

To:	Warden Halliday and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	November 22, 2018
Subject / Report No:	PDR-CW-42-18
Title:	Regional Agricultural Learning and Demonstration Site – Potential Partnership Opportunity with Owen Sound Agricultural Society and Chatsworth Agricultural Society
Prepared by:	Randy Scherzer
Reviewed by:	Kim Wingrove
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	Township of Georgian Bluffs, Township of Chatsworth and City of Owen Sound
Status:	Recommendation adopted by the Committee as presented as per Resolution <i>CW277-18</i> ; Endorsed by County Council on December 20, 2018 as per Resolution <i>CC05-19</i> .

Recommendation

1. That Report PDR-CW-42-18 be received which provides an overview of a potential partnership opportunity between Grey County and the Owen Sound Agricultural Society and Chatsworth Agricultural Society to create a Regional Agricultural Learning and Demonstration Site directly adjacent to Grey Roots; and
2. That support be provided in principle to explore this partnership opportunity further and to submit a Niagara Escarpment Plan Amendment application to the Niagara Escarpment Commission to seek permission for establishing a Regional Agricultural Learning and Demonstration Site adjacent to Grey Roots; and
3. That staff be directed to prepare a report for Council in 2019 which would include a proposed memorandum of understanding detailing the partnership with the Owen Sound and Chatsworth Agricultural Societies.

Executive Summary

The Owen Sound Agricultural Society and the Chatsworth Agricultural Society have approached the County about a potential partnership opportunity to create a Regional Agricultural Learning and Demonstration Site directly adjacent to Grey Roots. The potential synergies with having this site beside Grey Roots would allow Grey County residents, visitors and future generations to learn not only about Grey County's agricultural history, but to also learn about current agricultural practices. By locating next to Grey Roots, facilities and infrastructure can be shared such as buildings, parking areas, and the existing entranceway from Grey Road 18. In order to

consider this partnership opportunity, a Niagara Escarpment Plan Amendment is required to be approved by the Niagara Escarpment Commission to permit the establishment of a Regional Agricultural Learning and Demonstration Site on the subject lands. It is recommended that support be provided in principle to explore this partnership opportunity further and that staff be directed to assist the two Agricultural Societies with preparing the Niagara Escarpment Plan Amendment application. A draft memorandum of understanding would be prepared and presented to Council in 2019 which would provide further detail about the partnership with the two Agricultural Societies.

Background and Discussion

The Owen Sound Agricultural Society and the Chatsworth Agricultural Society have approached the County about a potential partnership opportunity to create a Regional Agricultural Learning and Demonstration Site directly adjacent to Grey Roots. The Regional Agricultural Learning and Demonstration Site could be used for residents and visitors to learn about the importance of agriculture, how food is grown, and where our food comes from. In addition to being an agricultural learning and demonstration site, the site would also be host to a regional fair as well as other agricultural associated events. The site would be directly west of Grey Roots and would be approximately 8.1 hectares (20 acres) in size (see Figure 1 – Location of Subject Lands).

Two buildings are proposed on the site, one building for office staff of the two Agricultural Societies which would contain staff washrooms plus a large room for displaying agricultural exhibits (See Figure 2 – Draft Concept Plan). A second large barn style structure would be used to temporarily house livestock during the regional fair and agricultural events. The barn style structure would also house educational displays and would be used for agricultural workshops and programs regarding current farming and food production. These structures would be constructed at the expense of the Agricultural Societies.

The site would also contain a track, and parts of the site would be used for temporary parking of vehicles during the regional fair and events. The site would also contain agricultural demonstration plots for educational purposes. The intent is to maintain the look and feel of the site as a farm/agricultural use. During the Regional Fair and other agriculturally related events, temporary tents and portable toilets would be used; however at least 80 to 85% of the time the site will look like a farm with agricultural demonstration plots (e.g. corn, wheat, etc.) and an interpretative treed pathway that would demonstrate various local tree species, including an apple orchard. The corn plot would be converted to a corn maze as an agri-tourism use on the site during the regional fair event.

Figure 1 – Location of Subject Lands



The focus of the Regional Fair would include cattle displays and competitions, homecraft competition and education, and educational displays of the County’s past and present agricultural way of life. Other events as part of the Regional Fair would include the traditional midway and games, tractor pulls, and a demolition derby. These uses are temporary uses and would only operate a maximum of 4 days per year and would be located on portions of the site to minimize any impacts to adjacent land uses. The treed interpretative path around the site will also help to provide a visual buffer to these temporary uses. The remainder of the year, the site will essentially have the look and feel of a farm/agricultural use.

