



Committee Report

Community Communications Advisory Committee

Meeting Date: February 16, 2021
Meeting Time: 9:00 a.m.
Location: Town Hall, Council Chambers
32 Mill Street, Thornbury, ON

Community Communications Committee Recommendations

NOTE: The following are recommendations from the Community Communications Advisory Committee to be considered for adoption by Council

- [Receive Minutes \(February 16, 2021\)](#)

Recommended (Move, second)

THAT Council of The Town of The Blue Mountains receives the Community Communications Advisory Committee Minutes dated February 16, 2021 as attached, for information purposes.



Minutes

The Blue Mountains, Community Communications Advisory Committee

Date: February 16, 2021
Time: 9:00 a.m.
Location: Town Hall, Council Chambers - Virtual Meeting
32 Mill Street, Thornbury, ON
Prepared by:
Sarah Merrifield, Executive Assistant Committees of Council

Members Present: Deputy Mayor Rob Potter, Councillor Paula Hope, Lyn Logan, John Milne, Tom Maloney, Jayne Sutherland
Regrets: Mary Ferguson
Staff Present: Manager of Communications and Economic Development Tim Hendry, Communications and Economic Development Coordinator Carling Fee, Manager of Revenue Kris Couture, Library Chief Administrative Officer Dr. Sabrina Saunders, and Chief Administrative Officer Shawn Everitt following the Call to Order

A. Call to Order

A.1 Traditional Territory Acknowledgement

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

Executive Assistant Committee of Council Sarah Merrifield confirmed all Committee members were present, save Mary Ferguson. Chair John Milne also welcomed Mayor Alar Soever.

A.3 Approval of Agenda

Moved by: Deputy Mayor Potter
Seconded by: Tom Maloney

THAT the Agenda of February 16, 2021 be approved as circulated, including any additions to the Agenda.

Yay (6): Councillor Hope, Lyn Logan, Tom Maloney, Deputy Mayor Potter, Jayne Sutherland, John Milne
Absent (1): Mary Ferguson

The motion is Carried (6 to 0, 1 absent)

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 2019-56, Community Communications Advisory 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: Jayne Sutherland
Seconded by: Councillor Hope

THAT the Minutes of January 18, 2021 be approved as circulated, including any revisions to be made.

Yay (6): Councillor Hope, Lyn Logan, Tom Maloney, Deputy Mayor Potter, Jayne Sutherland, John Milne
Absent (1): Mary Ferguson

The motion is Carried (6 to 0, 1 absent)

B. Staff Reports and Deputations

B.1 Deputations, if any

None

B.2 Public Comment Period (each speaker is allotted three minutes)

NOTE: In accordance with the Town Procedural By-law 2019-56 fifteen minutes is allotted at the Meeting to receive public comments regarding Community Communications Advisory Committee matters included on the Agenda. The speaker shall provide their name and address, and shall address their comments to the Chair. Comments shall not refer to personnel, litigation or potential litigation matters, or matters that are a follow-up to a Public Meeting.

NOTE: Committee meetings are taking place virtually to assist with social distancing with respect to COVID-19. Comments received from the public that have not been included on the Agenda will be read at the meeting by the Executive Assistant.

None

B.3 Staff reports, if any

None

C. Matters for Discussion

C.1 Mayor Soever Re: Protocol and Procedure for Committees of Council

Mayor Alar Soever began by thanking Committee members for their work to date and emphasized the Committee structure as an important part of the Town's governance. Mayor Soever noted the Town has 17 Committees, and in 2020 held 181 Committee meetings, which includes Task Force meetings. Mayor Soever noted each Committee has at least one (1) Council representative which allows the Council member to provide advice to Committees and offer assistance.

Mayor Soever noted Committees form the foundation for advice that is sent to Council through the Committee of the Whole. Mayor Soever provided an overview of the advisory role of Committees within the municipal structure and emphasized the role of the Chief Administrative Officer as the one employee of Council. Mayor Soever noted that the Manager of Communications and Economic Development Tim Hendry also provides feedback to the Chief Administrative Officer to ensure he is aware of Committee activities.

Mayor Soever explained that any recommendations made at the Committee of the Whole are not final decisions until they are passed at Council. Once a decision is made by Council, the decision is passed to the Chief Administrative Officer who considers budgetary, human resource and other resource requirements. Operational staff implement Council's direction with coordination by the Chief Administrative Officer. Mayor Soever noted that while the process seems cumbersome, it's in the interest of transparency.

