

Report CAOR-CC-02-14

To: Warden Milne and Members of County Council
From: Lance Thurston, Chief Administrative Officer
Meeting Date: January 9, 2014
Subject: **2103 Corporate Operating Plan Year End Update**
Status: Report endorsed by County Council, with the Operating Plan being amended per Resolution CC07-14 January 9, 2014;

Recommendation

THAT County Council receives the Chief Administrative Officer's 2013 Corporate Operating Plan Year End Update report, CAOR-CC-02-14, and hereby adopts a revised Corporate Operating Plan for 2014-2016 as recommended by the CAO.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to:

- a) Provide a 2013 year-end update of the strategic initiatives set out in the Corporate Operating Plan
- b) Outline upcoming initiatives and anticipated challenges for 2014, and
- c) Recommend adoption of a revised operating plan for the 2014-2016 planning period

Background

In 2012 County Council adopted a strategic management framework to enable County Council and staff to set priorities, align available resources to focus on those priorities, and monitor performance against the stated objectives. The framework consists of:

- The Strategic Plan, which is the organization's blue print for the future
- The Corporate Operating Plan, which activates the strategic action items identified in the Strategic Plan over a three year planning horizon, and
- Departmental work plans, which detail how each initiative will be achieved

The Corporate Operating Plan, which is the subject of this report, reflects only the change agenda of the corporation, i.e. those strategic objectives that Council has determined are necessary to improve program and service delivery. This plan does not reflect the more routine yet still important day-to-day operational activities within each department.

The Corporate Operating Plan has a three year rolling time horizon, which means it is revised and rolled ahead by one year on an annual basis to keep it current. This makes it a very useful monitoring tool to gauge progress on the corporation's strategic objectives.

The 2013-2015 Corporate Operating Plan as updated to December 31, 2013 is attached to this report. It is also available on the county website or by contacting the CAO's office.

Discussion

Grey County was a hive of activity in 2013. Overall, great strides have been made in realizing County Council's stated strategic objectives. A number of strategic initiatives have been completed and many are on pace to completion as anticipated. A few initiatives have slowed down for a variety of reasons, most of which are beyond the control of the county, and only one has not started on the time line expected in the plan. Of particular note:

Goal 1: Expanding the Prosperity Base

This Strategic Goal is focused on attracting development, enabling business growth and encouraging investment that creates jobs. It has been and continues to be the central focus for County Council. There are a number of interrelated and coordinated initiatives underway, as described below.

Economic Development Capacity Building

Economic development as an activity is new to the County. This past year was a capacity building year in which the County strengthened its staffing complement and support systems with local municipalities and other community stakeholders to undertake economic development work. This new staffing capacity has enabled progress on a number of fronts over the year, including support to the local food industry, and laid the necessary ground work for significant work in the future.

Economic Development Strategy

With a couple of years under our belt and the foundation laid, it is time to spell out a comprehensive economic development strategy for Grey County – a road map to guide us over the coming years. This work will proceed in 2014 in collaboration with municipal and industry partners and will help to better define the County's value added role in economic development.

Tourism Development Strategy

Tourism promotion and destination development has been a long-established activity in Grey County, and enjoyed continued success this past year as county staff partnered with municipal and business partners on many creative programs and services to promote tourism in the region. The Tourism Advisory Committee has been particularly effective in shaping and guiding the strategic efforts of the department. For 2014 the department will continue to strengthen its efforts through initiatives such as the roll out of a more current and interactive tourism website. Updating the County's tourism destination strategy will be an important activity now slated for 2015.

Internet Connectivity

Accessible, low cost, ultra-high speed broadband Internet connectivity and capacity is a building block of rural economic development and social renewal. High capacity broadband access is fundamental to attracting, retaining and sustaining investment. To prosper locally and grow investment we must leverage the capabilities offered by widespread use of ultra-high speed broadband connectivity commonly available in major urban centres and most other countries in the world.

