



TOWNSHIP OF NORTH HURON

REPORT

Item No.

REPORT TO: Reeve Vincent and Members of Council
PREPARED BY: Dwayne Evans, CAO
DATE: 05/02/2018
SUBJECT: Policing Cost Analysis
ATTACHMENTS: Public Information Session Notes and Written Comments; Wingham Police Service Petition

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Council of the Township of North Huron hereby receives the report of the CAO, dated February 5, 2018 regarding the policing cost analysis;

AND FURTHER, the Clerk be directed to call and advertise a special Council meeting on February 21, 2018 to discuss this report in more detail;

AND FURTHER, the Clerk be directed to extend an invitation to the Wingham Police Association and the Wingham Police Chief to attend as a delegation at the February 21, 2018 special Council meeting.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the request of Council, the OPP prepared and presented a proposal for Council's consideration. The proposal was presented to Council at a special meeting held in the Wingham Town Hall Theatre on September 25, 2017. Several members of the public were in attendance.

At the October 2, 2017 regular meeting, Council directed staff to investigate the following three options: OPP assuming responsibility for the Wingham Ward only; maintaining the Wingham Police Service and maintaining OPP policing for the Blyth and East Wawanosh wards; and expanding the Wingham Police Service to assume responsibility for the Blyth and East Wawanosh wards.

At the December 4, 2017 regular meeting, staff presented a policing service analysis for Council's consideration. The analysis looked at the three policing options directed by Council. By motion, Council invited the OPP to attend the December 18, 2017 regular meeting to provide more information on the OPP Billing Model. After the OPP delegation on December 18, 2017, Council directed the holding of a public information session. As discussed with Council, two public information sessions were held in the Wingham Town Hall Theatre on January 17, 2018; 3:00-5:00 pm and 7:00-9:00 pm. A copy of the notes from the public information session are attached for Council's reference.

In addition to the above, several written comments were received and are attached to this report for Council's consideration. Of particular note, are the written comments received from the Wingham Police Association and the Wingham Police Chief. Over the last 5 months, Council has received delegations from the OPP however, no delegations have been received from the Wingham Police Association or the Police Chief. It is recommended the Association and Police Chief be invited to a special council meeting to discuss the opportunities and challenges of policing the Wingham ward.

To allow for advertising, a suggested meeting date is February 21, 2018. Council has until March 25, 2018 to accept or refuse the OPP's proposal.

DISCUSSION

The Wingham Police Service currently provides policing services to the Wingham ward. The Wingham Police Service is comprised of 1 Police Chief, 1 Sergeant, 5 Constables, 0.8 Administrative Clerk and a part-time time prisoner guard. The service is provided 24/7 with one uniformed officer on duty at all times. When an emergency call is received which exceeds the resources and/or expertise of the Wingham Police Service, the OPP provide service to the Wingham ward. The services the OPP provide to the Wingham ward are currently provided 'free of charge'.

The OPP currently provides integrated policing services to the Blyth and East Wawanosh wards. This integrated service is based on the calculated expectation of the resources required in a region or zone under normal circumstances and the fee charged is based on community characteristics; core calls for service; patrol standards; and officer safety. Because there are no 'dedicated' resources to a region or zone, the model offers immediate flexibility in rare or unusual circumstances to support incidents where required.

At the October 2, 2017 regular meeting, Council passed the following motion:

"Moved by: T. Seip

Seconded by: Y. Ritesma-Teeninga

That the Council of the Township of North Huron hereby receives the October 2nd, 2017 report of the CAO regarding OPP Servicing Costs;

AND FURTHER, that Council directs staff to prepare a report outlining the costs associated with all available options for municipal policing of the Blyth, East Wawanoh and Wingham wards."

The options investigated included OPP policing of the Wingham Ward; maintaining and expanding the Wingham Police Service to include Blyth and East Wawanosh wards; and maintaining status quo. A staff report in the form of a presentation was presented to Council at the December 4th regular meeting. A summary of the report is included under the heading 'financial impact'.