There may be other agricultural events that are held on the site. Some of these will be in conjunction with some existing Grey Roots events especially where there is an agricultural element to the event, and other agricultural events will be specific to the site. These could include tractor pulls, fundraisers (e.g. barbeque and barn dance), Grown in Grey (educational two day event each spring with grade 5 students from local schools learning about agribusiness and agricultural commodities), hosting 4-H club meetings and workshops, Harvest for Hunger (one day fundraising event by providing a day at the farm experience). Some other events through partnering with Grey Roots could include antique car/truck/tractor displays, ‘art in the barn’ show to showcase local artists, meeting space for other agricultural organizations (4-H, Soil and Crop Associations, etc.), Steam Show with threshing and sawmill displays and wood processing demonstrations, and possibly some other farm machinery and farm animal events.

Figure 2 – Draft Concept Plan



Why this location?

The potential synergies with having this site beside Grey Roots would allow our residents, visitors and our future generations to learn not only about Grey County's agricultural history, but to also learn about current agricultural practices. Visitors to Grey Roots will also be able to learn about agriculture with a hands-on approach by seeing firsthand how crops are grown, seeing livestock up and close during the regional fair and events, and seeing farm practices in action. The site can also be used as a space to explore and discuss agricultural innovation through the use of new agricultural practices and technology.

By locating next to Grey Roots, facilities can be shared such as buildings, parking areas, and the existing entranceway from Grey Road 18. The proposed entrance to the site would be from the existing Grey Roots entrance off of Grey Road 18 and therefore a new entrance will not be required. During the regional fair and agricultural events, parking facilities can be shared between the two sites. Buildings and facilities that are located at Grey Roots can also be used during the regional fair and the agricultural events and vice versa.

A Niagara Escarpment Plan Amendment is required to be approved by the Niagara Escarpment Commission to permit the establishment of a Regional Agricultural Learning and Demonstration

Site on the subject lands. The subject lands are designated as Escarpment Rural Area in the Niagara Escarpment Plan. Section 1.5.1 of the Niagara Escarpment Plan outlines specific objectives as it relates to the Escarpment Rural Areas. Some of the permitted uses in the Escarpment Rural Area include agricultural uses, agricultural related uses and on-farm diversified uses, forest management and institutional uses, and accessory uses. The Regional Agricultural Learning and Demonstration Site fits well within the permitted uses identified above. Based on this site also being host to the regional fair and other agricultural events, a Niagara Escarpment Amendment is required as these uses are not explicitly permitted in the Escarpment Rural Area designation. However given the proximity to Grey Roots, and with the regional fair and agricultural events having agricultural elements associated with it, we believe that this site is in an ideal location.

County staff and representatives from the two Agricultural Societies met with Niagara Escarpment Commission to determine the application requirements associated with the Niagara Escarpment Plan Amendment application. The NEC staff indicated that a Planning Justification Report addressing the policies in the Niagara Escarpment Plan would be required to be submitted with the application. The Planning Report would also include traffic analysis information, visual impact analysis and justification for the potential loss of any agricultural lands as a result of the proposed use. County staff can prepare the information required to support the Niagara Escarpment Plan Amendment in support of this partnership.

The current owner of the subject lands has indicated that they are willing to donate the property to Grey County and the two Agricultural Societies to establish the Regional Agricultural Learning and Demonstration Site. The intent would be that the County would acquire the lands under Section 50(3)(c) of the *Planning Act* and hold the lands in trust for the Agricultural Societies. A memorandum of understanding would be prepared and presented to Council in 2019. The memorandum of understanding would detail the relationship of this partnership between the County and the two Agricultural Societies. The memorandum of understanding would also include a clause to indicate the lands would be held in trust for the Agricultural Societies and that the lands would be transferred to the Agricultural Societies at a later date. A separate agreement for any shared access/parking that will be used between the Agricultural Societies and Grey Roots would also be prepared.

It is recommended that support be provided in principle to explore this partnership opportunity further and that staff be directed to assist the two Agricultural Societies with preparing the Niagara Escarpment Plan Amendment application. A draft memorandum of understanding would be prepared and presented to Council in 2019 which would provide further detail about the partnership with the two Agricultural Societies.

Legal and Legislated Requirements

Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act

Niagara Escarpment Plan

Agricultural and Horticultural Organizations Act

Financial and Resource Implications

Based on the application requirements identified with the NEC staff, County staff can prepare the majority of the information required including the Planning Justification and the Traffic Analysis. The information can be prepared by existing staff and therefore would be prepared as in-kind support to this partnership. Any additional requirements for the application beyond what County staff can prepare would be prepared at the expense of the Agricultural Societies. The lands to be donated by the current owner can be acquired by the County under Section 50(3)(c) of the *Planning Act* and therefore a consent application is not required. A survey of the lands would be required. The partnership memorandum of understanding would be prepared and reviewed by Agreement Staff and the Director of Legal Services. Any additional costs with constructing the proposed buildings, preparing the site, etc. would be at the expense of the two Agricultural Societies.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal (Planning, Transportation Services, Grey Roots, Clerks, Chief Administrative Officer, Director of Legal Services)
- External (Niagara Escarpment Commission, Township of Georgian Bluffs, City of Owen Sound, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Owen Sound Agricultural Society and Chatsworth Agricultural Society)

Appendices and Attachments

None