The County is involved in three significant regional initiatives aimed at improving the availability, speed and capacity of Internet services in small towns and rural communities:

- 1) The Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC) regional broadband feasibility study;
- 2) The South West Economic Alliance (SWEA) Intelligent Region Initiative; and,
- 3) The Provincial Government's GO-NET consolidation and update project.

The WOWC study has been endorsed and is proceeding to the next stage, which is the development of detailed project business planning documents. The County

has supported this work through the special one-time contribution of \$25,000 to the WOWC project in 2014.

The province's Go-Net project is proceeding, and the County's IT Director is participating on a technical advisory committee for the procurement process. This project and the procurement path chosen by the Province will have significant bearing on the WOWC broadband network design. It is not clear at this time what involvement Grey County will have in 2014.

Grey County participated in a pilot project to determine its level of preparedness as a "smart and connected" community. Commissioned by the Southwest Economic Alliance, this county-wide benchmarking project represents the first step in SWEA's Intelligent Region Initiative. Beyond its clear benefits to the residents of Grey, the study is an important planning tool for SWEA as it prepares to benchmark all the communities of Southwestern Ontario.

The SWEA initiative is an ambitious five year undertaking designed to help transform the economy of Southwestern Ontario through the application of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) on a regional broadband network. A final report, written by the project team from Cisco Canada will be the outcome of this pilot. Further involvement in the SWEA initiative will be determined through 2014.

There has been and will continue to be significant time commitment related to these initiatives. It can be daunting at times for county staff and does impinge on time available to work on other county projects. It is, however, important work to advance the County's prosperity agenda.

Goal 2: Enabling Healthy and Resilient Communities

"A community that is vibrant, strong and offers hope to its residents is a community in which neighbourhoods are safe, the environment is clean, housing is affordable, social support services and cultural/recreational opportunities are accessible and where civic spirit is nurtured by participatory decision-making, innovative design and celebration"¹

Newcomer Attraction and Retention Strategy

This is one of the keys to long-term prosperity in the county. It is closely tied to the economic development work noted above, and shows the significant interconnectedness of many of these strategic initiatives.

¹ Grey County Strategic Plan

Staff made tentative steps into this important area over 2013 and will continue to do so in 2014. Partnering with the Ministry of Rural Affairs and the Four Counties Labour Planning Board, well attended community forums were held across the county in the fall aimed at informing and educating municipal staff, residents and business owners about the need for newcomer-friendly policies, programs and practices. This area of work will form an important part of future development work by the County and its partners. It is anticipated that more focus will be brought to this important effort in 2015, once an overall economic development strategy is in place.

In addition, county staff is working with Georgian College and the Four Counties Labour Market Planning Board in 2014 on a Skills Gap Study that will help inform efforts by Georgian College and others to strengthen the local labour force.

Health Care Initiatives

An increasingly significant portion of the County's resources are directed towards the provision of health care services in our communities, through its involvement in long-term care, paramedic services and public health.

The health care sector is undergoing major transformation as the Provincial government shifts its service and spending emphasis towards preventive community health strategies, primary care and strategies to keep people in their homes longer. This transformation requires extensive stakeholder engagement across the community and health care sector, and County staff is increasingly involved in service reviews and programming discussions that will have significant implications to the health services the County delivers and supports.

Improving access to care, investing in healthy living strategies, aging in place strategies, reviewing our involvement in and staying on top of the changing world of long-term care and strengthening our emergency paramedicine capabilities are four significant initiatives in which the County is involved and needs to stay involved.

Affordable Housing

Work on implementing elements of the adopted Affordable Housing strategy is slow. While policy development continues within the Planning and Housing departments, the lack of significant new funding from upper levels of government for new housing initiatives certainly is placing a damper on progress.

Related to this, the County completed and approved a Housing and Homelessness strategy in 2013 that will serve as a blue print for the County and

community agencies in creating responsive strategies to address the myriad of issues related to homelessness and suitable affordable housing opportunities.