Public Comments

At the January 17, 2017 public information sessions, several comments were received. It is estimated 30 residents attended the afternoon session and approximately 50 residents attended the evening session. Some of the residents who attended the afternoon session also attended the evening session.

As per the attached notes, a number of questions and comments were received from the public. The comments expressed support for keeping the Wingham Police Service and in at least one case, support was expressed for expanding the Wingham Police Service to include the Blyth and East Wawanosh wards. In response to a question, the OPP advised that should Council decide to accept the OPP's proposal, Wingham Police officers who become OPP officers will be provided with the opportunity to continue to police the Wingham ward. Concern is also raised regarding driving behaviour in the vicinity of the high school in the absence of a police presence.

In addition to the verbal comments received at the public information sessions, several written comments have been received.

In an email dated January 18, 2018 and on behalf of the Listowel Wingham Hospitals Alliance, Karl Ellis, President and CEO, stresses the importance of response times remaining timely. Like most small hospitals in Ontario, the Listowel Wingham Hospitals Alliance does not have security services on site and relies on local police to assist, patients with mental health challenges; violent patients and visitors; missing patients; and safety and security concerns. In the absence of a responsive local police service, providing on-site security services 24/7 would impact the Listowel Wingham Hospitals Alliance budget by at least \$500,000 per site annually. In his email, Mr. Ellis notes the Listowel Wingham Hospitals Alliance currently receives an excellent response from the Wingham Police Service to the Wingham and District Hospital and an excellent response from the OPP to the Listowel Memorial Hospital. In their response, the OPP request any data regarding the number of times the Wingham and District Hospital has contacted police for assistance. The OPP also asked if the hospital has signed a Transfer of Care protocol with the OPP in Listowel or any other police agency.

In a letter dated January 28, 2018 (attached), the Wingham Business Improvement Association expresses strong opposition to replacing the Wingham Police Service with OPP Policing. Reasons for the objection include, but are not limited to, slower response times to calls; safety of workers at local eateries during late hours; wasted money on renovating the Bristol Terrace OPP location; lack of available policing during shift changes; anticipate payback does not begin until year 4 at which time the costing formula could adversely change; the OPP proposal does not include court costs, overtime or 'enhancements'; other municipalities that have gone to OPP policing are regretting the move; and any increase in the number of calls will result in increased costs being added.

In a letter dated January 29, 2018 (attached), Archie MacGowan, Wingham resident, expresses support for maintaining the Wingham Police Service. Mr. MacGowan argues that the only way policing will become cheaper for Wingham residents is to reduce the service level and he does not believe there are many Wingham ratepayers that have an appetite for that option. Mr. MacGowan concludes by stating that the Wingham community is very proud of their municipal police force and residents like the level of service, even though it costs more.

In an email dated January 25, 2018 (attached), Grant and Deborah Currie, Wingham residents, advise that their choice is to keep the Wingham Police Service. Similarly, in an email dated January 29, 2018 (attached), Mary Campbell, Wingham resident, expresses appreciation for the Wingham Police Service and ask that the service be maintained. This sentiment is echoed in an email dated January 31, 2018 (attached) from Mark Foxton advising that he wishes to maintain the Wingham Police Service in the Wingham ward.

In an email dated January 26, 2018 (attached), John Manning, Blyth resident, suggests the Wingham Police Service should be disbanded as has been done in every other small municipal area. He strongly objects to any idea of expanding the Wingham Police Service to cover the Blyth ward and he is prepared to pay a little more to continue with the OPP.

In an email dated January 29, 2018 (attached), Ken Whitmore, Owner, Blyth Printing, voices strong opposition to expanding the Wingham Police Service to cover other part of the municipality. As a small business owner he states that costs and taxes have risen exponentially over the past years and he doesn't want to pay extra taxes for service he doesn't feel is needed. He states "other municipalities did away with small police forces 25-30 years ago due to the costs of carrying on status quo being too high and not economically feasible." He comments that he is "proud to live and own a business in North Huron and wants to stay here not being forced out due to unneeded services making the cost of living out of [his] financial reach". In his email, Mr. Whitmore advises he has spoken with some Wingham residents who say they are not in favour of keeping the local force. He suggests a vote be taken allowing all ratepayers the right to have a say in the matter.

