



Committee Minutes

Hanover-Owen Sound Task Force February 28, 2022 – 9:30 am

The Hanover-Owen Sound Task Force met on the above date through electronic participation with the following members in attendance:

Present: Chair Brian O’Leary; Councillors Milne and McQueen; and Warden Hicks

Staff

Present: Kim Wingrove, CAO, Randy Scherzer, Deputy CAO, Anne Marie Shaw, Director of Community Services, Barb Fedy, Director of Social Services, Scott Taylor, Manager of Planning Services, Stephanie Lacey-Avon, Intermediate Planner, Savanna Myers, Director of Economic Development, Tourism and Culture, Kevin McNab, Director of Paramedic Services, Heather Morrison, Clerk, Tara Warder, Deputy Clerk/Legislative Coordinator, Brian Tocheri, Hanover CAO, Tim Simmond, Owen Sound CAO and Olivia Yale, Digital Communication Specialist.

Call to Order

Chair O’Leary called the meeting to order at 9:30 am.

Declaration of Interest

There was none.

Report

PDR-HOSTF-08-22 Hanover-Owen Sound Task Force Final Report and Workplan Presentation

Randy Scherzer introduced the report and thanked the staff and community stakeholders that helped inform the final report and workplan for this Task Force.

Randy Scherzer provided an overview of the objectives established by County Council for the Hanover-Owen Sound Task Force. He outlined the themes and topics covered through presentations from a variety of community stakeholders and municipal staff. He

spoke to the social determinants of health noting that many of the themes and challenges are interconnected, indicating that a multi-pronged approach will be required to address these challenges.

Mr. Scherzer then spoke to the alignment with Recolour Grey, noting that policies and objectives have been broken out by themes to address opportunities heard from community stakeholders. Continued policy implementation will occur through Recolour Grey and will assist in addressing some of the challenges heard by the Task Force. He noted that while the challenges identified in the report are prevalent in all areas of Grey County, they do concentrate in the two urban areas of Hanover and Owen Sound.

Mr. Scherzer then spoke to several new initiatives and updates for the members that are contained within the proposed workplan. He noted that some initiatives have commenced while others have been exacerbated by factors including the pandemic and will be looked at in future workplan updates.

Randy Scherzer provided an overview of the final staff report from the Hanover-Owen Sound Task Force and outlined the workplan components. He then outlined the specific themes and recommended actions within the workplan.

Housing Opportunities

Mr. Scherzer noted housing was mentioned within each of the themes heard by the Task Force. He noted that the key is to continue implementation of the Housing Action Plan, some of which have already been implemented, including utilizing the Affordable Housing Fund, implementing the Housing Surplus Land Bank, promotion of the Community Improvement Plan incentives, promotion of the development charge exemptions and deferrals program and implementation of Recolour Grey policies.

He also highlighted the need to connect tenants with tenant services to understand needs, the establishment of a Housing Response Table, which has been completed, exploration of rent safe initiatives, identifying grant opportunities and other financial incentives for retrofit programs, completing education campaigns related to building code compliance, exploring challenges and opportunities for landlords and companies who operate rental housing stock, further engagement with indigenous populations, and exploring short-term housing and transitional housing opportunities. He noted that many of these actions have already been incorporated into the Housing Action Plan.

Questions from the members then arose related to tiny homes, back-to-back semi-detached homes, and the development of transitional/supportive housing in Hanover and within the entire county.

Staff noted that in Recolour Grey there are policies relative to tiny homes and the Official Plan Amendment 11 is currently exploring further policy changes and working

with local municipalities to address this area and create further housing opportunities. Staff indicated that density opportunities and the ability to remove minimum square footage requirements to allow for smaller homes is part of ongoing discussion with the local municipalities. Staff noted that the challenge with supportive housing is finding supports for tenants.

Poverty and Community Safety and Wellbeing Opportunities

Mr. Scherzer noted the need for basic necessities such as food, housing, utility payment, transportation, and employment are often beyond the reach for people living on low-income. He noted that opportunities were identified relating to the importance of implementing the Community Safety and Well-being Plan (CSWBP) to assist in addressing some of these challenges. He also indicated that support from the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force is critical in helping to reduce poverty in our communities.