Goal 3: Securing the County as Ontario's Recreation Jewel

Initiatives intended to support and promote the exceptional natural assets that make Grey County a four- season recreation destination for residents and visitors alike.

Grey Roots Museum and Archives

A revised business plan for Grey Roots was approved in 2013. Grey Roots Museum and Archives together with Moreston Village is the centre piece to the County's cultural heritage program. Continued prudent investment in these facilities and services is ensuring that the important history of the county lives on in our daily lives.

Tourism Development

This important work is ongoing and is reported under the Prosperity goal noted earlier in this report.

Goal 4: Making Connections

Initiatives designed to improve the physical, operational, and virtual connections between Grey County's communities and areas beyond.

Collaborative Decision-making Framework

Council approved a collaborative decision-making framework in March 2013 after an extended dialogue with local municipalities. The policy framework provides a structured process for engaging the County and other municipal organizations in exploring a shared approach to a specified service challenge or a potential new service arrangement. In Q4 2013 Council received its first request for consideration under this framework, to review library services. A preliminary report from the CAO will be tabled in Q1 2014 on the merits of proceeding with a county-wide review.

Transportation Master Plan

This is important policy work that has consumed a great deal of time and energy over the course of the year at the county and local municipal levels. Work continues on pace through 2014 towards a master plan that also addresses the contentious issues of road and bridge rationalization.

Investment in Technology

One of the keys to an effective and efficient organization is its investment in and use of ever-advancing technology solutions. The County is proceeding on a number of significant technology upgrades, such as the WEAVE program in Transportation and the HRIS in Human Resources. Extensive work is also underway within the Tourism department on creating a new content management system and upgraded website. This very necessary work is at times slow and always meticulously detailed. It is proceeding in accordance with the County's approved information technology strategic plan, albeit more slowly in some areas than anticipated initially.

Administration Space Review

The POA administration and courts building needs to be replaced and the ongoing space crunch in the County administration building needs to be addressed. The Accommodations Task Force has endorsed in principle the concept of building an appropriately sized addition to the rear of the administration building to meet foreseeable space needs. The review will continue in Q1 2014 with a review of recommended interior space configurations and a recommendation to committee not later than Q2 2014.

The CAO will be coming forth with a report in Q1 2014 recommending some modest modifications to address current space pressures in the current building

Goal 5: Listening and Working Together

Strategies to engage residents and stakeholders in decisions that affect them, and working together to achieve mutually desired outcomes.

First Nations Consultation Protocol

Discussions are sporadic but ongoing between county staff and staff of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation on developing an acceptable protocol to serve as a guide for a positive and respectful relationship. This will be pursued further in 2014.

County Governance Review

The Governance Task Force completed its mandate in early 2013. Its recommendation not to pursue governance changes was accepted by County Council.

Review of Assisted Transportation Options

In Q2 2013 County Council added this project to the corporate operating plan. Some initial work was undertaken to meet with community partners in determining an interest in being part of this review. There is significant interest county wide. Community stakeholders have been engaged by the County Social Services Department to explore potential improvement strategies. This work will continue through 2014. It ties nicely with a regional transportation advocacy effort being led by the South West Economic Alliance (SWEA) and a study on rural transportation being undertaken by the Rural Ontario Institute.

Goal 6: Achieving Excellence in Governance and Service

The aim of this goal is to foster a corporate culture and organizational structure that facilitates exceptional service delivery.

Corporate Brand Refresh

The County successfully adopted a new corporate logo and tag line as the centre-piece to a rebranding effort that over 2014 will encompass all aspects of the County's communications, public imaging, activities and interactions with community partners and residents. This includes new signage for buildings, properties and roads, county vehicles, tourist way finding and community identification. It is a large task that will be implemented over a few years and sustained incrementally over the long-term.

