



# Committee Minutes

## Hanover-Owen Sound Task Force December 14, 2020 – 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 Desai, Milne and McQueen; and Warden Hicks

### Staff

Present: Kim Wingrove, CAO, Randy Scherzer, Director of Planning, Savanna Myers, Director of Economic Development, Tourism and Culture, Anne Marie Shaw, Director of Housing, Barb Fedy, Director of Social Services, Scott Taylor, Senior Planner, and Heather Morrison, Clerk

Guests: Phyllis Lovell and Jan Chamberlain

## Call to Order

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

## Declaration of Pecuniary Interest

There was none.

## Business Arising

Randy Scherzer noted that since the last meeting was December 11, 2020, there were no further updates to the Recommendations and Opportunities paper to date. Updates from both the December 11 and 14 meetings will be provided at the January 11, 2021 meeting.

## Delegations

### **Bruce Grey Child and Family Services, Phyllis Lovell, Executive Director**

Ms. Lovell provided an overview of Bruce Grey Child and Family Services (BGCFS) to the Task Force. She spoke to referrals noting that there are approximately 1,400

annually with most referred from Owen Sound and Hanover areas from both the school boards and police services providing those referrals. She noted that the top reasons for referrals include a caregiver with a problem creating a risk for the children and partner conflict and violence, indicating that 23%-30% of referred families receive longer term supports and services.

Ms. Lovell provided a view of historical statistics for referrals noting that on average BGCFS has 420-430 open cases at any one time. She also indicated that most cases have long-term challenges that require additional ongoing supports.

Ms. Lovell provided an outline of the families served by BGCFS. She noted that 98% of children and youth served still live at home, 75% of families are served on a voluntary basis and 25% of families are identified to a court or subject to a court order. She also indicated that there is an increasing number of families who can offer safe, familiar care alternatives as opposed to traditional foster care services. BGCFS also provides customary care for indigenous children where the community becomes the caregiver for the child rather than moving the child outside of the first nation. This enables local, community support for the children requiring care.

Ms. Lovell outlined the current challenges for parents including childhood trauma, poverty, precarious employment, housing insecurity, transportation challenges, mental health and the social isolation impact of the pandemic. She noted that often families make choices on where they live based on the community services available in the area.

She provided an overview of the current challenges for BGCFS including a lack of mental health and addiction recovery services, increasing rates of child and youth mental health problems, few home services in a large geographic area and the lack of centre-based childcare options for parents. Affordable housing and the provision of mental health services for both adults and children were highlighted as provincial challenges. She also noted the lack of recovery services specifically for women in the community as well as the need to increase supports in school settings for both parent and child.

She noted that the opportunities for BGCFS include connections with community based social supports to help improve and develop normal, healthy lives, the unprecedented cooperation among charities during the pandemic, and better municipal connectivity for strategic planning purposes and population data.

Questions and comments then followed. Discussion occurred on how to address childhood trauma. Ms. Lovell noted that part of the solution is the removal of the stigma and the provision of safe school and childcare settings to assist in providing supports for

both the parent and child. The lack of community services makes it difficult to provide the required services for families in need, especially in smaller communities.

The question was asked as to where municipal dollars could be best spent. Ms. Lovell indicated that transportation and affordable housing are high needs that often assist with life stabilization. She noted that the stress of the pandemic within the homes is there, but that adults often acknowledge the impact of their mental health issues and seek out services. She did indicate that BGCFS is seeing escalating addiction behaviour and that BGCFS works closely with public health as a community partner.

Ms. Lovell noted that the population underrepresented in current statistics is the 0-4yrs-preschool as they are often invisible at home, unable to express their needs and even unable to dial 911 for any assistance. She identified them as the most at-risk population.

She noted that school-based nutrition programs are lifelines for families. She indicated that during the lockdown phase of the pandemic, staff that were deemed non-essential in BGCFS went to community partners to assist in providing breakfast food to vulnerable families within the various communities.

Ms. Lovell elaborated on Keystone which is a children's mental health community partner assisting children 0-18 years with mental health services and community-based counseling and supports. They also have a local residential service within Owen Sound to assist those most in need. General discussion occurred on addictions and the impacts of that over the life of the person.

### **Actively Engaging Our Seniors, Council on Aging-Jan Chamberlain, Vice Chair**

Ms. Chamberlain provided some background information on the Council on Aging (COA) and the grassroots of how the organization came to be. She noted that during the pandemic, seniors, being part of the most vulnerable population, have had to stop a lot off their social interactions. They have been encouraged to use Zoom or other technologies to connect with each other to maintain the social interaction. There is a need to feel like they belong in their respective community. She indicated that the radio is being used quite a bit for communication purposes.

Ms. Chamberlain answered questions from Task Force members.

The pandemic has increased the fear with seniors with some still quietly meeting with others as they feel the need for that social interaction. She indicated that some are fearful of the current situation but still need that social contact. The Council on Aging and other senior services are encouraging the use of technology to connect safely with others. Senior centres are still using Zoom for music days, presentations, trivia etc.

Radio stations are being encouraged to inform listeners of these opportunities which are being spearheaded through the local senior centres. In current meetings with the COA this is being promoted with the opportunity for radio stations to share good news and stories for listeners. Ms. Chamberlain indicated that most seniors use the words 'stressed' or 'can't stand this' rather than indicating they struggle with mental health issues. She noted that local churches are stepping up to assist in this capacity.

Kim Wingrove spoke to the Inclusive Communities Grant for seniors which is currently open. She indicated that the Seniors Without Walls and radio programming may benefit from this grant, and she is reaching out to Bayshore news through Ross Kentner for the opportunity to assist in the provision of these types of services.

Ms. Chamberlain noted that the most important thing that municipal leaders can do is listen to the seniors as they contribute to the society in a large way. Engage seniors in aspects of county operations including participation in various municipal committees. A lot have given back to their respective communities and continue to make contributions. Making age friendly communities so all ages count within the community was also highlighted.

## Other Business

There was none.

## Next Meeting Dates

**January 11, 2021 9:30 am.**

On motion by Councillor Milne and Councillor McQueen the meeting adjourned at 10:51am.

Brian O'Leary, Chair