Committee member Jayne Sutherland noted that the Mayor had stated in his presentation that the Chief Administrative Officer runs the Town. Jayne noted her issue with this statement, and clarified that Council runs the Town by providing direction to staff. Mayor Soever noted his agreement. Committee member Lyn Logan requested clarity for when a Committee member is able to address the Chief Administrative Officer, and questioned if it always needs to be done through a request to Council. Mayor Soever noted that Committee members do not always need to go through Council to speak with staff, however, Committees cannot provide direction to staff. The Mayor noted it is best for a Committee to go through their dedicated staff resources if there are questions.

Mayor Soever pointed to the example of the letter prepared by Chair Milne to Council with respect to the Town's service level and response time. The Mayor noted that as the letter was changed, it became far less prescriptive.

The Mayor provided an overview of the *Municipal Act* and the Town's Procedural By-law and commented on the rules against closed meetings, and email exchanges. The Mayor clarified that the rules do not prohibit two (2) members of a Committee from contacting one another, but each Committee must be cautious of the need to ensure there are no meetings taking place via email. The Mayor confirmed that if a Committee member would like a matter added to a Committee agenda, it is best to reach out to Chair Milne.

Mayor Soever reviewed the Committee's Mandate and pointed to Chair Milne taking a proactive approach to reach out to Council for feedback on what the individual members feel the Committee's Mandate is. Chair Milne noted he reached out to Council at the suggestion of the Mayor and heard back from six Council members. John further commented that the Mandate is open to a great deal of interpretation and separating the "how" of communication from the "what" of communication is impossible. Mayor Soever confirmed that as the Committee works through its Mandate, the Committee can come back to Council to request feedback and/or changes. Mayor Soever pointed to the positive work done by the Committee through the survey, the Public Engagement Session, and the website initiative. Mayor Soever noted two concerns, being: the focus on a shorter term than a five-year Plan, and noted Council should have an outline for the longer-term Communication Strategy.

Mayor Soever noted that while the municipal process can be frustrating, the public process is in place to ensure transparency. Mayor Soever noted that the Town deals with a lot of misinformation as well, which he is hoping the Committee will assist with addressing.

Committee member Tom Maloney commented that he is fairly new to the municipal process, but noted that initiatives move much more slowly than he would like. Tom explained that work on the municipal website has been delayed, and questioned whether the progress is acceptable. Tom noted that several municipal websites, such as Markham and Kitchener Waterloo are excellent examples that the Town could model to expedite the process. Mayor Soever noted that identifying website examples that work well is very helpful for staff through the municipal website redevelopment process. Manager of Communications and Economic Development Tim Hendry commented that the Request for Proposal for the municipal website redevelopment closed prior to the end of 2020 and the Town is currently in the negotiation stage with the vendor. The timeline identified for the municipal website redevelopment is 6-9 months. Tim commented that he understands the importance of the new website, and further noted that the pandemic caused the project to be put on hold. Tim noted that until the website redevelopment is finalized, staff are modifying the current website to work better based on the analytics (example: Council Meeting Livestream button on the homepage).

Tom commented that he appreciates the importance of a Strategy that identifies a 5-year direction, but communications is dynamic in nature. There's an immediate need for communication, and communication changes over time. Tim further explained that the immediate need is what the Committee is trying to focus on.

Jayne Sutherland noted that the public wants information on what's happening right now. Jayne commented that the Committee has a depth of experience and need to know how best to comment on specific issues to better guide the Town in its communication efforts. While the long-term communications tools are useful, addressing short-term communications needs will be most helpful. Jayne further noted that when misinformation is spreading in the community, it is Council's job to address it.

Tom commented that the "how" of communication is something the Committee has been suggesting to Council, yet it appears the Committee is back to where it started and Committee suggestions are not being implemented. Mayor Soever noted that perhaps some recommendations are not getting to Council because there is no formal accompanying motion to incorporate into the Committee Reports that are considered by Council. Tim noted that the Town and Committee is bound by process, but the Strategy will reinforce the metrics for communication.

Tom Maloney commented that Council's priorities are to be representative, foster stewardship, and form policy. Tom commented that the idea of a newsletter would be an optional communications tool and questioned whether this item would have to go to Council for consideration. Mayor Soever noted that Council has now approved funds for the creation of a newsletter.