Implementation of Accessibility Standards

Work continued across the organization in 2013 to entrench Accessibility standards into the operations of the corporation and ensure compliance with Provincial legislation. A new corporate focus is being brought to bear on this mandatory work, made possible through the addition of a part-time Corporate Accessibility Coordinator. A key milestone in 2013 was the review and strengthening of the Accessibility Advisory Committee structure and processes. In addition, accessible templates were introduced into all communication vehicles used – reports, memos, website, media releases, etc. With the Coordinator's continued energy and the committee's guidance Grey County is fulfilling its obligations under Provincial legislation.

This is an area that will require additional focus in future. Consideration will be given in 2014 to service delivery options that will better serve the combined needs of local municipalities and the county organization.

Program Reviews

An important part of the strategic management framework adopted by the County is the periodic review of departments and divisions within the corporation. It is sound business practice to review from time to time how departments are organized and services delivery. In 2013 the Housing Department was reviewed and recommendations arising from that study will form the basis of an implementation plan in 2014/15. Resources are earmarked in 2014 to assist in this implementation. In addition, an allocation has been set aside in 2014 to assist in creating a road map or strategy for the County's Communications function.

Corporate Asset Naming Convention

County Council asked that a policy be developed to guide decision-making about naming and renaming county assets like buildings, roads, etc. The issue arose mid-year in response to a road naming request, and a new policy was approved in Q4 2013.

Workplace Wellness Program

Workplace wellness programs aim to promote health, prevent disease, and reduce injuries by making it easier to enjoy healthy lifestyle behaviors in the workplace. County employees spend half of their waking hours at work and eat at least one of their daily meals while at work. This provides what the American College of Preventive Medicine calls a "valuable, high-yield environment for health promotion initiatives". Enlightened employers have realized the benefits of workplace wellness programs through lower healthcare costs, decreased absenteeism, workers' compensation savings, and the enhanced productivity that result from having a healthier workforce.

The County is already doing a number of things to support and encourage healthy living through a variety of policies, procedures and actions. Many of these tend to be ad hoc in nature or not evenly applied across the organization. The idea behind this initiative is to create more of a consistent corporate policy approach to work place wellness.

This is the only action item on the Corporate Plan that has not been initiated on the time line originally intended. In hindsight and in fairness to the number of strategic initiatives underway in the organization, the original timeframe was perhaps overly ambitious. Given the press of initiatives underway at this time, it is recommended that this matter be considered for action in 2015.

Recommended Next Steps

The start of a new year, with the installation of a new County Warden, is an excellent time to review the progress being made on the organization's strategic objectives and to make any necessary adjustments in strategic focus, work plans, intended approaches and project timelines.

There is much on the corporate plate for 2014, so there is limited capacity in the organization to take on new initiatives until some of the current projects are wrapped up or a change in direction is directed by Council. That said, the following adjustments or additions to the corporate plan are recommended:

County Library Review – A new initiative started in Q4 2013 to explore the merits of creating a county wide library system. This will be reported out to committee and Council in Q1 2014

Municipal Grants Policy – A new initiative requested by Council to create a policy for considering requests from community groups for financial assistance

Work Place Wellness Strategy – Extending the start date of this initiative to 2015.

Tourism Destination Development Strategy Update – Start in Q2 2015

Newcomer Attraction and Retention Strategy – Start in in 2015

WOWC Regional Broadband Network – Next stage of the review process – development of business plan, organizational structure and Building Canada Fund application in 2014

Administration Space Needs Planning – Extend timeline of project planning phase to 2015, recognizing that project construction phase if approved would not be finalized until 2017/18 at the earliest.

Rural Stewardship Program – Extend completion date to Q3 2014.

Review of Assisted Transportation Options – Extend completion date to Q4 2015.

Link to Strategic Goals / Priorities

Action 6.1

Update all departmental work/operating plans to align with this Strategic Plan and identify specific initiatives and budget implications over a multi- year period (three years for operating and ten years for capital).

Appended to this report is a copy of the Corporate Operating Plan Q4 2013 Update

Respectfully submitted,

Lance Thurston, Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment: Corporate Operating Plan 2013-2015, Q4 2013 Update