The actions contained within the workplan related to this area include an increase in affordable housing supply, support to our community partners from the Bruce Grey and Information Sharing Collaborative (BGDISC), implementation of the CSWBP and continued support of the Poverty Task Force efforts. It was also noted that the actions within the Social Services theme and the Labour Force and Employment theme will also help to address some of the poverty related challenges.

Mental Health and Addiction Opportunities

Mr. Scherzer noted the direction from Warden Hick's inaugural address on the urgent response required related to mental health and addictions and specifically the recent formation of Grey County's Mental Health and Addiction Task Force. Mr. Scherzer indicated that people with a mental illness are twice as likely to have a substance abuse problem and those with a substance abuse problem are three times more likely to have mental health issues.

Mr. Scherzer then outlined the actions relative to mental health and addictions including continuing with the newly adopted protocol by Grey County Paramedic Services related to tracking opioid incidents to monitor trends, mapping existing mental health and addiction services in the area and identifying any gaps, exploring the creation of healthy and happy communities, implementation of the CSWBP, funding and resource allocation to add additional pediatric beds at Grey Bruce Health Services, resource sharing opportunities to support not-for-profits for program implementation and service delivery, and the call to actions contained in report SSR-CW-02-22 relative to mental health and addictions.

Social Services

Mr. Scherzer highlighted the programs under the purview of Ontario Works, Children's Services, and the EarlyOn Centres. He also noted significant barriers to these programs including transportation, available addiction and mental health services, housing and reduction in emergency assistance programs offered through different levels of government during COVID-19.

Mr. Scherzer then outlined the actions for this theme including enhancing the awareness and promotion of registered Early Childhood Educators, improvement of data collection related to client needs, support for food literacy programming and support for local food programs, exploration of living wages/guaranteed income, establishment of a donation program for old phones, computers and tablets, and the creation of community hubs to allow clients to access several services in one spot. It was noted that Renewed Computers is working in partnership with Social Services on a repurpose program for electronics.

A question arose related to the data collection and potential improvements required. Staff noted that the data needs to be sorted through to determine what is relevant and helpful for supporting large groups in the community. It was also noted that relevant data is required to assist with funding opportunities and this is included as part of the workplan.

Labour and Employment Opportunities

Mr. Scherzer spoke to issues raised related to employment and labour in the area. He noted that the unemployment rate is lower in Grey County compared to the provincial average. He also indicated that employers are having difficulty filling positions at this time and employers have indicated that retaining staff is a concern. The importance of retaining and recruiting a skilled workforce was also highlighted.

Mr. Scherzer then identified the actions relative to employment and labour including identification of employment resources to assist employers with recruitment, connecting with businesses and focusing efforts on retention, understanding the movement patterns of people to allow the tailoring of marketing materials and outreach to attract newcomers, review of commuting patterns to support future policies and initiatives related to housing, transit and active transportation, and working with local school boards to ensure students have adequate information related to job opportunities, education and training.

Staff noted that the comparison of labour shortages between larger urban areas and Grey County is very similar. It was noted that other areas such as transportation and housing continue to contribute to labour shortages, specifically in rural areas.

Youth and Senior Support Opportunities

Under youth and senior support opportunities, Mr. Scherzer noted that 54% of Grey County's population is over 50 years of age, well above the provincial average. He stated that achieving an age-friendly community will address the eight dimensions contained in the community life profile outlined by the World Health Organization.

Mr. Scherzer then outlined the actions including the need for more local services for mental health and addiction for all ages, coordination of public transportation, enhanced data sharing with community stakeholders to better anticipate community needs and monitor trends, encourage local councillors to connect with senior advisory committees, identify recreational opportunities for those with enhanced mobility needs, promote good news stories through local media channels, and implementation of the Age-Friendly Community Strategy and Action Plan.

Policing Opportunities

Information on Hanover and Owen Sound police operations was then discussed. Mr. Scherzer noted the increase in the Crime Severity Index and call volumes over the past several years. He noted that there is a concentration of social services and support agencies in each area which bring more marginalized residents to these communities, often having several morbidities. It was noted that a Hanover mental health response team has been implemented, but on a part-time basis only currently. It is recommended that police services look at the recent Ontario Association Chiefs of Police initiative to implement call assistance relative to mental health.