Chief Administrative Officer Shawn Everitt noted that when staff consider initiatives, staff first look to the budget available. Shawn confirmed that when the Strategy provides metrics for measuring communications on a longer-term basis, this is helpful. When recommendations come from the Committee to Council, staff consider the specific budget implications. Shawn noted that if there are items identified as critical by the Committee, but staff do not have funding available for implementation, the request to Council for consideration would also include a request for additional budget and/or resourcing. Shawn noted that through the recent budget approval, Council provided an investment in communications through additional staffing. Those staff will be integral in implementing recommendations from the Communications Strategy.

Councillor Hope requested clarity regarding the best way to contact the Chief Administrative Officer. Mayor Soever clarified that Committee members can reach out through the Manager of Communications and Economic Development. However, if the Committee has a request or recommendation, it must go through Council for consideration. It was noted by Chair Milne that common sense and courtesy should drive the interaction between Committee members, Council, and staff. Shawn Everitt noted the importance of ensuring that the dedicated Committee staff resource be involved in meetings between Committee members and the Chief Administrative Officer.

Committee member Lyn Logan commented that the time spent on service delivery during the previous Committee meeting was important, particularly due to the emphasis by staff of the importance of customer service. Lyn further noted her hope that the recommendation by the Committee be taken in a more positive light. Committee member Jayne Sutherland noted the tone of the service delivery letter to be discussed at Item C.2 was intended to be suggestive only.

Chair Milne closed the discussion and noted his thanks to Mayor Soever for attending the Committee meeting to clarify the Committee process. John further commented that the Committee is working on an actionable, five-year plan, which also includes short-term recommendations. John noted the discussion regarding service delivery is a priority and the Committee was not sidetracked by this exercise. Further, John noted the communications efforts the Committee is requesting Council to adopt, whether short term or long term are coming from the right place. There's a need on the Committee's part to hear back with respect to initiatives that are recommended, as an example: feedback regarding the Mask By-law was provided, but the Committee was not advised as what feedback was ultimately received. A similar example is the communications efforts undertaken with respect to the Sustainability Advisory Committee where the Communications Committee was not advised of the communications undertaken.

Moved by: Councillor Hope
Seconded by: Jayne Sutherland

THAT the Community Communications Advisory Committee receives Item C.1
Mayor Soever Re: Protocol and Procedure for Committees of Council for
information purposes.

Yay (6): Councillor Hope, Lyn Logan, Tom Maloney, Deputy Mayor Potter, Jayne
Sutherland, John Milne
Absent (1): Mary Ferguson

The motion is Carried (6 to 0, 1 absent)

**C.2 Report from Chair Milne Re: Follow-up to Service Level and Response Time
Letter**

Committee member Lyn Logan read the following statement aloud, which she
requested be transcribed directly into the meeting minutes:

“In reference to Council’s strategy in support of the community advisory
committees, may I request that council members consider carefully their
words about committee proceedings, ensuring that their comments
reflect the true nature of a committee’s intention. I’m referring to
comments made by Councillor Sampson at the January 27th Town Council
meeting in which he states his concerns about C.C.A.C. Chair Milne’s
letter and that the “tone of the letter seems to indicate that we have
poor customer service and we need to pick up our socks”¹.

Further on, Councillor Sampson states that he watched the entire video
of our last CCAC meeting of January 18th and he was “disappointed with
the content of the discussions he heard”¹ in which he said members of
our committee were “alleging that staff were terribly deficient in
responding to resident complaints and issues, and we need to pull up our
socks”¹.

This is not a true representation of the facts. Not only was I at our Jan
18th meeting, I too reviewed the video. I did not hear anyone on our
committee make reference to town staff being deficient and needing to
pull up their socks. The language that Councillor Sampson used is
offensive and does not reflect the essence of our committee’s
objective. May we set the record straight and say that town staff are
doing an excellent job, and it is our goal to continue to seek ongoing
input from residents and provide advice on matters relating to best
practices in Communication.

Councillor Sampson also said:

“We want the town’s communications to be the best we can be.”

“We should always strive for the best customer service.”

“Can ‘they’ do better – yup we can all do better.”

I agree - and moving forward I hope that council members keep in mind that we are all on the same team and want what’s best for our town

1. All quotes were transcribed verbatim from the video of the Wed., Jan. 27, 2021, 9:00 a.m. Town Hall, Council Chambers – Virtual Council Meeting.”

