

## Report CAOR-PCD-03-14

**To:** Chair Wright and Members of Planning & Community Development Committee  
**From:** Lance Thurston, Chief Administrative Officer  
**Meeting Date:** January 21, 2014  
**Subject:** **Grey County Representation on SWEA Board of Directors**  
**Status:** Recommendation endorsed by Committee as presented per Resolution PCD18-14 January 21, 2014; Endorsed by County Council February 4, 2014 per Resolution CC23-14;

### Recommendation(s)

**WHEREAS Grey County as a member in good standing is entitled to one Authorized Representative on the Board of Directors of the South West Economic Alliance (SWEA);**

**AND WHEREAS Lance Thurston serves as the County's representative on the SWEA Board;**

**AND WHEREAS Lance Thurston's term on the SWEA Board ends June 17, 2014;**

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Report CAOR-PCD-03-14 be received;**

**AND THAT Lance Thurston be hereby re-appointed to serve as Grey County's Authorized Representative for a two year period effective June 17, 2014.**

### Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek a Grey County representative for the Board of the South West Economic Alliance.

## Background

The Southwest Economic Alliance was established in 2006 as a unique partnership of local governments, educational institutions, the broader public sector and the private sector. The organization focuses on building the Ontario economy in the Southwest through strong regional leadership, cooperation, research and advocacy.

SWEA is governed by an 11 member board of directors elected by the membership each year at the annual general meeting. Elected directors serve two year terms and are limited to a total of three consecutive terms. The President is an ex-officio voting member of the board. In addition, the board has established an Executive Committee comprised of the Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, one Director-at-Large and the President. These positions are appointed by the board on an annual basis.

On September 26, 2013 the Board of Directors adopted new rules for membership and governance to go into effect January 1, 2014. The changes have two key objectives:

- Strengthen the Alliance by extending voting privileges to all categories of members, thus improving the level of engagement;
- Broaden involvement in SWEA's governance processes by expanding the size of the board of directors and ensuring all municipal members are guaranteed a seat on that board.

As a result, the new rules now allow two categories of voting members — Municipal Members and Non-Municipal Members. Each category is allowed a single vote during annual and special general meetings. In addition, the SWEA board is expanded to 30 directors from the current 11. Each Municipal Member is guaranteed a seat on Board.

### *Board Meetings*

Since the new Board will be much larger than the former Board, it will meet less frequently and will provide more of a strategic oversight role. The full Board will meet in person four times a year. The dates for 2014 are:

- Thursday, March 14 at 10 a.m.
- Wednesday, June 11 at 10 a.m.
- Thursday, September 11 at 10 a.m.
- Thursday, December 4 at 10 a.m.

## *Executive Committee*

A six to eight person executive committee will be chosen from the Board of Directors. The Executive Committee has responsibilities delegated to it by the Board in respect of the management and direction of the affairs of the Corporation, except such acts as must, pursuant to the Act or the By-laws, be performed by the Board itself.

The Executive Committee will function as a management committee and will meet monthly, via teleconference, on the Second Thursday of every month at 11 a.m., with the exception of those months when the Board of Directors meets, as follows:

- Thursday, January 9 – 11 am Teleconference
- Thursday, February 12 – 11 am Teleconference
- Thursday, April 10 – 11 am Teleconference
- Thursday, May 8 – 11 am Teleconference
- Thursday, July 10 – 11 am Teleconference
- Thursday, August 14 – 11 am Teleconference
- Thursday, October 9 – 11 am Teleconference
- Thursday, November 13 – 10 am to 2 pm In Person

## Financial / Staffing / Legal / Information Technology

### Considerations

The County Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) has served as the Grey County representative on the SWEA Board for the last two years. His term of appointment ends in June 2014 and therefore must either be reappointed or replaced. Grey County Council may choose any person from the county as its Authorized Representative on the Board of Directors. The representative may be a member of county council, a member of staff or a member of the public.

The CAO has enjoyed serving on the Board of SWEA. The role has nurtured a strong direct and beneficial working relationship between SWEA and the Grey County organization, particularly in the areas of economic development and broadband Internet connectivity projects. It has also served well in strengthening the working relationship between SWEA, the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus and its CAO group, given the active involvement of the Grey County CAO in that organization and on its regional broadband initiative.

## Link to Strategic Goals / Priorities

The lack of coordination and collaboration among stakeholders can significantly hamper growth and effective use of resources in the region. There is a clear need for “single window” thinking that will more efficiently focus and harness the investments being made in the region by all levels of government, by colleges and universities, including their research arms, and by the private sector. SWEA provides an opportunity for regional collaboration.

Membership in SWEA and working with other counties and municipalities, post-secondary educational institutions and private sector organizations in the region underpins virtually every strategic goal and objective set out in County Council’s Strategic Plan. Participation on the Board of Directors is an excellent strategic investment of the County’s time, energy and resources and enables the County to be part of and to influence regional decision-making.

The SWEA 2014 Business Plan is provided in Appendix 1 to this report to demonstrate the focus of the organization for the coming year.

