

Southwold Economic Development Committee

Southwold Economic Development Committee

MINUTES

Wednesday, October 19, 2017
8:30 a.m., Council Chambers, Fingal

PRESENT: Chair: Deputy Mayor, Ian Chard
Voting Members: Councillor Peter North
Jack VanderKooy
Chris Meyer
Jim Carder
Valerie Cron
Non-Voting Members: Jeff Sheridan, Elgin Business Resource Centre
Kate Burns Gallagher, Elgin County
Guests: Ross Bugar, Southwold History Committee
Resource: Kim Grogan, Treasurer
Lisa VanderWallen, CAO (8:30-9:30)
ABSENT: Voting Members: Ernst Hoffsuemmer
Barry Harrison
Steve Bushell

1. Call to order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

2. Introductions

Ross Bugar, Southwold History Committee, was introduced.

3. Confirmation of Agenda

4. Approval of minutes from September 20, 2017 meeting

Moved by Jim – Seconded by Peter: Minutes from the meeting of September 20, 2017 were reviewed and approved.

CARRIED.

5. Business arising from those minutes.

a) **Welcome Package** - Lisa provided the Committee with a disclosure document that Developers could provide to new residents authorizing their permission, contact information and preferred contact method for a welcome package to be distributed. Welcome packages would also be made available at the municipal office as an initial point of contact for new residents.

Commercial Property Availability - Lisa provided the Committee with maps of areas within the Township and identified vacant properties with commercial zoning. Lisa explained the Official Plan review process and determination by the province of whether the Township's current plan includes enough land to support future growth and development. Kate provided that the Township had 13 vacant commercial properties. Kim explained the tax implications on vacant/excess commercial and industrial land and the impact of the elimination of the reduction program for classes beginning in 2018. The Committee discussed municipally owned properties with tenant vacancies and the need for on-site signage and marketing to identify commercial properties that are immediately available for occupancy. The potential to list with real estate was discussed. It was noted that the property owned by the Township at the southwest corner of Union Road and

Talbot Line was declared surplus by Council earlier in 2017. Kate advised that the County has a listing of all vacant commercial properties in the County of Elgin.

Moved by Peter – Seconded by Chris: *The Committee request staff develop a list of properties owned by the municipality that are available for immediate occupancy and recommend Council approve advertising of the spaces for lease.*

CARRIED.

- b) **Vacancy Program Elimination** - Kate reviewed the elimination of the vacancy program and County Council's decision to invest an additional \$80,000 into Elgin incentives as a result. All properties with vacant/excess assessment within the County of Elgin were provided notice of the program changes, the Elgin incentives program and dates for upcoming information sessions for vacant property owners.
- Welcome Packages** – Kate advised that she reached out to the former St Thomas Welcome Wagon proprietor to discuss the successes and struggles of the program. It was provided that the Home Builders Association will be offering welcome bags in the new year and that the Township could possibly contribute to packages for Southwold residents. The Home Builders Association is looking to expand their membership categories which may result in membership fee savings.
- Who Are You Online?** - Kate provided details on the Elgin County Conference Series seminar on October 25, 2017, "Who Are You Online?".
- Community Development Update** - Kate provided copies of West Elgin's Market Threshold Analysis and Resident Survey Report which provides data for businesses that could be supported within communities. The Committee supports the County continuing the community development plan process including the completion of a market threshold analysis for Southwold. Next steps would also include analysis of available space to accommodate business growth, visioning, and branding.
- c) **Business Survey** – Jeff discussed the survey to be distributed to businesses in Southwold by e-blast. The Committee requested that the survey be distributed to Council and Committee members as well.

6. New Business

- a) **Heritage Park - Ross Burgar** - Ross presented the Committee with a presentation on the History Committee's vision of expanding the Fingal Park on Union Road into a Heritage Park to support visitors to the area and increase usage and activity. A park plan would be developed and could include: historical signage, sculptures, history trail (could be expanded across the Township), iron fencing, benches, picnic tables, bathroom, walkways that could be used for chalk art, bike stand, fitness park/fitness trails, shelter area. There is no budget yet determined for the expansion which could be completed in phases. Valerie recognized the achievements of the History Committee and provincial recognition received from Communities in Bloom. Peter led discussions surrounding the importance of supporting projects that make significant economic impact in the Township and the difficulty of measuring the economic impact on projects of this nature.

Moved by Valerie – Seconded by Jim: *The Committee supports the History Committee's initiative of the Fingal Park expansion for a "Heritage Park" and encourage private funding be sourced for the project.*

CARRIED.

- b) 2017 Year to Date and 2018 Budget** - Kim provided details of year to date costs for Economic Development and noted that the largest fluctuation between budget and actual has resulted from promotional items underspent to date. Kim requested that the Committee provide suggestions for promotional items to purchase. The Committee suggested other projects for the unspent 2017 budget including a display cart for brochures and information to be placed in the Country Grocery (for a fee) and/or transferring the balance of unspent funds to reserve for 2018 projects. It was also suggested that funds could be used in 2018 towards the community development plan being prepared by the County. Nothing was decided. **The Committee will revisit the balance of funds available for 2017 at the next meeting.**

The Committee reviewed the 2017 Southwold By Tractor event.

Moved by Peter – Seconded by Chris: The Committee requests that Council approve the transfer of the net revenues of the 2017 Southwold By Tractor event of \$364.14 to the Economic Development Reserve for future Southwold by Tractor events.

CARRIED.

Kim provided the Committee with details of the Awareness Campaign budget and balance available for printing costs. Unspent funds could be transferred to reserve at the end of 2017 for future updates to the brochure and future printing costs with Council's approval.

The Committee discussed a number of items to be included in the 2018 budget:

Booth at Rosy Rhubarb	\$ 100
St Thomas Home Show	\$ 650
Home Builders Association Membership	\$ 950
Summer Student/Facebook support	\$2,000

The Committee decided not to enter the London Home Show.

The Committee will continue to discuss the 2018 budget at the next meeting.

To be considered and discussed at the next meeting:

Events-seminars? (host our own or support EBRC and County events)

-Business After 5?

-Business Appreciation Christmas Event?

Promotional items?

Other items?

Kim also asked, given past meeting discussions regarding the website, if the Committee was considering making a request to Council that the website be redesigned in 2018. No request was made.

7. Other Business

- The Committee revisited discussions surrounding recommended signage for available municipal space that took place earlier in the meeting as well as sign pollution in Elgin County.
- Next meeting will be held on November 22 at 8:30 am at the Municipal office.

Moved Valerie- Seconded Chris: Meeting adjournment at 11:10 a.m.

CARRIED.