Mayor Soever responded to Lyn’s remarks, and noted it is important to remember that everyone is working towards the same goal, and the rhetoric needs to be toned down. Mayor Soever noted Lyn’s points were well-taken.

Committee member Jayne Sutherland noted that the comments she made in the prior discussion relate to this matter; a key to the Committee’s Mandate is to foster community engagement and dialogue. Communication with constituents is very important.

Mayor Soever noted that the initial letter which requested response in 48 hours was changed to state “defined timelines” as staff and Council are currently faced with hundreds of emails per day, often from individuals who write in about a myriad of topics which can impact response times and operations. Deputy Mayor Potter noted that sometimes what seems a simple enquiry is not and requires detailed background work, but further noted that the Town needs to set a goal for response time.

Chair Milne noted it is important to recognize the spirit of the letter, and noted it is not overly prescriptive. John encouraged Council to receive all advice and recommendations in the spirit with which they are provided. John noted he was struck by the tone Councillor Sampson took during the Council meeting and noted his hope that an apology is forthcoming. Jayne and Tom expressed their agreement.

Tom noted the significant communications expertise on the Committee and noted the Committee understands that Council is free to reject its recommendations, but the hope is that suggestions will be received with respect.

Moved by: Deputy Mayor Potter

Seconded by: Jayne Sutherland

THAT the Community Communications Advisory Committee receive Item C.2 Report from Chair Milne Re: Follow-up to Service Level and Response Time Letter for information purposes.

Yay (6): Councillor Hope, Lyn Logan, Tom Maloney, Deputy Mayor Potter, Jayne Sutherland, John Milne

Absent (1): Mary Ferguson

The motion is Carried (6 to 0, 1 absent)

C.3 Follow-up to February 10, 2021 Public Engagement Session

Re: Corporate Communications Survey Results

With respect to the February 10, 2021 Public Engagement Session, it was noted that feedback received has been positive. This meeting style is a good example for other Committees to follow. Tom noted that several participants noted confusion about Development Planning. Tom reviewed several by-laws that were sent to Council for consideration related to development planning, and emphasized that the material is difficult to understand. Tom questioned how the planning and development process can be made clearer for residents. Tim noted that the Town is developing interactive mapping that provides a refreshed, visual element to development and planning projects that is supplemented by website content. It was noted that the need for plain language is clear in all material produced, including staff reports and webpage content.

Tim noted the feedback provided by participants of the Public Engagement Session was valuable and offered an opportunity to check in with the community a year following the communications survey, and also served as a metric against the draft communications strategy. Deputy Mayor Potter enquired whether a section could be added to the Communications Strategy that provides clarity for avoiding jargon and technical language.

Councillor Hope noted the session was skillfully led by Chair Milne and complimented the attendees and the Committee members for the level of engagement observed. Councillor Hope noted her hope that this method of engagement be utilized more broadly going forward.

Chair Milne requested the Committee to reflect on the lessons that can be taken from the session and how the Committee can gain some momentum. Tom noted another challenge is to ensure the sessions engage younger adults as well. Deputy Mayor Potter pointed to the key takeaways being: proactive, “early and often” communication methods and reviewing communication of initiatives from a news perspective.

Moved by: Tom Maloney

Seconded by: Deputy Mayor Potter

THAT the Special Meeting Minutes of February 10, 2021 be approved as circulated, including any revisions to be made.

Yay (6): Councillor Hope, Lyn Logan, Tom Maloney, Deputy Mayor Potter, Jayne Sutherland, John Milne

Absent (1): Mary Ferguson

The motion is Carried (6 to 0, 1 absent)

Moved by: Councillor Hope

Seconded by: Deputy Mayor Potter

THAT the CCAC requests the feedback received from the February 10, 2021 Public Engagement Session be considered while drafting the Communications Strategy and reported back to the public at the next available opportunity.

Yay (6): Councillor Hope, Lyn Logan, Tom Maloney, Deputy Mayor Potter, Jayne Sutherland, John Milne

Absent (1): Mary Ferguson

The motion is Carried (6 to 0, 1 absent)

C.4 "Communicating with the Town 101" Request - Chair Milne

Chair Milne noted he received feedback from a member of the public that it is difficult to ascertain how to contact staff regarding various matters. John questioned the best way to ensure residents of various ages and technological comfort or access can be made aware of Town contacts.

