



Staff Report

Strategic Initiatives

Report To: COW- Admin, Corp and Finance, SI, Comm. Services
Meeting Date: April 28, 2025
Report Number: SI.25.013
Title: Informal Public Engagement Opportunities Follow-up Report
Prepared by: Allan Gibbons, Manager of Communications & Customer Service

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report SI.25.013, entitled "Informal Public Engagement Opportunities Follow-up Report";

AND THAT Council put forward a resolution regarding the scope and frequency of future informal public engagement opportunities.

B. Overview

This report provides Council with a summary of the Council Cafés and Community BBQ events that were hosted by the Town to increase informal engagement with residents.

In addition, the report seeks direction from Council on the desire to host additional events throughout 2025.

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.

At the April 29, 2024 Committee of the Whole meeting, Town staff presented report [FAF.24.085](#) "Informal Public Engagement Options Follow Up". At the meeting, Council provided direction to host a community BBQ and a series of Coffee with Council events, later titled 'Council Cafes'. In addition, Council approved a \$2,000.00 budget to support the events.

The direction from Council was actioned with the following event schedule:

- The free community barbecue was held on Sunday, September 15 at the Thornbury Farmer's Market.
- Four Council Café events were held from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. on these dates:
 - September 27, 2024 – Beaver Valley Community Centre

- November 27, 2024 – Ravenna Hall
- January 8, 2025 – Craigleith Heritage Depot
- March 28, 2025 – Marsh Street Centre

Additionally, Council members participated in the Olde Fashioned Christmas event at Town Hall by serving free hot chocolate on Saturday, December 14, 2024, prior to the tree-lighting ceremony.

D. Analysis

The following section of this report details the different events, including costs, staff requirements and attendance.

- 1. Community BBQ** – The free community barbecue was held on Sunday, September 15, 2024, at Smith Memorial Park in conjunction with the Thornbury Farmer’s Market from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

An estimated 300 burgers and hot dogs were served to attendees by Council and Town staff, at an approximate cost of \$1,000. An estimated 20+ staff hours were spent on the event, including advertising, planning, site preparation, set-up, clean-up and the event itself.

- 2. Council Café Events**

- The first Council Café event was held at the Beaver Valley Community Centre on Friday, September 27, 2024. The event was attended by approximately 20 residents. The cost of the event was \$325.
- The second Council Café event was held at the Ravenna Hall on Wednesday, November 27, 2024. Councillor McKinlay prepared a pancake breakfast for approximately 24 residents. The cost of the event was \$150.
- The third Council Café event was held at the Craigleith Heritage Depot with support from the Blue Mountains Public Library on Thursday, January 9, 2025. The event was attended by approximately 25 residents. The cost of the event was \$125.
- The final Council Café event was held at the Marsh Street Centre on Friday, March 28, 2025. The event was attended by approximately 25 residents. Final costs for the event have been finalized but is anticipated to be approximately \$300.

Each Council Café event was supported with approximately six hours of staff time, including event preparation, set-up, clean-up, advertising, planning and the event itself.

- 3. Olde Fashioned Christmas** – The Town was a proud supporter of Olde Fashioned Christmas on Saturday, December 14, 2024. As part of the festivities, there was a ‘Block

Party' at Town Hall featuring multiple vendors and the Christmas Tree lighting ceremony. Council members and Town staff distributed hot chocolate at the Town booth, sharing over 200 cups throughout the evening. The event cost \$60 with an estimated five hours of staff time.

In addition, members of Council participated in various community events throughout the year including but not limited to the Seniors Fair, Arts Walk, Beaver Valley Fall Fair and Open Fields.

Through hosting these events, Town staff have learned that the most attended sessions were held in conjunction with an already existing event that helps drive traffic and public interest. While the barbecue and Olde Fashioned Christmas events had the highest attendance, interactions between Council members and the public were shorter and less intimate due to the nature of the event. Council members were able to sit down and have full conversations with members of the public at the Café events as they had fewer responsibilities than when they were serving food at the barbecue or hot chocolate at the market.

Overall, Town staff considers these public engagement initiatives a success and have received positive feedback from members of the public at the events.

If Council wishes to proceed with additional events for 2025, staff ask that Council provide direction regarding the scope and frequency of future informal public engagement opportunities.

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

The total cost of the six events has not yet been finalized but is expected to come in below \$2,000. Incurred costs to this date have totaled \$1,860.

In addition, approximately 40 hours of staff time were required to support these events. At a blended and averaged salary rate of \$60.00 per hour, the estimated staff time cost is \$2,400.00.

If Council wishes to proceed with additional events for 2025, the budget should be allocated from the Council operating budget.

H. In Consultation With

Tim Hendry, Director of Strategic Initiatives

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 Allan Gibbons, Manager of Communications & Customer Service at agibbons@thebluemountains.ca.

J. Attached

No attachments.

Respectfully submitted,

Allan Gibbons
Manager of Communications and Customer Service

For more information, please contact:
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Report Approval Details

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Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Apr 14, 2025

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

Tim Hendry - Apr 14, 2025 - 3:13 PM