



# Committee Minutes

## Affordable Housing Task Force July 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 Keaveney, Soever and O'Leary

Regrets: Councillors Burley and Hicks

### 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; Heather Morrison, Clerk and Tara Warder, Deputy Clerk/Legislative Coordinator

## Call to Order

Heather Morrison called the meeting to order and asked for the Task Force to elect an Acting Chair.

*AF04-20* Moved by: Councillor O'Leary      Seconded by: Councillor Keaveney

**That Councillor Soever be nominated as Acting Chair for the July 21, 2020 Affordable Housing Task Force meeting.**

Carried

Councillor Soever accepted the nomination and then assumed the Chair.

## Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations made.

## Grey County Affordable Housing Statistical Package

Randy Scherzer addressed the Committee on the statistical package, containing information which will help determine some of the core housing needs throughout the

County. Many of the data sets have been investigated and staff wish to present the preliminary results from that investigation.

Mr. Scherzer noted that the average market rent for housing has increased. This is true for both Grey and Bruce Counties, and the Province as a whole. Mr. Scherzer reviewed the average pricing for a two bedroom rental in Grey County, and rental vacancy rates.

He then reviewed new housing starts by dwelling type, noting that historically the majority of new housing starts have been single family dwellings. There has been however, a trend in Grey County in recent years for more multi-residential homes than we have seen in the past and recent construction statistics demonstrate this.

The Committee noted that there is merit in comparing these statistics and values to Simcoe County as well.

Mr. Scherzer then spoke to Core Housing Need, defined as a household whose housing falls below at least one of the adequacy, affordability or suitability standards and it would have to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable.

It was noted that the majority of those in core housing need are renters and the key group in core housing need in Owen Sound are females over the age of 65. The importance of housing being built with accessibility standards in mind was highlighted.

The difficulty for newcomers to find housing was also noted. If Grey County wanted to attract immigrants to the area, housing need would look different than what currently exists.

The data will help build a business case for the type of housing that is needed.

## Grey County Land Mapping

Randy Scherzer provided an overview of lands in Grey County owned by local, provincial and federal governments. Some of these lands could have potential to be sites for future affordable housing builds. The mapping needs to be further examined and discussions could happen with local municipalities to see if there are any pockets that could be utilized for such a project if desired.

The goal is to establish a land bank for future needs. If Council wishes to pursue future affordable housing builds, money can be set aside to acquire these lands.

## Analysis of Waitlist for Rent Geared to Income

Anne Marie Shaw spoke to the waitlist for Grey County Housing, noting that most of the people are in a very high core need. It was noted that the social housing wait list is lower in rural areas and there has been an increase in the people applying to rural areas from urban centres.

The City of Owen Sound has the highest need, followed by Durham, Hanover and Meaford. Ms. Shaw detailed the waitlist statistics and demographics and spoke to the need for affordable housing.

There is a need to look at housing that is market and affordable so we are meeting all needs.

Anne Marie Shaw noted that social housing is open to anyone to apply for as long as they meet the requirements. Realistically, though many of the people on the wait list are not Grey County residents, the majority of people who use Grey County housing are Grey County residents or live in the fringe areas.

It was noted that there is opportunity with the property being acquired in Durham for the new Rockwood Terrace to have mixed housing options and meet the needs of all. This approach makes the building sustainable and creates revenue.

The Committee inquired as to whether staff have any information on tiny homes that could be shared. Staff noted that in some areas, tiny homes do work well however winters in Ontario and the existing building code add some complicating factors. The importance of taking the time to figure out the type of housing that is needed for certain demographics was cited.

## Draft Action Plan for Developing Affordable Housing

Anne Marie Shaw addressed the Committee on the draft action plan for developing affordable housing. As part of the update to the Housing and Homelessness Plan, staff put together a strategy to look at affordable housing and examine the missing middle as well as the Grey County waitlist.

Ms. Shaw noted that when staff undertook the 2019 update, the County was able to lobby the province for more funding. As a result of that, a 59 unit affordable housing build in Owen Sound is in its initial stages of development. There will be 27 affordable units with pricing at approximately \$600 and remaining units ranging to \$900 at more of a market price.

It is important for Grey County to undertake actions which allow the County to become shovel ready if funding becomes available from the Province, or if the County has its own funds to move forward with any developments. The recommended strategies to be looked at are as follows:

1. Establish a housing task force
2. Determine specific housing needs for each area of the County
3. Establish an affordable fund
4. Establish a land bank.
5. Develop an incentive package for rental housing development
6. Assess current community housing for redevelopment.
7. Assess nonprofit housing providers for affordable housing opportunities
8. Public Private Partnerships
9. Develop an RFP for Affordable Housing Development.
10. Assess other programs such as the Secondary Suite Program
11. Portable Rent Supplement Program

The Committee discussed the Community Improvement Program and the development charges by-law.

Staff noted that incentives are key to encouraging the development of the housing that is needed in Grey County.

## Review the Task Force Mandate

Staff noted that if there is support for the action plan, staff can build a mandate around the initiatives.

*AF05-20* Moved by: Councillor O'Leary      Seconded by: Councillor Keaveney

**That the Draft Action Plan for developing Affordable Housing be endorsed as presented and become part of the Terms of Reference for the Task Force.**

Carried

Staff noted that they will bring forward the Terms of Reference to the next meeting based on the discussion today about the Task Force's mandate.

The Committee discussed options for the Task Force and its structure. Is it desirable to have something that is sustainable and can finance both itself and new projects, or is there appetite to have something that requires County funds in the budget every year?

The Committee noted the need to determine who the target audience is and what needs the County is trying to fill and what is affordable for the County.

Staff noted that that the most successful developments are a mix of affordable, rent geared to income and market rent units. If the preference is to have a mixture of housing options and create a possible revenue stream for the County, this can be incorporated into the work that staff bring back to the Task Force.

## Other Business

There was no other business.

## Next Meeting Dates

To be determined.

On motion by Councillors O'Leary and McQueen, the meeting adjourned at 3:03 PM.

Alar Soever, Acting Chair