

To:	Warden Hicks and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	April 25, 2019
Subject / Report No:	Addendum to PDR-CW-13-19
Title:	Climate Change Action Plan Student Report
Prepared by:	Scott Taylor
Reviewed by:	Randy Scherzer
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	All Municipalities in Grey County
Status:	Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented as per Resolution CW98-19;

Recommendation

1. That Addendum to Report PDR-CW-13-19 be received for information;
2. That the University of Guelph student report titled 'Climate-Conscious Grey: Developing a Climate Change Action Plan for Grey County, Ontario' be received;
3. That staff incorporate recommendations from the University of Guelph student report, along with the feedback received from County Council, to develop a terms of reference for a Grey County climate change action plan, and prepare the requisite request for proposal document to initiate development of the plan.

Executive Summary

The County partnered with students from University of Guelph Masters of Rural Planning and Development program, who produced a report titled 'Climate-Conscious Grey: Developing a Climate Change Action Plan for Grey County, Ontario' for the County. This study was completed as part of the students' course work for their Masters of Rural Planning and Development program, and will benefit the County and member municipalities. The study provided examples of other municipal climate change plans, as well as high level policy recommendations to mitigate climate change, as well as strategies for operational improvements that could help lower the County's impact. Based on this report, staff are seeking feedback from Council, so that the County can move forward to develop a climate change action plan, which will involve public and stakeholder consultation.

Background and Discussion

County Planning staff partnered with Alexa-Rae Valente, Louis Helps, and Gursewak Singh, students from University of Guelph Masters of Rural Planning and Development program, who authored the 'Climate-Conscious Grey: Developing a Climate Change Action Plan for Grey County, Ontario' study for the County. A link to the student's report has been included in the Attachments section of this report. Members of the student team presented a summary of their research to Committee of the Whole on April 11, 2019.

The students' report provided;

- a jurisdictional scan of other municipal approaches to combat climate change, including a SWOT (Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Threats) analysis on these plans, and
- a survey of select Grey County and member municipal staff to get their opinions on policy or operational improvements that could be considered for a future climate change action plan.

Section 7 of the students' report provides recommendations to the County on; (1) planning policy adjustments, and (2) operational improvements to lower Grey County's greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce our overall impact. Some highlights of these categories include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Planning Policy Adjustments

- setting minimum density thresholds for new greenfield development within settlement areas,
- incentivizing infill developments within settlement areas,
- implementing the recommendations of the County's natural heritage systems study, Green in Grey, through Recolour Grey,
- developing a scoring system to evaluate new development proposals to evaluate several criteria including density, walkability, environmental protection, climate change preparedness, etc.
- limiting the number of new residential lots created outside of settlement areas, except where there's a demonstrated need, or where such lots are associated with resource-based recreational uses, and
- supplementing the County's policies with community specific policies in municipal official plans.

2. Operational Improvements

- tracking monthly energy consumption in government buildings,
- creating facility and equipment retrofit programs,
- implementing an anti-idling policy for government and private vehicles,
- upgrading municipal lighting to LED (light emitting diodes),
- allowing tele-commuting for employees, where feasible,
- continuing to support SWIFT (Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology) and broadband expansion,
- going 'paper-less' as much as possible, including digital forms and applications where feasible,
- continuing the paved shoulder program implemented by Transportation Services,

- considering a 2:1 tree replacement program for all trees removed from government property,
- purchasing electric vehicles over gas-powered vehicles where possible, and
- implementing inter-community public transit.

Next Steps

Now that this student project is complete the County can build on key pieces from their work, to develop a more robust 'made-in-Grey' climate change action plan. The goal of the climate change action plan is to create an actionable list of measures the County can undertake to better prepare for and mitigate climate change impacts.

As highlighted in the student report the creation of a meaningful climate change action plan can be an extensive and time-consuming process. Some of the reports highlighted in the students' report had a four year gestation period to develop the plans. County staff hope to work with external partners, including municipalities, conservation authorities, the Health Unit, and others to build off work and data that is already being done in our area. Even with utilizing these external talents, this project may not be able to be completed in 2019, although staff intend to commence the project as soon as possible. Similar to the recommendations in the report, the County can consider both policy and operational improvements to ensure the County is 'leading by example' when it comes to climate change mitigation and preparedness.