Respectfully submitted by,

Lance Thurston, Chief Administrative Officer

# Appendix 1: SWEA Business Plan 2014

## 1. Core Operations

### *OBJECTIVES*

- Core Operations undertakes SWEA's administration, governance, stakeholder engagement, government advocacy
- Operates primarily as a cost centre

### *KEY UNDERTAKINGS IN 2014*

1. Implement new SWEA governance model
2. Increase Municipal Membership
3. Increase Non-Municipal Membership
4. Develop recommendations for a new membership dues structure and report the findings to members at the AGM
5. Finalize fundraising for endowed Chair in Regional Economic Development for Southwestern Ontario
6. Advocate for provincial funding of SWEA core operations
7. Renew MOU agreements with key stakeholder groups
8. Investigate options for cross-border trade cooperation initiative with Michigan
9. Promote SWEA messaging during municipal election process, and brief newly elected municipal officials on the economic situation in Southwestern Ontario
10. Promote SWEA messaging during possible provincial election process
11. Launch and improve SWEA Economic Dashboard in partnership with Libro Credit Union and Central1 Credit Unions

### *SOURCES OF FUNDING*

1. Municipal membership fees
2. Non municipal membership fees
3. Corporate contributions
4. Government grants or subsidies

## 2. SWEA Assembly & AGM

### *OBJECTIVES*

- Annual gathering of SWEA membership and stakeholders
- Co-scheduled with Annual General Meeting
- An important opportunity to introduce and reinforce key messaging about Southwestern Ontario economic issues and SWEA undertakings
- The Assembly has historically operated as a profit centre, with a \$20—30K in contribution to overhead.

### *KEY UNDERTAKINGS IN 2014*

1. Host in a larger urban centre to maximize access to delegates and corporate sponsorship
2. Investigate partnership with OMAF and RA to co-provide economic development training
3. Focus content on key SWEA initiatives:
  - a. Intelligent Region
  - b. Centre for Sustainable Food Systems
  - c. Passenger Transportation Advocacy

### *SOURCES OF FUNDING*

1. Corporate and government sponsorships
2. Registration fees
3. Host city contributions in kind

## 3. Intelligent Region

SWEA is promoting the idea of the region re-inventing itself through the application of high speed, high capacity communications technologies across a wide range of sectors. SWEA is seeking to launch an initiative that could lead to all of South-western Ontario being recognized as an *intelligent region*. The intention is to help create a strong brand for the region as innovative and forward-looking. The SWEA board of directors has recognized that future economic growth in Southwestern Ontario will be knowledge-based and "intelligent".

## *OBJECTIVES*

- Recognition of Southwestern Ontario as an Intelligent Region through the *Intelligent Communities Forum*, NYC (or equivalent body)
- Drive the Return On Investment for ubiquitous, ultra high speed broadband access for all parts of Southwestern Ontario without regard for population density
- Complement WOWC broadband initiative (SWIFT)

## *KEY UNDERTAKINGS IN 2014*

1. Initial benchmarking of all communities by Cisco Canada (Pilot completed in Grey County in 2013)
2. Identification of implementation clusters within the region
3. Development of implementation strategies for each cluster in partnership with universities and outside vendors
4. Ongoing brand building and success story communications strategy involving all member municipalities

## *SOURCES OF FUNDING*

Job Creation Partnership (JCP) with Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities will supply field staff for community engagement and project coordination for the four undertakings above. CONFIRMED. Work to begin in January 2014.

Rural Economic Development (RED) Program to fund Cisco benchmarking phase (items 1-3 above). IN PROCESS. Decision pending in late January for implementation in early March.

Southwestern Ontario Development Fund (SWODF) to possibly fund aspects of items 1-3 not covered by RED. Initial application has been reviewed and will be updated based on JCP grant and possibility of RED grant. NEGOTIATIONS REQUIRED.

## **4. Centre for Sustainable Food Systems**

### *OBJECTIVES*

To create market development and distribution mechanisms to expand Local Food Initiatives into a region-wide strategy

## *KEY UNDERTAKINGS IN 2014*

1. Deliver on the requirements of a Labour Market Partnership (LMP) grant focused on a pilot program in Elgin County.
2. Attract at least one more county into the existing pilot program.
3. Formally incorporate the Centre for Sustainable Food Systems, giving it its own governance structure and financial independence.

## *SOURCES OF FUNDING*

- LMP grant from MTCU operates from October 2013 to December 2014. IN PLACE
- Grant from Green Belt Fund, to add extra elements to Elgin County pilot. CONFIRMED, with contract pending.

## **5. Passenger Transportation Advocacy**

### *OBJECTIVES*

Advocate to all three levels of government the need for coordinated planning of regional passenger transportation options, including buses, commuter rail and VIA Rail

## *KEY UNDERTAKINGS IN 2014*

1. Political action day at Queens Park to promote the need for an all-party committee of the Ontario Legislature to study passenger transportation planning for Southwestern Ontario.
2. Advocacy initiative in support of VIA Rail service improvements and re-investments.
3. Communications planning to coordinate messaging from SWEA, local municipal governments and grassroots transportation advocacy groups.

## *SOURCES OF FUNDING*

- Corporate sponsorships
- Municipal government contributions
- Provincial government subsidy for local research, planning and community advocacy.

END