



Committee Minutes

Hanover-Owen Sound Task Force

June 18, 2021 – 1:30 pm

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 Milne, Desai and McQueen; and Warden Hicks

Staff

Present: Kim Wingrove, CAO, Randy Scherzer, Director of Planning, Anne Marie Shaw, Director of Housing, Barb Fedy, Director of Social Services, Scott Taylor, Senior Planner, Stephanie Lacey-Avon, Intermediate Planner, Steve Furness, Manager, Economic Development, Heather Morrison, Clerk, Brian Tocheri, Hanover CAO and Tim Simmonds, Owen Sound CAO

Call to Order

Chair O’Leary called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm.

Declaration of Interest

There was none.

Background Information

Randy Scherzer provided an update of the Recommendations and Opportunities document related to the meetings held through this Task Force and the stakeholder input and engagement from each previous meeting. He noted that this document assisted in forming the draft opportunities presentation.

Mr. Scherzer spoke to questions arising from the previous meetings.

Hanover-Owen Sound Task Force Summary Presentation

Randy Scherzer led the presentation which provided a summary of the main themes discussed during the stakeholder engagements with the Task Force between

September 18, 2020 and February 19, 2021. Each theme was reviewed, and the opportunities outlined. Mr. Scherzer noted that priorities and actions will need to be discussed following the presentation. The actions included in the implementation plan may involve County and municipal staff as well as stakeholder engagement groups. It is hoped that the actions support a proactive plan rather than focus on a reactive plan.

Mr. Scherzer noted that due to pandemic restrictions, the Owen Sound Tour was cancelled but looked to the Task Force members for direction on rescheduling. Members noted they felt a tour of Owen Sound would be beneficial to further promote understanding of certain areas of concern and opportunities. Staff will work with Owen Sound staff to schedule a tour.

Housing Opportunities

Mr. Scherzer noted that the Affordable Housing Task Force has created a Housing Action Plan which is being implemented by Grey County and focuses on several initiatives including an affordable housing fund, housing land bank and rent supplement programs among others. He noted that other opportunities discussed include: staying connected with tenants to understand their needs through a variety of means, identify grant opportunities and other funding resources, complete educational programs, continue to work with landlords and developers, and look for ongoing opportunities to engage with local indigenous populations. The creation of a Homeless Response Table serving all Grey County was also identified as an opportunity.

Questions from members related to housing opportunities followed including an update on the Community Improvement Plans (CIP). It was noted that affordable housing is a priority area in many municipalities under the CIP. Anne Marie Shaw also noted that housing and homelessness is part of the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan. It was noted that lack of available lands is a contributing factor in Hanover for the development of housing.

The Task Force identified the implementation of the Housing Action Plan, land supply issues relative to housing shortages and short-term and transitional housing opportunities as key priorities to be considered for the final report.

Poverty and Community Safety and Wellbeing Opportunities

Mr. Scherzer noted a strong overall theme throughout the discussions with the Task Force and community partners was the importance of providing safe and affordable housing. He highlighted the need for continued support for community service providers to enhance planning and resources through the Bruce Grey Data and Information Sharing Collaborative (BGDISC). Staff also noted that the first report of the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan (CSWP) has recently been released and the implementation

phase of the Plan is underway and the important of aligning the final report with the recommendations and opportunities identified through the CSWP.

Mental Health and Addiction Opportunities

Grey County Paramedic Services continues to work in collaboration with Grey Bruce Health Services on the newly adopted Rapid Access Addiction Medicine (RAAM) Protocol as well as the Mobile Mental Health Urgent Response Team run by the local Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). Another opportunity discussed previously was to map out existing mental health and addiction services within the County and work to identify gaps in these services for improvements. There continues to be support for the Grey Bruce Health Services to secure funding for additional pediatric mental health beds. Another opportunity is to identify resource sharing opportunities to support not-for-profit programs for service delivery. The establishment of an electronic donation program for phones, computers etc. was also noted.

Task Force members noted that addictions are a key priority in several municipalities. The identification of a long-term solution is necessary, and a recent example in Hanover will assist in shedding light on the gaps in services.

Social Services

Mr. Scherzer spoke to the need to enhance recruitment and public awareness for registered early childhood educators and training opportunities. This sector continues to struggle to find sufficient staffing for available childcare spaces. There is ongoing support for food literacy programs as well as the creation of social service community hubs. The viability of a living wage or guaranteed income was also highlighted. Ms. Fedy noted that Grey and Bruce are working together to build different programs to assist in the recruitment of ECEs. Presentations at local municipalities related to food security are currently occurring.

Task Force members noted the benefit of social services community hubs in various areas within the County and the bringing together of various community partners for the provision of services was important.

