

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, October 1, 2018

The Township of Rideau Lakes Economic Development Committee held a Regular Meeting on Tuesday, October 1, 2018 at the Municipal Office in Chantry, Ontario.

Acting Chair Arie Hoogenboom called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

1. ROLL CALL

The following committee members were in attendance: Mayor Ron Holman, Councillors Claire Gunnewiek, Arie Hoogenboom and Cathy Livingston; Public Representative Sharen Symondson; and Staff Mike Dwyer, CAO (arrived at 9:55 am) and Meg McCallum, Development and Emergency Management Coordinator. Chairperson Bob Lavoie was absent with prior notice and Jennifer Campbell was absent. Councillor Arie Hoogenboom chaired the meeting in Councillor Lavoie's absence.

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA:

RECOMMENDATION #1

Moved By: Cathy Livingston

Seconded By: Claire Gunnewiek

That this Committee adopt the Agenda, as submitted.

Carried.

3. DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTEREST & GENERAL NATURE THEREOF:

Chair Hoogenboom asked if anyone had a pecuniary interest and the general nature thereof and none were declared.

4. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES:

Minutes of the September 4, 2018 Economic Development Committee Meeting were distributed to the Committee. Chair Hoogenboom asked for any errors, omissions or questions. An amendment was noted under item 6.2: "the building is unused" to be replaced with "the property is vacant".

The following recommendation was duly moved and seconded:

RECOMMENDATION #2

Moved By: Ron Holman

Seconded By: Cathy Livingston

That this committee approve the Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes of September 4, 2018 as amended.

Carried.

5. GUEST SPEAKER:

Jennifer Miller, Manager of Economic Development and Tourism for the Town of Smiths Falls, attended the meeting to discuss the impacts of Tweed, the changing nature of tourism and the town's rebranding.

She noted that Tweed expects to reach a maximum of 1200 employees sometime in the next year. Many are young professionals with families, meaning a big impact on real estate, restaurants, hotels and catering. There has been a swell of interest from complementary and supporting industries. Almost all buildings in the industrial park are at capacity. Commercial vacancies are very low with new leases being signed almost daily. The residential vacancy rate is also very low and the Town is playing a role in advising Tweed of rental vacancies for their new employees. The Town has produced a "lifestyle guide" to introduce newcomers to local services and amenities. She noted that fortunately, there were significant investment in upgrades to schools, hospitals and arenas over recent years, meaning that the Town is in a good position to absorb the growth, but commented that there is a need for more housing – rental and home ownership – and for more tourism offerings and accommodations. There is also a focus on expanding arts and culture opportunities.

With regard to trends in tourism, Jennifer explained that Tweed's Visitor Centre has become a popular destination and the Town anticipates significant cannabis tourism. Additionally, Le Boat had a very successful first year of operations with 87% occupancy. They plan to add 4 boats per year for the next 4 years. Next year they will expand to Seeley's Bay. Jennifer noted that Smiths Falls has received visits from international travel media and travel product buyers. She noted that many visitors experience Smiths Falls from the water, and the next area of focus is the Waterfront Redevelopment Plan, which will bring new docks, bridges, trails, recreation opportunities and a sprucing up of the area.

She mentioned that Smiths Falls will most likely be opting in to the upcoming cannabis retailing option, and there have been request from tour bus operators about where visitors will be able to smoke. In an effort to control the Town's brand, they have recently produced a lexicon for staff to use: cannabis, not marijuana or pot; retail store instead of dispensary.

Smiths Falls has undergone a major rebranding exercise. Jennifer noted that their new logo reflects the changing fortune of the town: Rise at the Falls. It focuses on the water and boating, and has a sub-brand "On the Roll" to promote music, arts and culture. She noted that the rebranding is a work in progress and continues to have a significant expense impact. But she noted that it won awards and has been seen as a positive exercise.

Committee members had many questions about how Smiths Falls and Rideau Lakes could work together to respond to the needs of the new residents and visitors. It was suggested that a group tour of the Tweed Visitor Centre be arranged for members of Council, and that staff keep in touch regarding complementary opportunities. The question of travel options by rail and bus was raised. Some European and Asian tour operators plan to bring busses of tourists to Smiths Falls, but at this time there is no firm plan about expansion of rail or commuter bus options.

The committee thanked Ms. Miller for her presentation.

The committee observed a 5-minute break at 9:45 am and reconvened at 9:55 a.m.

When they reconvened, the committee discussed the demand for housing and potential for development within Rideau Lakes, including subdivisions currently in the development pipeline.

After discussion, the following recommendation was duly moved and seconded:

RECOMMENDATION #3

Moved By: Claire Gunnewiek

Seconded By: Cathy Livingston

That the Economic Development Committee thank Jennifer Miller, Manager of Economic Development and Tourism for the Town of Smiths Falls for her presentation.

Carried.