In an email dated January 26, 2018 (attached), Mary Beth Foxton-Chippa Wingham resident, expresses support for keeping the Wingham Police Service. In her opinion, the cost of maintaining the Wingham Police Service is priceless in terms of quick response times and knowing that an officer or officers are on duty at all times and based in town. She suggests the figures quotes by the OPP are misleading as she does not know of anything where costs go down over the years. She concludes by stating that if council were to do their due diligence they would realize that the smaller communities who have switched to the OPP have regretted that decision immensely but lack the funds to go back.

In a letter dated January 19, 2018 (attached), the Wingham Police Association strongly supports North Huron being policed by one police service. The letter is also states that approximately 17 years ago the Association found itself in this same costing issue and back then and still now, the Association supports disbanding the Wingham Police Service. The Association states, "The Council should be aware that the numbers presented for the options that involve the Wingham Police Service are quite "light" as to what the Association feels is required to continue to provide adequate and effective policing. It's not that we can't do the job, it's about having the proper resources to do the job in an adequate and effective manner. We feel that the Council should be aware it is about Officer and public safety! The Association is currently in negotiations with North Huron Police Services Board and although we cannot completely divulge our requests we are standing firm on having two (2) officers on duty at all times, 24 hours a day seven days a week." The Association expresses appreciation for the support the Townspeople have shown however, goes on to comment that there has to be an understanding that it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain a "bare minimum" Police Service. The Association concludes by stating, "We want to continue to exist as a Police Service but given the presentations and no possibility of expansion and the potential increase cost in manpower it would only make sense that the township accept the O.P.P proposal and initiate the process of disbanding the Wingham Police Service."

In a letter received January 18, 2017 (attached), Chief Tim Poole, Wingham resident, speaks highly of the Wingham Police Service and discusses a number of accomplishments. As a local ratepayer he expresses that he very much wants to keep the local police service however, highlights six areas of concern. The areas of concern are with regards to the number of staff on duty; the increased seriousness of incidents; limited staff to compensate for sickness or injury of officers; ensuring the officers have a supervisor to contact at all times; cost to repair vehicles and vehicles being out of service; and potential that the OPP will charge for services currently being provided at no cost to the municipality.

In an email dated January 30, 2018 (attached), Bob Armstrong and Faye Moir, Wingham residents, advise that they are “long time residents and feel the men have done a good job over the years”. They state that they are definitely on the side of keeping the local police force in operation.

In an email dated January 30, 2018 (attached), Sandra Bailey, Blyth resident, advises that the OPP have sufficiently provided all policing that is necessary for our community of our size. She believes that same service would be adequate for the Town of Wingham. Her desire is remain status quo of OPP in Blyth and East Wawanosh.

In a letter dated January 20, 2018 (attached) Susan and George Duvall, Wingham residents, express concerns that at some point the Wingham Police Service may cease exist. They highlight two experiences with the Wingham Police Service. They suggest that with the OPP the Wingham ward would be a number and the crime rate would go up. They also suggest the response time will increase. They support an increase in taxes to keep the Wingham Police Service.

In a letter received at Town Hall (attached), Marjorie McKay, Wingham resident, express support for keeping the Wingham Police Service and raise concern regarding people on a fixed income. She highlights a number of other expenses for the municipality and the wages of staff. She suggests people in Walkerton are unhappy about switching to the OPP.

In a letter received at Town Hall (attached), Dale Beninger, Wingham resident, states that the municipality should keep the Wingham Police Service. He highlights experiences in Walkerton when the OPP contract was up for renewal. He suggests that when a lot of municipalities went OPP, many would have gone to a local police services however, all of that was gone and it would be very expensive to start again. He also questions how the OPP “can be less expensive when their contract says they must be the highest paid police force in Ontario”. He also speaks to the Huron OPP Detachment office being located in Clinton and the travel distance for small things and he expresses concern with comments his relatives have made regarding the OPP’s response time.

