

North Huron Economic Development Committee
Minutes
January 4, 2018

Attendees: Glen Manjin, Wingham BIA Representative
Karen Stewart, Blyth BIA Representative
Rebecca Rathwell, Centre for Employment and Learning
Dave Tiffin (arrived 12:43 pm)
Councillor Seip
Councillor Knott
Dwayne Evans, CAO

Absent: Murray Simpson

CAO Evans welcomed and thanked everyone for attending.

The minutes from the December 8, 2017 Economic Development meeting were reviewed.

Moved by: Karen Stewart

Seconded by: Councillor Knott

That the minutes of the December 8, 2017 North Huron Economic Development Committee be approved.

CARRIED

At this time there is a discussion regarding the North Huron Economic Development Strategic Plan that was circulated with the meeting agenda. Glen suggests goals 5.1 (Business Retention and Attraction) and 5.2 (Attracting a More Highly Skilled Workforce) of the Strategic Plan should be focus of the Economic Development Committee.

After some discussion;

Moved by: Karen Stewart

Seconded by: Councillor Knott

That the North Huron Economic Development Committee hereby requests the Council of the Township of North Huron direct staff to prepare a status report regarding goals 5.1 (Business Retention and Attraction) and 5.2 (Attracting a More Highly Skilled Workforce) contained in the North Huron Economic Development Strategic Plan.

CARRIED

In response to a question regarding the Township's development process, CAO Evans explains that when he arrived the Township's development process was unclear. Developer's questions were being answered however, there was no single point of contact for developers and there was no staff coordination. CAO Evans advises he has introduced and is now implementing the County's 'Ideas to Occupancy' approach to developer inquiries. It is an approach he used successfully in Goderich and has been adopted by other Huron County municipalities. The approach has been used on two separate occasions in North Huron and the feedback has been positive. The CAO has become the single point of contact for developers.

There is a brief discussion regarding development on North Huron's periphery, in adjacent municipalities. In accordance with cross border servicing agreements with Morris-Turnberry and Central Huron, respectively, North Huron provides water and sewer services to periphery development. CAO Evans explains that last fall a developer appeared at Town Hall requesting services for his development in Morris-Turnberry. North Huron staff had no knowledge of the development or the requirements imposed by Morris-Turnberry. Confusion ensued. Since that time a discussion has taken place with Morris-Turnberry and as of late, Morris-Turnberry has invited North Huron staff to attend a meeting regarding a proposed development on North Huron's periphery. North Huron's staff attendance at that meeting has been positive and well received.

Karen suggests new development is minimal and business expansions are the primary driver of economic growth. She notes North Huron faces a major labour shortage and housing is limited. Based on phone calls she receives, Rebecca agrees there is a significant need for labour. She advises employers in the area are constantly recruiting new staff and in particular, in the construction and manufacturing sectors. Rebecca advises we have one of the lowest, if not the lowest, employment rate in the province at 3.7%. There is a brief discussion about how the labour market changed. It is not uncommon for employees to live outside the community.

There is a discussion regarding the need to recruit labour. Councillor Seip asks if information is available regarding employer's needs. Rebecca advises the Employer One Survey for 2018 has been distributed to employers for completion. The results from the 2017 survey are available. Rebecca will provide a copy of the 2017 survey report to the Economic Development Committee members. This leads to a discussion regarding participation in job fairs, including those offered at post-secondary institutions. It is suggested employers wishing to participate in job fairs contribute towards the cost. Shortage of housing for new employees is also discussed.

CAO Evans advises three housing projects are in the works. In September a face-to-face meeting between North Huron staff and representatives of the A2A development was held. Prior to the holiday break, North Huron staff had a follow up discussion with the A2A representatives. CAO Evans also reports a public meeting is scheduled for January 15, 2018 regarding a proposed plan of subdivision in Blyth. North Huron staff have also been contacted by another developer who is investigating another housing development in the municipality. There is a brief discussion regarding how much and what information staff can share with the committee, Council and the public.

There is a discussion regarding the type of housing needed. It is suggested the housing need has shifted from singles and semi-detached to condominium and apartment style of housing because younger generations have less of an interest to own things. Not all committee members agree with this view and there is a discussion about younger generations building home equity. This leads to further discussion regarding the labour shortage.

A suggestion is made that local employers be surveyed to verify the findings of the 2017 Employer One Survey. This will enable the committee to identify and recommend to Council a couple of strategies for resource allocation. The Bruce Power redevelopment project is discussed. CAO Evans advises he has attended a couple of meetings regarding this project and due to the Township's limited industrial land supply, he suggests the Township's greatest opportunity for growth and development is housing. Committee members are encouraged to invite real estate agents to the next meeting.

There is a discussion regarding how to reach out to local employers. Personal, intimate discussions are recommended rather than a general employer meeting. It is suggested any interactions need to be flexible and we may need to go to them to have discussions. Prior to interactions with employers, it is suggested the findings of the Employer Survey be reviewed to identify a particular sector(s) with the greatest need.

Glen advises part of his job involves reaching out to employers. He is willing to reach out to businesses on behalf of the committee.

Next steps:

1. 2017 Employer One Survey results are shared with the committee members
2. Council to consider Committee's motion requesting staff to provide a status update on goals 5.1 and 5.2 of the North Huron Economic Development Strategic Plan
3. 2017 Employer One Survey results to be discussed at next committee meeting
4. Prepare questions we want to ask employers-Feb, March, 2018
5. Seek direction and resource re-allocation from Council-spring, 2018

Rebecca advises the ideal time for job fairs for this area is April. Employers are seeking seasonal workers and students are looking for work. Post-secondary schools also host job fairs at this time of year.

Next Meeting: Thursday, February 1, 2018
 12:00 pm
 Blyth Memorial Hall