6. NEW BUSINESS:

6.1. Project idea: Tourism Accommodations Summit

Chair Hoogenboom outlined an idea to host a tourism accommodations summit for rental cottage/ resort and campground owners in 2019, noting that he has heard from many small operators with 2 to 6 cabins they rent on a weekly basis who could benefit from an education and networking opportunity. He would like to add this project into the work plan and budget for 2019 and noted that it would have to happen outside peak season, either in spring or fall. Committee members agreed that this could be a great opportunity as long as it is given adequate resources and has good programming, but cautioned that it might be hard finding a time that works for seasonal residents. Staff will include this idea in the draft work plan and budget that will come forward in November.

After discussion, the following recommendation was duly moved and seconded:

RECOMMENDATION #4

Moved By: Ron Holman

Seconded By: Cathy Livingston

That the Economic Development Committee acknowledge the discussion on a 2019 Tourism Accommodation Summit.

Carried.

7. BUSINESS ARISING:

7.1. New Provincial Government – verbal update re: cannabis retailing

CAO Mike Dwyer joined the meeting, and explained that this item was added to the agenda in order to have the committee weigh in from an Economic Development perspective regarding the Township's position on cannabis retailing.

Mayor Holman gave an update from information received at a ROMA meeting the previous week, and noted that under the draft legislation municipalities will have to opt in or out by January. After that, municipalities who opt out will have one chance to opt back in at a future date. He noted the draft legislation assumes one retail license per 15,000 population, with businesses operating as standalone stores with no accessories in areas zoned commercial. Municipalities will be “commenting bodies” and will have 15 days to comment on applications. They will not have the authority to make decisions. Licenses will be handled through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission. There are no anticipated proximity restrictions (for example, from schools or from other cannabis retail stores). Municipalities are not expected to receive much revenue, but will most likely incur increased expenses for policing. He noted that most small municipalities at ROMA are considering opting out.

Committee members expressed concerns and questions about potential locations and enforcement.

After discussion, the following recommendation was duly moved and seconded:

RECOMMENDATION #5

Moved By: Claire Gunnewiek

Seconded By: Cathy Livingston

That the Economic Development Committee acknowledge the verbal update from Mayor Holman on cannabis retailing.

Carried.

7.2. Delta Site Servicing – written report from School Board

CAO Mike Dwyer referred to the letter included in the meeting package and noted that if the school board decides to declare the property surplus the disposal will likely happen sometime over the coming year.

Mr. Dwyer mentioned that he met with a representative from CMHC about their \$40 million affordable housing fund. He noted that this funding can likely cover twenty to thirty cents on the dollar of construction financing, but that the expectation is for builders to come with the rest of the funding secured elsewhere. Funding is awarded on a competitive basis with points awarded for environmental performance and viability. In response to a question from a committee member, he noted that brownfield remediation might be funded, but that typically it is expected that municipalities also contribute to remediation expenses through mechanisms like fee and tax relief.

After discussion, the following recommendation was duly moved and seconded:

RECOMMENDATION #6

Moved By: Cathy Livingston
Seconded By: Claire Gunnewiek

That the Economic Development Committee acknowledge the discussion on the written response from the Delta Foundry School Board and CMHC affordable housing funding.

Carried.

8. ACTION LISTING

Meg McCallum presented an updated version of the Action Listing update and explained that it will be updated for each meeting with the most current status. Committee members reviewed the listing and commented on specific actions. With regard to the community asset database, Mike Dwyer explained that this is the list of amenities available, such as public boat launches and beaches. This information is publicly available on the website and in the bi-annual brochure. Committee members asked whether this will be easily available on the new website, and Mr. Dwyer responded that there is potential to add on a third-party app. Committee members noted that the "assigned to" column should include committee and Council members, since the Township does not have a fully resourced economic development function and many members of Council are involved in meetings with community members and business owners.

9. CLOSED SESSION

There was no closed session.

10. CORRESPONDENCE/INFORMATION:

There was no correspondence.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE AND AGENDA ITEMS:

The next meeting will take place as usual on the first Monday of the month (November 5), even though it is after the election but before the new Council is inaugurated. All incoming members of Council will be invited to attend and observe.

The Committee asked that the following items be brought to the next meeting: Delta Waterfront; Delta Heritage Symposium. A call for agenda items will go out ahead of the meeting.

12. ITEMS FOR EC DEV MEETING BRIEF:

Meg McCallum noted that this item is being added as a standing item in order to determine what content from the meeting or other items of interest should be included in the monthly Ec Dev meeting brief. Committee members noted: Cannabis retailing/ tourism, budget and work plan planning; tourism accommodation summit; UCLG Ec Dev summit; Elgin Main Street wrap up.

13. ADJOURNMENT:

The Chair declared the Economic Development Committee Meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m., until the next Regular Meeting.

Bob Lavoie
Chairperson

Michael Dwyer
Secretary