Committee. David thanked everyone for welcoming him to the committee and provided background on himself.

Deputy Mayor Bordignon called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

Executive Assistant Carrie Fairley, confirmed all members were present virtually, save and accept Member Hope, Member Sandiford, and Member Spence, who sent their regrets.

A.3 Approval of Agenda

Moved by: John Ardiel

Seconded by: Patti Kendall

THAT the Agenda of April 12, 2024, be approved as circulated, including an addition at agenda items F.1.1. added to the Agenda.

Yay (6): John Ardiel, Patti Kendall, Michael Thompson, Deputy Mayor Peter Bordignon, Councillor Gail Ardiel, and David Thomson

Absent (3): Paul Sandiford, Pamela Spence, and Councillor Paula Hope

The motion is Carried (6 to 0)

A.4 Declaration of Pecuniary Interest and general nature thereof

NOTE: In accordance with the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act* and the Town Procedural By-law 2023-62, Council or Committee Members must file a written statement of the interest and its general nature with the Clerk for inclusion on the Registry.

None

A.5 Previous Minutes

Moved by: Councillor Gail Ardiel

Seconded by: Patti Kendall

THAT the Economic Development Advisory Committee minutes of November 16, 2023, be adopted as circulated, including any revisions to be made.

Yay (6): John Ardiel, Patti Kendall, Michael Thompson, Deputy Mayor Peter Bordignon, Councillor Gail Ardiel, and David Thomson

Absent (3): Paul Sandiford, Pamela Spence, and Councillor Paula Hope

The motion is Carried (6 to 0)

B. Staff Reports and Deputations

None

C. Public Comment Period

None

D. Matters for Discussion

D.1 Communications and Economic Development Department's Strategy and Achievements, (Verbal Update)

Tim Hendry, Manager of Communications and Economic Development provided a verbal update to the Committee on staff's continued work on implementing the action items in the Communications and Economic Development Department's strategies. Tim noted new action items have been scheduled since the plan was developed five years ago. Tim noted those items are looking at strategic land acquisitions to support future commercial growth within the Town. Tim noted that he will provide progress reports as the projects move through implementation and that due to the timing of the budget, there were some delays.

Tim noted that an updated strategic plan will be developed next year and currently they work with the province and OMAFRA around what supports will be available for funding to help hire a consultant to develop the strategy. Tim further noted that the strategy could also be completed internally. Tim noted that the current Strategic Plan was completed in house, and there are a couple of different routes that can be taken with developing the strategic plan. Tim highlighted to the Committee an action item that staff are working very hard at is supporting local businesses and spoke about the upcoming events in support of those businesses.

Allan Gibbons, Communications and Economic Development Coordinator provided an overview of the events that have been successfully completed through the Town.

The Committee discussed bike events and bikes on busy roads and roads that are used heavily for agricultural uses. Tim noted his participation in a regional economic development group, working with neighbouring municipalities in Simcoe County to understand the connection of the Town of The Blue Mountains to the County of Simcoe and noted he will start the conversations on this topic and will report back to the Committee.

Tim provided an update on the work of his department over the last five months noting a new year, means grants season and numerous grants have been applied for, to help support initiatives. Tim noted some initiatives are the Fed Dev Grant to support development of a tourism strategy, the Rural Economic Development Grant to help support Open Fields, and My Main Street Activator Grant to help fund the outdoor family movie night series. Tim spoke regarding new businesses and noted Allan and himself have been working with new and existing businesses in the community such as a new restaurant in the former Sterling's location. Tim noted the support is provided to new businesses coming into Town to help navigate through the Town's services and processes. The Committee discussed wayfinding signs and new businesses marketing. Tim provided an overview of where signs are aloud to be installed and the struggles with having signage erected.

Tim provided an update on the successful business event that was held at the end of 2023 noting he is hopeful to bring it back this year again. Tim noted these are held in an effort to connect the business community.

Tim noted a social media campaign is set to start shortly to promote the Town's business directory including a business spotlight series.

Tim spoke regarding the Community Improvement Plan (CIP) noting in 2023, the CIP was launched, with two intake periods. Tim noted there are two Community Improvement Plans one that is focused on townwide revitalization and other is focused on attainable housing. Tim provided background information to the Committee about what a CIP program is including the noting the most popular plan has been the Community Improvement Plan. Tim noted the Town has provided more than \$150,000 in grants over the community, leveraged over two million dollars of private sector investments. The

Committee discussed businesses that are not eligible to receive funding. Deputy Mayor Bordignon noted that Council is committed to putting funds into the CIP program. The Committee discussed expanding the areas the CIP program covers. Tim noted Bill 23 has brought changes and updating the CIP program is something they are looking at. Tim further noted the process to update a CIP is a legislative process including a public meeting and funding dollars would be needed for consulting assistance.

Deputy Mayor requested Executive Assistant Carrie to provide the Committee via email with the Community Improvement Plan: Housing within Reach, Community Improvement Plan: Town Wide Revitalization CIP and Town of The Blue Mountains Corporate Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024. The committee discussed reviewing and providing assistance to the update to the Town Wide Revitalization Plan.

Tim spoke regarding a refresh of the Town's gateway and wayfinding signage noting through the 2024 budget, funds were received to support the design process by hiring a consultant, who will be responsible for working with the Town and various stakeholders, and this Committee on new gateway and wayfinding signage, following the brand standards that have been recently improved.