Labour and Employment Opportunities

Staff noted there is a need to build employer capacity to attract and retain staff. There are opportunities to identify employer resources, including the local immigration partnership, that might be helpful in attracting employees to a particular employer. There needs to be a focused effort on business retention and an understanding of where people are moving from and how those patterns can assist in employee attraction and retention. It was noted that transit, affordable childcare, and education were key factors in increased levels of employee retention. Working with local school boards and

Georgian College to support students in the workforce and with training opportunities was also highlighted.

Members noted the important link between employment and transportation availability.

Youth and Senior Support Opportunities

Highlighted within the category was the need for more local mental health and addiction services for all ages. Transportation is a key piece to allowing both youth and seniors to connect with others whether it is for social, medical, recreational, educational reasons or otherwise. Enhancing data-sharing and recreational opportunities through various community partners was highlighted. Staff spoke to the Age Friendly Community Strategy and Action Plan currently underway which will also help to inform future actions items to ensure that our communities throughout Grey County are age-friendly for all age groups.

Policing Opportunities

The court security funding model for the Superior Court in Owen Sound was highlighted as an area for review. The ability to triage service calls to police depending on the call type (mental health versus other emergency calls) as well as enhancing the Mobile Mental Health Addictions Response Team were two key areas emphasized during discussions with police services. The Crime Severity rates were discussed relative to other jurisdictions and options to share best practices. An emphasis on preventative care was noted as an opportunity and a potential focus for future budget discussions.

Planning and Development Opportunities

Mr. Scherzer spoke to the exploration of opportunities to better support and raise awareness surrounding the need for affordable and attainable housing including the establishment of a land bank and an official plan policy review to support affordable and attainable housing. He noted that several studies including the Growth Management Study Update, Climate Change Action Plan and Age Friendly Community Strategy are currently underway. These studies will assist in providing information related to the County's growth to better balance local housing needs. A review of the existing County planning framework is also underway to look for opportunities to streamline service delivery where possible. Encouraging active transportation within the County was also highlighted.

Transportation Opportunities

Transportation was highlighted as a high priority as it is a building block for so many other services and opportunities throughout the County. Opportunities to look at connecting with not-for-profit programs, public transit services and identifying the gaps

in-between and resource sharing were discussed. Alternative service delivery models and working with employers and students to meet their needs was also identified as an area to explore. Creating more awareness of public transit opportunities and refining routes and schedules to work with employers and employees was highlighted.

Hanover and Owen Sound Unique Challenges and Opportunities

Mr. Scherzer spoke to specific challenges within each urban area. He noted that within Hanover there is a shortage of land to accommodate growth. The Town is continuing to work with neighbouring municipalities on possible solutions.

Within Owen Sound, Court security costs were identified as something strictly unique to Owen Sound who has the Superior Court located within its boundaries.

Within both urban areas is a concentration of service and treatment facilities as the population is more concentrated in these areas. The opportunities and impacts of non-resident fees were also touched on.

Next Steps

Mr. Scherzer provided an outline of the proposed final report framework including background information, high level reviews of each theme, data summaries and key findings, identifying next steps, prioritization of action items and finally to define a proposed workplan.

Mr. Scherzer highlighted the next steps for the Task Force. Specifically, they focus on:

- Finalizing the draft report in partnership with Owen Sound and Hanover staff and community partners
- Sharing the draft report with staff and community partners for input and comment
- Sharing the draft report with the Hanover-Owen Sound Task Force for comment
- Final presentation of findings to Committee of the Whole
- Implementation of workplan in partnership with municipalities and community partners.

Staff hope to bring back the draft report in the Fall, 2021.

General discussion then took place on identifying key priorities for staff to focus on in the final report. Task Force members spoke about the potential for provincial and federal responsibilities and opportunities for financial supports. CAO Wingrove noted that requests to other levels of government must be specific on the needs and the availability of resources for the implementations and a clear identification on where the gaps lie. The County will try to take advantage of government funding programs

available. Housing and mental health and addictions were identified as the two main priorities for the final report to focus on.

Warden Hicks acknowledged the work of staff and community partners for this Task Force in outlining the themes and information that will be used to draft a final report. It was also noted that when the final report comes forward to County Council, that it provides information, opportunities and a framework that will support work in all of the municipalities in Grey County.

Specific questions related to housing demographics followed. Anne Marie Shaw provided an overview and noted that those who are ready for employment receive supports from Ontario Works and other community partner supports. Barb Fedy noted that Ontario Works is moving to life stabilization processes and wrap-around services rather than a focus on income supports. Community Service Workers offer connections between tenants and community support services in the area. There is very close collaboration between Housing and Social Services supports.

Other Business

Staff will work with Owen Sound to schedule a tour.

Next Meeting Dates

Fall 2021

On motion by Councillors Milne and McQueen the meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm.

Brian O'Leary, Chair