



# Committee Minutes

## Affordable Housing Task Force September 21, 2020 – 1:30 PM

The Affordable Housing Task Force met on the above date through electronic means with the following members in attendance:

Present: Warden Paul McQueen; Councillors Burley, Hicks, Soever and O’Leary

Regrets: Councillor Keaveney

### Staff

Present: Kim Wingrove, Chief Administrative Officer; Anne Marie Shaw, Director of Housing; Randy Scherzer, Director of Planning; Savanna Myers, Director of Economic Development, Tourism and Culture; Scott Taylor, Senior Planner; Heather Morrison, Clerk; Tara Warder, Deputy Clerk/Legislative Coordinator and Rob Hatten, Communications Manager

## Call to Order

Chair Hicks called the meeting to order at 1:38 PM.

## Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations made.

## Review the Terms of Reference, Mandate and Who the Task Force will be Serving

Kim Wingrove addressed the Task Force on the above. During the previous meetings of the Task Force, there had been discussion on the mandate being to increase the supply of affordable housing. Staff would like to confirm there is a common understanding of the definition of affordable housing that is being used, which relates specifically to assisting the most vulnerable in the community.

Staff inquired as to what group the Task Force is looking to help, whether those in the affordable housing category, attainable housing category, or both.

The Task Force members noted that during early conversations, the need for both attainable and affordable housing was discussed. The Task Force inquired as to what the appetite of County Council is in terms of the resources to put towards housing. It was noted that attainable housing can be self-sustaining over time and affordable housing requires a continuous subsidy. Discussions need to take place with County Council to determine the direction.

Staff spoke to the additional concerns that can arise if a sector of the population isn't housed, including enforcement, mental health and addiction challenges.

The Task Force suggested that the County should work towards addressing affordable housing and assisting the County's most vulnerable population first and then look to attainable housing. There is the possibility that a mix of housing can be incorporated in order to keep it sustainable.

Anne Marie Shaw provided information on the rent levels for affordable housing in Grey County. Grey County lacks rental housing. There is a need to build, and a need for more subsidies so that people can stay where they are.

Ms. Shaw then spoke to the workplan, noting that the local planners will be meeting in October and there will be an opportunity to speak with the local municipalities and determine their need for affordable housing. Discussions on available land will take place to initiate the first steps in creating a land bank.

## South Georgian Bay Tourism Workforce Attainable Housing Strategy

Savanna Myers addressed the Task Force on the Workforce Attainable Housing Strategy. Staff wish to make the Task Force aware of the work done by the group. The report looked at the attainable housing side and examined the difficulties faced by this region in finding housing and workers. Case studies are included to show what things look like when incentives are provided, and further examination of public – private partnership opportunities are also included.

Randy Scherzer noted that the document has been used to develop incentives such as planning and development fee waivers, proposed development charge exemptions, Community Improvement Plan program, etc. Another incentive that may warrant additional research are rental guarantees. Rental guarantees include working with employers to guarantee they rent a certain number of units within a particular build to help relieve some of the pressure and risks the developer takes in the upfront investment when building these rental units.

The Task Force inquired as to whether the County could have its own housing asset and eliminate the role of the developer. The importance of owning the asset was noted, as opposed to handing it to the developer. The County would lose control over rent levels unless controlled through an agreement and there would be no ability to earn equity or borrow against the asset.

The Task Force and staff spoke to the advantages and disadvantages of the two options.

Anne Marie Shaw noted that all Grey County housing is owned by the Grey County and Owen Sound Housing Corporation. There is already a corporation and management in existence and there are different models to examine as well.

It was noted that there is consensus from the Task Force that Grey County needs to increase its housing stock.

The County recognizes that each municipality has its own needs. Staff intend to work with the planning staff at each municipality to gain an understanding of the most current conversations that have taken place at the local level.

## Municipal Data Sets and Comparisons for Simcoe County

Randy Scherzer reviewed statistical information and comparisons to Simcoe County. It was noted that the average market rent has continued to increase. The average and median dwelling values have continued to increase as well, and Simcoe County values are increasing at an even higher rate. He then reviewed the residential building permits by type, noting that the City of Owen Sound has the highest number of permits for apartment and condo rentals in 2019, which is positive because it is needed.

