



Committee Minutes

Affordable Housing Task Force March 3, 2020 – 1:30 AM

The Affordable Housing Task Force met on the above date at the County Administration Building with the following members in attendance:

Present: Warden Paul McQueen; Councillors Keaveney, Burley, O’Leary and Hicks.

Regrets: Councillor Soever

Staff

Present: Kim Wingrove, Chief Administrative Officer; Anne Marie Shaw, Director of Housing; Randy Scherzer, Director of Planning; Kevin Weppler, Director of Corporate Services; Savanna Myers, Director of Economic Development, Tourism and Culture; Scott Taylor, Senior Planner; Heather Morrison, Clerk and Tara Warder, Deputy Clerk/Legislative Coordinator

Call to Order

Clerk Heather Morrison called the meeting to order.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

The Clerk called for nominations for Chair of the Affordable Housing Task Force.

AF01-20 Moved by: Councillor O’Leary Seconded by: Councillor Burley

That Councillor Hicks be nominated as Chair of the Affordable Housing Task Force.

Councillor Burley moved nominations close.

Councillor Hicks accepted the role of Chair.

The Clerk called for nominations for Vice Chair of the Affordable Housing Task Force.

AF02-20 Moved by: Warden McQueen Seconded by: Councillor O’Leary

That Councillor Burley be nominated as Vice Chair of the Affordable Housing Task Force.

Councillor O'Leary moved nominations close.

Councillor Burley accepted the position of Vice Chair.

Councillor Hicks then assumed the Chair.

Declaration of Interest

There was none.

Reports

PDR-AF-01-20 Housing Options and Programs Report

Scott Taylor introduced the above report. The report contains a summary of what the County is doing so far in terms of housing options and programs.

Mr. Taylor first spoke to the Recolour Grey Official Plan Review process, noting that two main issues arose out of the consultations: Housing and Transportation. There are several policies in the official plan which aim to address these items. Since Recolour Grey was passed in 2019, there have been some changes to secondary units made by the Province that require changes to the Plan.

Measures may want to be taken to reduce restrictions on minimum unit size, and minimum lot sizes. County staff are willing to work with local staff to look at best practices to move forward. The more the requirements can be streamlined, the easier it will be for builders and residents.

Discussion occurred on why secondary units are not taking off as quickly as expected. It was noted that more partnership work needs to be done with the member municipalities. In terms of rural development within hamlets and small villages, new housing development is supported, and opportunities exist across rural areas on existing lots where secondary suites can be added. Staff have heard mixed results across the County, with some municipalities seeing uptake on secondary suites and others, less so.

The Committee noted that there is a need for the Province to do more and offer more of an incentive to young people to assist in buying homes. It was further noted that the consideration of renting a home perhaps has not been given enough consideration.

Discussion occurred on the opportunity to create a type of matching system within communities, where people can find seniors in communities that have extra space available in their home and rent space from them.

Savanna Myers then spoke to the Community Improvement Program. It is a template program that must be passed at the local level. It was noted that municipalities can't participate in any of the incentives until it's passed by the local municipality. There have been several affordable and attainable housing items addressed and when all the Plans are in place, likely by the end of 2020, municipalities can start moving forward with the plan and support the development.

Randy Scherzer spoke to the opportunity for surplus land development and the need to have some control over the prices of units in order to keep new housing within an attainable price range. In order to encourage more rental housing, an incentive needs to exist. The possibility of purchasing land and partnering with local municipalities to provide surplus lands for attainable housing development was discussed.

It is important not to create a situation where local municipalities are competing against one another and crucial to reach out to the building and development community in order to prevent competition in getting tradespeople and builders.

Anne Marie Shaw then addressed the Task Force on the Housing and Homelessness Plan Review which looks at how to move forward with housing for people in lower income brackets. There is a need for more affordable housing and subsidies. Ms. Shaw spoke to the additional funding and units that have been received from the Province.

There is a need to look at capacity of builders to manage rental buildings once they are constructed.

Randy Scherzer then spoke to development charges and deferral agreements.

It was noted that the County does not have a development charge deferral policy for rental housing. Staff are working on this and will be bringing it to Council for consideration.

Mr. Scherzer noted that there have been recent changes to the Development Charges Act. Mr. Scherzer outlined that changes respecting requirements for the deferral of development charge payments for rental and institutional developments, as well as non-profit residential developments.

Mr. Scherzer spoke to the proposed changes staff are looking at in the development charges by-law update.

There is value in secondary suites and value in promoting them. They create rental opportunities and allow people to enter the housing market earlier, and the aging population can perhaps remain in their home longer. Discussions with employers across the region could explore whether there are partnership opportunities to develop employee housing.

One other program that staff would like to investigate would be a tenant and landlord matching program.

Another tool to consider that may not be as pertinent in Grey County at this time would be inclusionary zoning. This is a tool that allows a municipality to zone certain areas so that a certain percentage of housing is required to be affordable. Inclusionary zoning is administratively heavy at this stage and appears to be geared to larger high-growth municipalities. As the tool starts to evolve, it could be applicable in Grey County.

There is a certain demographic that is over housed, but without adequate housing supply and choice they don't move. Additional rental and condo units could encourage people to move to smaller more manageable homes which would free up larger homes for growing families.

Residential development in rural areas can lead to conflicts with aggregate operations as well as between farm and non-farm uses. Rural areas may not be the ideal location for affordable housing due to the the potential for higher lifestyle costs, such as the costs to commute and to own a vehicle if other modes of transportation aren't available.

Mr. Taylor then spoke to the advantages and efficiencies of more intensive development as opposed to development in rural areas when it comes to the long-term carrying costs of infrastructure.

Discussion occurred on the next steps for the Task Force.

AF03-20 Moved by: Councillor Burley Seconded by: Warden McQueen

That Report PDR-AF-01-20 be received for information purposes; and

That the Report be shared with member municipalities in Grey County for their information.

Carried

Employer Needs and Challenges

Savanna Myers spoke to employer needs and challenges. There are businesses reducing hours, putting expansion plans on hold and even shutting down because they

are not able to find workers. It was noted that a healthy rental supply is key to assisting with increasing the labour pool and a crucial first step. Employers are stressing the need for this, as well as sufficient entry level, starter homes. The manufacturing sector is also struggling with the labour pool, as there are many transportation deterrents for those working in that sector as well, including high insurance costs and the licensing process that are preventing people from being able to get to their job.

Ms. Myers then reviewed information provided at the Economic Development and Planning Advisory Committee meeting and shared statistics surrounding the Grey County labour force and participation rates, as well as statistics around movers and commuters. To summarize, all labour challenges are very much tied to housing.

There was a question as to whether the Province been involved in conversations about their assets (vacant schools) and surplus lands.

Review Task Force Mandate

This item will be included on the next agenda.

Meeting Schedule

Meetings will be scheduled on the third Tuesday of each month at 1:30 PM.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Next Meeting Dates

Tuesday, April 21, 2020 at the Grey County Administration Building.

On motion by Councillors Burley and Keaveney, the meeting adjourned at 3:39 PM.

Selwyn Hicks, Chair