It was noted that the Town can use The Blue Mountain Review and e-blasts for communicating. Deputy Mayor Potter encouraged residents to reach out to members of Council as well. Tom noted that Council members are responsible for various topics and Committees, and this should be communicated to the public.

Jayne noted that a guide on contacting the Town should be front and center, along with the messaging that Council can be contacted regarding any matter. A comprehensive listing should be made available for residents. Councillor Hope noted that the next issue of the Municipal Guide should include a comprehensive explanation of all options for public engagement. Lyn noted that search engine optimization on the website would be helpful, and questioned whether the redeveloped website will have search enhancements. Tim confirmed that the redeveloped website will have better keyword tagging.

Manager of Communications and Economic Development Tim Hendry left the meeting at 10:57 a.m.

Chair Milne noted that a double-sided, one page resource should be developed and circulated to provide guidance to the community on who to contact for specific operational concerns or questions. Deputy Mayor Potter questioned whether a ½ size calendar would be useful to distribute with municipal information.

C.5 Communications Strategy Update - Chair Milne and Manager of Communications and Economic Development Tim Hendry

Communications and Economic Development Coordinator Carling Fee provided an update on behalf of Tim Hendry. Carling noted the focus is on developing a Communications Strategy that is plain language and includes a clear and immediate action plan. A 1-page summary document will accompany the broader strategy document. Carling noted that sub-committee meeting will be called, after which the draft strategy will be provided to the full Committee. It was clarified that the full strategy will be considered and endorsed by the Committee prior to being provided to Council through Committee of the Whole for final approval. Chair Milne noted he would like to call a Special Communications meeting for the purpose of considering endorsement of the full strategy.

C.6 Inflow and Infiltration Sub-Committee Update - Tim Hendry

Carling noted that the Communications Plan suggested by the inflow and infiltration sub-committee will be presented to Town staff for implementation.

C.7 Roundtable Update from Committee Members (standing item)

- Mary Ferguson
None
- Councillor Hope
 - March 11, 2021 Public Information Centre regarding Victoria and Louisa Streets Preliminary Engineering
- Lyn Logan
 - Noted thanks to Mayor Soever for joining the Committee meeting
- Tom Maloney
 - Noted significant discussion on The Forum Town of The Blue Mountains regarding The Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation and requested an update on the project
 - Mayor Soever noted the Attainable Housing Corporation appeared at Committee of the Whole to request the Town to initiate a site-specific Zoning By-law Amendment and Official Plan Amendment for the Gateway Site. Mayor Soever noted there is some misinformation regarding a breach at the Thornbury Wastewater Treatment Plant that implies the breach lasted one month, when in reality there was a small breach lasting a short period of time following a period of heavy rainfall. The next step is

to begin the planning process which is a fully legislated process. The Mayor noted there are no current plans for any other attainable housing projects by the Attainable Housing Corporation, but this will be reviewed as the Gateway Project proceeds.

- Deputy Mayor Potter
 - Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (“RABIT”) Task Force Information Centre will include presentations by Internet Service Providers – February 16, 2021
 - While the event is not open to the public, it will be livestreamed
- Jayne Sutherland
 - Making a deputation at the Leisure Activities Plan Steering Committee meeting as a private citizen regarding waterfront access
- John Milne
 - Would like further detail on the Sustainability Project and requested a mechanism that would enable Committees to receive updates on what each other is working on. Deputy Mayor Potter noted the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan is just beginning and public engagement opportunities are now available.

D. Correspondence

None

E. New and Unfinished Business

E.1 Additions to Agenda

E.2 Items Identified for Discussion at the Next Meeting

- Communicating with the Town 101 Follow-up
- Integrated Community Sustainability Plan Update

F. Notice of Meeting Dates

March 15, 2021

Town Hall, Council Chambers (virtual)

G. Adjournment

Moved by: Deputy Mayor Potter

Seconded by: Lyn Logan

THAT the Community Communications Advisory Committee does now adjourn at 11:20 a.m. to meet again at the call of the Chair.

Yay (6): Councillor Hope, Lyn Logan, Tom Maloney, Deputy Mayor Potter, Jayne Sutherland, John Milne

Absent (1): Mary Ferguson

The motion is Carried (6 to 0, 1 absent)