Core housing need statistics were then reviewed. Core housing need is defined as households falling below at least one of the adequacy, affordability and suitability standards and where 30% or more of a household's before tax household income is required to pay for the housing.

Randy Scherzer then highlighted updated housing information and reviewed municipal profiles.

## Incentives for Affordable Housing

Randy Scherzer addressed the Committee on incentives for affordable housing, providing an example of potential savings in a build.

Savanna Myers reviewed information on the Community Improvement Program and the potential results of incentives provided.

## 2021 Budget and Funding Uses

Anne Marie noted that discussions have occurred on putting money in the 2021 budget for affordable housing.

Kim Wingrove noted that if staff had an idea of the money that was appropriate to put towards affordable housing, it can be incorporated into the budget document for consideration.

The Task Force requested staff put together a report on the County's need so that Council can set a goal based on that information. The Task Force was encouraged to suggest what it would like to see, and staff can provide information on the investment that it will take to achieve that.

Anne Marie Shaw noted that there is a non-profit that is interested in building, so there is opportunity out there.

*AF06-20* Moved by: Councillor O'Leary Seconded by: Councillor Burley

**That staff bring back a report for consideration on Grey County's critical housing needs, key assets and opportunities for affordable housing for consideration in the 2021 budget.**

Carried

## Local Planners Meeting Discussion – Land Inventory and Low-Middle Income Housing

Randy Scherzer noted that the topic was covered earlier in the meeting.

## University of Toronto Study - Conversion of Commercial Street Level Units to Residential Units and the Switch to Virtual Business in the wake of COVID-19 – Verbal Update

Scott Taylor addressed the Task Force on the above subject matter. County Planning and Economic Development staff have partnered with students from University of Toronto to look at policy and incentive opportunities for new housing on downtown main streets across Grey County towns. The report is going forward to Committee of the Whole on Thursday, September 24, 2020.

## HDR-AF-09-20 Owen Sound Housing Company Odawa Heights Update

Anne Marie Shaw provided an update on the progress of the Odawa Heights project. It was noted that site plan approval has been received from the City and a building permit has been issued. Allen Hastings Limited was awarded the contract and the hope is to get started on the site this fall.

The build will have 32 one-bedroom and 18 two-bedroom units. Nine units will be accessible, and all units will be built with the age in place guidelines. Doorways will be wide enough for a wheelchair or scooter and there will be storage areas constructed as well. The rent will be \$635 for a one-bedroom unit and \$740 for a two bedroom. Market rent is \$820 and \$1200 respectively.

*AF07-20* Moved by: Warden McQueen Seconded by: Councillor Burley

**That Report HDR-AF-09-20 regarding an Odawa Heights update be received for information.**

Carried

## Correspondence from Town of Collingwood – Out of the Cold

Kim Wingrove addressed the Committee on the above correspondence. The Town of Collingwood has asked the County of Grey to provide support for a feasibility study for the Out of the Cold program that operates in Collingwood. It is a volunteer operated program and there is a great demand for it. The Town of Collingwood has committed to providing 50% of the required \$18,000 for the study and is looking to the Blue Mountains, Clearview Township and Wasaga Beach for the remaining money. It was noted that \$3125 was provided from the Blue Mountains. There is a homeless issue in and around Blue Mountain Village and the Craigleith area, and emergency housing in Collingwood could be used to assist homeless individuals from the Blue Mountains. It was noted that the County of Simcoe has not provided money and were not aware of the study when it commenced.

*AF08-20* Moved by: Councillor O'Leary Seconded by: Warden McQueen

**That the County of Grey contribute \$1500.00 to the Out of Cold Feasibility Study regarding permanent homeless shelter services.**

Carried

## Other Business

There was no other business.

## Next Meeting Dates

To be determined.

On motion by Councillors Burley and O'Leary, the meeting adjourned at 3:50 PM.

Selwyn Hicks, Chair