Depending on direction from Council, the County's climate change action plan could include components of the following;

1. establishing a baseline measurement of the County's current greenhouse gas emissions,
2. setting targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions over the next 20 years (or any other desired timeframe),
3. on-going monitoring and reporting of the County's emission levels,
4. providing recommendations for planning policy changes in the County's Official Plan, beyond what's included in the County's new Recolour Grey Official Plan,
5. creating a new development scoring system to evaluate the efficiency and climate change preparedness of new development proposals,
6. creating mapping and analyzing existing mapping to better determine which areas of the County may be more susceptible to climate change impacts (e.g. updating hazard, soils mapping, woodland cover, etc.),
7. exploring operational improvements to the services the County provides (e.g. moving to more paperless operations, offering additional e-service delivery, considering employee telecommuting where feasible, etc.),
8. providing recommendations for building and infrastructure improvements or design standards for County owned facilities and infrastructure (e.g. energy efficiency upgrades in lighting, windows, or road / paved shoulder improvements, etc.),
9. undertaking robust public and stakeholder consultation (including municipalities, conservation authorities, health unit, and key sector representatives),
10. building partnerships with other levels of government or stakeholders for implementing climate change mitigation or preparedness strategies,
11. continuing to support opportunities for broadband expansion through SWIFT and other

local initiatives, and
12. supporting transit initiatives, including inter-community public transit.

A number of the above items can be addressed 'in-house', or with partners (e.g. conservation authorities and municipalities). However, some of the items on the list may require a consultant or further specialized expertise that the County does not currently have on staff (e.g. items 1, 2, 6, and 8). Other items such as 10 – 12 will require partnerships with external stakeholders. Some of these items may also require a longer timeframe and larger budget to develop the action plan (e.g. item 6 has the potential to grow beyond the scope of this project).

One of the keys to this project will be establishing our current benchmark and targets for reductions, so that we have something to measure success or failure against. Staff recommend that items 1 – 3 above will be crucial to include in the climate change action plan.

Other measures which may help lessen our collective climate change impacts will also aid in the County achieving other strategic goals, including but not limited to;

- healthy communities which are affordable, walkable, make efficient use of land, etc.
- providing excellence in government service delivery,
- reducing long-term energy costs,
- attracting and retaining a qualified labour force,
- asset management.

Where data is already being collected, or where groups are already undertaking work, the County does not want to duplicate efforts. Rather the County would seek to work with that information, rather than replicating it. For example, where conservation authorities are already monitoring indicators through their watershed report cards, there's little sense in the County monitoring those same factors.

At this stage staff are requesting feedback from Council on what to include in the County's climate change action plan. We will utilize this feedback, alongside the student report, to draft a terms of reference for this project, which will then inform the request for proposal to be issued. Once the project has commenced, staff will be seeking further Council direction as part of the public consultation process.

Staff will also explore any funding or grant opportunities which could apply to this project, prior to finalizing a request for proposals.

Legal and Legislated Requirements

There are no legal or legislative considerations at this time.

Financial and Resource Implications

The work completed by the student consulting team was without cost to the County, and done as part of the coursework for their master's degree. County staff are grateful to the students' efforts in this regard and would note that having to pay a consultant to complete a similar study would likely cost between \$25,000 - \$35,000.

The County currently has \$50,000 allocated in the 2019 budget for the preparation of a climate change action plan. Depending on the direction provided from Council, this project will likely involve a hybrid of in-house staff work, and hiring a consultant, through a request for proposals process. This project could also extend beyond 2019, and could require additional work to be completed in 2020. Should the proposed climate change action plan significantly exceed the budget allocated to this project, a further report will be prepared outlining options for Council's consideration.

Relevant Consultation

Internal: Planning, Transportation Services, Housing, Long Term Care, Information Technology, Paramedic Services, Tourism, Grey Roots, Finance, Corporate Services, and Economic Development staff were consulted as part of this study. These same County departments will be consulted as part of the County's eventual Climate Change Action Plan.

External: Municipal staff were consulted as part of the Student Project, and further municipal and public consultation will be required as part of the County's eventual Climate Change Action Plan. Other external partners to consult on this project may include; the Conservation Authorities within Grey, the Grey Bruce Health Unit, the Province, the Niagara Escarpment Commission, industry sectors, and conservation groups.

Appendices and Attachments

[Climate-Conscious Grey: Developing a Climate Change Action Plan for Grey County, Ontario](#)