The opportunities for action items relative to policing included a review of the court services funding model for the Superior Court in Owen Sound, examination of effective responses to mental health calls, adoption of best practices from surrounding jurisdictions that have a lower crime severity index, seek continued support for enhanced road safety, and further development to support proactive versus reactive crime prevention initiatives.

It was noted that the Grey County Farm Safety Association will continue to assist with the provision of reflective tape and lighting for buggies to increase visibility and safety on the roads.

Planning and Development Opportunities

Mr. Scherzer spoke to planning and development including supporting sustainable growth and development of settlement areas and the importance to the overall economic health of the region, planning for growth by ensuring an adequate land supply, as well as infrastructure and collaboration with all levels of government to ensure continued sustainability.

The actions include the continued exploration and implementation of efficiencies related to planning processes, better integration of growth analysis into land use planning and infrastructure planning, continue to update planning documents and special studies to respond to the needs of the community, maintaining community character through new policies and design guidelines, collaboration between all levels of government and municipalities and ensuring the sufficient supply of designated lands within settlement areas to address projected population growth, collaborate to ensure a sufficient supply of industrial and employment lands are 'shovel-ready', and to continue to build relationships between the county, local municipalities and our indigenous communities through Truth and Reconciliation.

Discussion occurred on the maintenance of community character and housing options specifically around who defines this and how staff can ensure that they hear all sides while remaining within the boundaries of approved planning policies. Staff noted that urban design guidelines could help to support this, but there is a balancing act to ensure all sides are heard but noted that an increase in density and intensification will continue to inform more affordable/attainable housing development and communities may not be used to this change. Staff indicated there needs to be ongoing communication related to housing needs within our communities.

The importance of maintaining current policies and documents was cited to support ongoing housing opportunities. Staff noted that there is still some pushback from some residents on housing type development beyond the traditional housing. It was noted the importance of density development and the importance of creating a variety of housing types and challenges encountered by others already having gone through this, recognizing the irritants and reluctance by some and how to address these moving forward. Working with developers to ensure second units were roughed in the home when first being built is one such option to increase affordable/attainable housing within our communities. The land crisis in Hanover was also cited, noting that this is also a county issue and it does impact other areas of the County outside of Hanover.

Transportation Opportunities

Transportation was highlighted and the need for more transportation options was conveyed through the Recolour Grey consultations. Improving access to safe and affordable transportation options for residents is critical and a key determinant of health. Also identified was the continued support for the Grey Transit Route (GTR).

The actions identified under the area of transportation include connecting all transit providers through Grey/Bruce and exploring opportunities for resource sharing, identifying opportunities for not-for-profit programs to connect with public transit services, identifying gaps in public transit service delivery, collection of additional ridership data, exploring alternative service delivery models, publicize and market public

transit services, and working with employers to refine public transit scheduling to meet employee/employer needs.

Next Steps

Mr. Scherzer then provided the Task Force with an overview of the proposed workplan. He noted that each Director or department lead will include the items contained within the report into their respective departmental workplans. There will be a development of a Prioritization Workplan based on common alignments with the various plans and strategies already underway. Updates on these projects and new initiatives will be brought forward to Council through staff reports.

Chair O'Leary thanked the staff involved in the process of the Task Force, both at the County level and the local municipal staff from Hanover and Owen Sound.

Comments on the Prioritization Workplan development and the alignment with a strategic plan were identified. CAO Wingrove noted that the reports and workplan identified through various task forces will serve as the basis for the development of Grey County's next strategic plan over the next year.

Warden Hicks echoed the Chair's comments and noted the exemplary work contained within the workplan and congratulated staff.

HOSTF-01-22 Moved by: Warden Hicks Seconded by: Councillor Milne

That Report PDR-HOSTF-08-22 regarding the Final Report and Workplan for the Hanover-Owen Sound Task Force be received; and

That the workplan and actions identified in the report be supported; and

That upon County Council's endorsement of the report and workplan, the Task Force be dissolved.

Carried

Other Business

There was none. Chair O'Leary acknowledged the comments from Hanover relative to the land crisis. Warden Hicks noted that the County is heavily involved in these discussions.

Adjournment

On motion by Councillors Milne and McQueen the meeting adjourned at 11:37 am.

Brian O'Leary, Chair