Tim provided an update on the launch of the Annual Business Association Funding program and noted this Committee is the recommending authority to Council regarding this. Tim noted every year the Town administers a small 20–25-thousand-dollar program offering \$5000 grants to each various business associations. Tim noted the funds are intended to support a special project or initiation that the Business Association is focused on such as the Thornbury Business Improvement Area, the Clarksburg Village Association, The Chamber of Commerce, and The Blue Mountain Village Association. Tim spoke regarding the intake, review and decision process and noted that a recommendation report will go to Council. Tim further noted the committee will see the proposals and will help with the recommendation to Council on how the funds will be distributed.

Tim provided an update regarding Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) noting in 2023 Council directed staff to review the feasibility of implementing a MAT. Tim noted that a MAT is a percentage for a flat rate that is collected on any overnight transient accommodation of less than 30 days. Tim further noted the funds received through that tax is used to support tourism and a portion of the money collected stays with the Town and a portion must be given out to a destination marketing organization. Tim noted his work over the last year engaging stakeholders about the benefits of the funds received as well as the challenges that could affect tourism. Tim provided the Committee with background information on the research conducted, the information provided to Council on this topic and noted this is a highly regulated process. Tim further noted the expected timelines when staff will be seeking direction from Council. Deputy Mayor noted that the MAT is intended to cover various items that are considered as part of tourism, which could include installing a washroom, extra garbage collection, and wayfinding signage, as examples. The Committee discussed how the funds are invested in third party investors and if the Town has influence on how the funds are spent. Tim

noted that the guiding principle would be a formal strategy to support tourism, which is needed in the Town. Tim noted there are still details to be figured out. Member Patti noted that Blue Mountain Village is funded through a village amenity fee of 2%, on all member hotel and short-term accommodations, which is used to fund marketing and events. Deputy Mayor noted that Blue Mountain Resort is a commercial operation and Blue Mountain Village Association is a not-for-profit are two separate entities. The Committee discussed the only exclusions of this tax would be provincial campgrounds. Member Patti noted that all hotels at the village, except for the Blue Mountain Inn are condo hotels and each of the 1000 units are independently owned.

D.2 Economic Development Council of Ontario's Resiliency Award, Re: Open Fields

Tim provided an update on the Open Fields Farm Tour event that occurred in 2023. Tim further spoke regarding the award his team received noting the award is the Innovation and Community Resiliency Award and is intended for rural municipalities with a population of under 100,000.

D.3 How this Committee can assist progress and opportunities of Communications and Economic Development Department

The Deputy Mayor noted that this agenda item will be discussed with agenda item F.2.

D.4 Follow-up Direction from Council

None

E. Correspondence

None

F. New and Unfinished Business

F.1 Additions to Agenda

F.1.1 Rural Small Business Improvement

Member John noted that this item was covered in the discussions throughout the meeting.

F.2 Items Identified for Discussion at the Next Meeting

Deputy Mayor spoke regarding the upcoming work of the committee such as assisting with the CIP, wayfinding signage, and MAT. Tim noted that Economic Development Strategy is currently being actioned and a number of action items are on-going and scheduled for this year. Tim noted the following projects he would like the Committee to assist and provide feedback, in the future:

- Wayfinding Signage Program
- Municipal Accommodation Tax
- Community Improvement Plan Update

- Events planned through the year such as the agricultural event, business networking event, International Women's Day event and community events such as Beaver Valley Fall Fair, and Olde Fashioned Christmas
- Forming a Task Force to review strategic property and land acquisition. Tim noted a limiting factor at the Town is the lack of inventory of industrial and commercial development land and other municipalities pre-service lands to accommodate these uses, but the Town does not, and Tim is looking on how to have shovel ready lands available for industrial development.
- Creation of a Quality of Business Index. Tim noted it is hard to measure some of the initiatives and programs offered by the Town and the thought behind this action item is to develop an index that is used to gauge the quality of business in the Town. Tim further noted that will identify if the Town is a business-friendly community, if there is red tape that is holding up or causing issues for businesses, work force, transportation etc., and trying to benchmark where the Town stands on the spectrum of being business friendly. Tim noted also in that action item is the creation of a Quality Index identifying if the Town is prepared for the business with services such as daycare spaces, seniors housing, medical services that are required and where do we rank and fall short. Tim further noted that index will provide a benchmark and every year staff can work to improve the score.

The Committee discussed the next steps and when staff would be looking for the Committee to assist on the items identified earlier in the meeting which Tim noted it would be later in June, early July.

The Committee discussed the Blue Mountains Film Festival and noted that it is not a Blue Mountains Resort film festival but a Town of The Blue Mountains Film Festival.

The Committee discussed holding an in-person meeting. The Deputy Mayor noted the Terms of Reference states that all committee meetings are held virtually but the Committee can request an in-person meeting. The Committee agreed that the in-person meeting should be a working meeting when it occurs.

Moved by: Councillor Gail Ardiel

Seconded by: Michael Thompson

THAT the Economic Development Advisory Committee requests Council to allow this Committee to have a future Special working group meeting in person.

Yay (6): John Ardiel, Patti Kendall, Michael Thompson, Deputy Mayor Peter Bordignon, Councillor Gail Ardiel, and David Thomson

Absent (3): Paul Sandiford, Pamela Spence, and Councillor Paula Hope

The motion is Carried (6 to 0)

G. Notice of Meeting Dates

At The Call of The Chair

H. Adjournment

Moved by: David Thomson

Seconded by: Patti Kendall

THAT this Economic Development Advisory Committee Meeting does now adjourn at 11:50 a.m. to meet again at the call of the Chair.

Yay (6): John Ardiel, Patti Kendall, Michael Thompson, Deputy Mayor Peter Bordignon, Councillor Gail Ardiel, and David Thomson

Absent (3): Paul Sandiford, Pamela Spence, and Councillor Paula Hope

The motion is Carried (6 to 0)