



Committee Minutes

Economic Development Advisory Committee April 7, 2016 – 7:30 AM

The Economic Development Advisory Committee met on the above date at Grey County Administration Building with the following members in attendance:

Present: Warden Barfoot; Ashley Chapman; Councillor Clumpus; Brian Davenport; Karen Ferri; Don Lewis; Marion Lougas; and Councillor McQueen

Regrets: Lance Thurston, Lynda Bumstead

Staff Present: Bryan Plumstead, Manager of Economic Development and Tourism; Philly Markowitz, Economic Development Officer; Kim Wingrove, Chief Administrative Officer; Sharon Vokes, County Clerk/Director of Council Services; Geoff Hogan, Director of Information Technology; Ashleigh Weeden, Project Lead, Connected County Initiative; and Mary Jane Hills, Recording Secretary

Call to Order

Chair Lewis called the meeting to order at 7:30 AM.

Adoption of the Agenda

Moved by: Councillor McQueen Seconded by: Brian Davenport

THAT the Economic Development Advisory Committee agenda dated April 7, 2016 be adopted as presented.

Carried

Declaration of Pecuniary Interest

There was none.

Business Arising from the Minutes

Minutes of the Economic Development Advisory Committee dated December 11, 2015

These minutes are for information only as they were adopted by Grey County Council on February 2, 2016.

Workforce Development Update

Gemma Mendez-Smith of Four County Labour Market Planning Board engaged the group in discussions surrounding the results of the recently completed Employer One Survey. The goal of the survey is to see employer hiring trends and make decisions based on needs identified. Grey County businesses were well represented with double the number of completed surveys over the previous year. Overall there were few changes in the findings from the previous year, indicating that it is important to hear what is being said and to act on those needs.

It was discussed that self-employed and family businesses do not usually respond to the survey as they do not have answers to provide relating to hiring. A different method is needed to reach these employment groups for feedback.

Grey County responses showed that 68% of those surveyed hired staff in 2015; of those 44% had hard to fill positions. 55% of survey respondents plan to hire staff in 2016. It was discussed that many health care positions are part time, temporary or contract positions without benefits and that makes it hard to attract people to those jobs. For continued community success and vitality, the County needs to consider how it can attract the workforce needed to fill the available jobs. Grey County has the third oldest population in the province.

Recruitment is undertaken first by word of mouth, then by use of online job boards, then with newspaper postings.

Of employees who left jobs in 2015, 45% were quits, 20% were temporary layoffs, and 14% were retirements. This is a problem for larger companies trying to fill jobs. Signs are pointing towards difficulties with new workers hired right out of high school who are lacking in social and team building skills. An alarming number of new hires simply walk away from jobs without providing feedback as to why. Social and team building skills need to be taught prior to workforce entry.

The attributing costs of training can be factors as to whether or not training is offered by employers. This is especially true when specialized training is not offered locally. It should be known that Georgian College can tailor training to specific needs and has had success locally with this approach.

The pros and cons of apprenticeship training were discussed. After training is completed apprentices will often take work with other companies. When this happens the time and expense taken by the sponsor company to train is not recaptured. To make this training avenue more manageable by small businesses, shared apprenticeships between two companies could be considered.

For jobs identified in the survey as hard to fill, reasons given were not enough applicants, applicants not meeting qualifications, and applicants not meeting work experience.

The survey shows that the labour market is shrinking locally as there were 6,000 fewer employees in Grey, Bruce, Simcoe, and Perth since 2014. Also a decline in the participation rate (those who are no longer looking for work between 15 and 65) was identified. It is important to re-engage this group and have them return to the work force.

Locally 63% of job postings will be found on corporate websites. Only 1% of jobs are posted through placement agencies. Some employers hire through Indeed.ca and those using this service are happy with it.

The highest number of postings in 2015 in Grey County was for registered and psychiatric nurses, followed by retail/wholesale managers. Healthcare jobs are likely at the top of the posting list because of the tendency for these jobs to be part time, resulting in higher turnover when employees search for full time employment or juggle two or more part time jobs to make up a 40 hour work week.

The difficulties of finding child care must be addressed. Employees working shift work find it even more difficult to get child care as these jobs often run on 24 hour shifts. Recent legislated Ontario government changes to child care have made this problem worse by indirectly causing daycare centres to close. This area of concern for young working parents is an area where the County could look into finding solutions.

Transportation is another item that affects a worker's ability to get to and from work in rural areas. Carpooling appears to be an answer, but if the driver is on vacation or sick, it affects the attendance of others who rides with them. This may also be an area where the County could look into answers to an ongoing problem.

Other topics were discussed including the need for everyone entering the workforce to understand the need for skills in the workplace, the consequences

of failure, and the need for employees to be reliable, and on time. This should be taught in school and at home, however it is not happening. It was also noted that university graduates are enrolling in colleges to get hands on skills.

A different approach to attracting youth to our area would be to reach out to urban populations and promote Grey County as a place to learn and mature.

Connected County – AG 4.0

Geoff Hogan introduced Ashleigh Weeden, the Project Lead for Grey County's Connected County Initiative.

Ashleigh discussed the need to attract young, knowledgeable, technically savvy workers to Grey County and some initiatives that would help with that.

Ashleigh and Philly Markowitz have identified a new initiative that will be developed this year - AG 4.0: The Next Big Thing. This program will encourage people in the agriculture, local food, and technology industries to leverage the digital economy to build innovative businesses and produce substantial financial increases for local gross domestic product. Some aspects of the program could include highlighting new advantages for use of sensors, robotics, distribution/logistics, radio frequency tracking, etc. The sky is the limit. The plan is for agriculture and food producers to work with technological and creative entrepreneurs allowing needs to be brought forward, ideas to blossom, and solutions to be created. AG 4.0 will bring in new innovative ideas and will open business people's minds to the opportunities that lay ahead.

An event to introduce this program to the business community will take place on November 2 and 3 at the Meaford Hall. This will include a full day summit that will inspire and engage attendees, have them experience innovations, and participate in a farm FAM (familiarization) tour that will be interactive, and will allow for exploration and inspiration. For further information go to Grey.ca/smart

AG 4.0 will leverage assets that already exist in Grey County. Bring the idea and let business see the benefits.

Staff Update

Bryan Plumstead provided a handout titled Economic Development Update and due to the time constraints of this meeting asked committee members to review the document and contact him with any questions they may arise.

Grey County is hosting a breakfast meeting tomorrow morning in Walter's Falls for area business people to network, interact and learn insights from Saj Jamal, Director of Marketing at Communitel in Waterloo. Saj will speak about his Company's exciting work and innovations. A good turnout is expected.

Next Meeting Dates

The next meeting will be held on June 23 at 7:30 a.m. to discuss business readiness and investment readiness. Meetings will follow in September and November.

On motion by Councillor McQueen, the meeting adjourned at 9:58 AM.

Don Lewis, Chair