In a letter dated January 29, 2018 (attached), Evonne Carter, Wingham resident, expresses support to keep the Wingham Police Service. She speaks to officer availability in the Wingham ward under the OPP and she suggests there is not a ‘standard level’ of OPP policing because enhancements cost extra. She comments that specific questions were not asked or answered at the public information session in regards the ‘standard level’ of OPP policing. In her letter, Ms. Carter expresses sadness that the Wingham community has been left to feel that OPP policing for the same service to going to be less expensive. She suggests the opposite. She also comments that Mount Forest, Kincardine and South Bruce are not happy with the OPP and St. Marys has left the OPP to join the Stratford police service. She also questions why communities near Owen Sound are considering joining the Owen Sound service. In closing, Ms. Carter states there have been several vehicle thefts in the neighbouring communities and that this should be a lesson for North Huron to keep the Wingham Police Service. She states that in the long run, not only is OPP policing going to be a lesser service, but to get the service level provided by the Wingham Police Service, the OPP service is going to be more expensive.

In an email dated January 31, 2018 (attached), Dan Bailey, Blyth Business Owner and resident, expresses satisfaction with the OPP police service. He is opposed to having the Wingham Police Service expand to include the Blyth ward and states that property taxes are already far too high. He concludes by stating that if Wingham residents “wish to continue status quo rather than choose substantial long term financial saving by switching to the OPP that is for them to decide. “

In an email dated January 31, 2018 (attached), Lisa Hearnden, Wingham resident, voices support for maintaining the Wingham Police Service. She comments the cost of maintaining the Wingham Police Service is priceless in terms of quick response times and knowing that an officer or officers are on duty at all times and based in town and she suggests the response time provided by the Wingham service will not be available if the municipality switches to the OPP. She also feels that the figures quoted by the OPP are misleading and states, ‘With our current system, OPP services such, as investigation costs, prisoner transfers, court time **are NOT billed to the municipality as the OPP are obliged to provide them upon request-they are paid in advance from our Provincial tax levy.** If we switch, another murder or man running around town with a gun, a school lockdown, could set the town back hundreds of thousands of dollars as neither would be covered under the “basic plan” council is considering. Additionally, salaries will increase, the price of fueling vehicles will increase, the wear and tear on the vehicles will be higher with driving back and forth to Clinton to name a few.” In closing, Ms. Hearnden states that if money is the only concern, why not wait and see how this plays out for other communities who have made the switch in 2017/2018, at the end of their 5th year and she suggest that “if council were to do their due diligence they would realize that the smaller communities who have switched to OPP have regretted that decision immensely but lack the funds to go back.”

Petition

On January 31, 2018, a petition (attached) was hand delivered to Town Hall. The description of the petition reads as follows:

The Council of the Township of North Huron has requested and received costing from the OPP for the Huron County OPP to police the Wingham ward, and whereas the Township CAO has completed analysis and presented those findings during a public meeting January 17, 2018; I/We the undersigned, petition the Council of the Township of North Huron to retain the current service provided by the Wingham Police Service.

Based on staff’s review, approximately 320 individuals signed the petition and approximately 20 were non-Wingham residents. Some of those who signed the petition also provided written comments, as per above.

Other Municipalities

At the January 17, 2018 public information session and as noted above, there was a suggestion to speak with municipalities who switched from their own local police force to the OPP. Contact was made with Central Huron, Goderich, Pembroke and St. Mary’s. At the time of writing this report, contact has not been made with Mount Forest, Kincardine, Walkerton or neighbouring municipalities of the City of Owen Sound. These municipalities came to staff’s attention at the time of reviewing and summarizing the written comments received.

In an email dated January 18, 2018, Steve Doherty, CAO, Municipality of Central Huron, advised that Clinton switched to the OPP in 1993 and they don't have crime rate info from 25 years ago. Based on staff's memory, the switch did not result in much crime change because the OPP essentially took over the Clinton Police Service and there was still police presence in the area. This change at the time of amalgamation in 2001 because the OPP wanted to charge more to have a detachment in Clinton while offering general coverage in Goderich and the former Hullett Township. The Council of the day did not want to see an increase in policing costs so they opted to go with a general coverage contract for the entire amalgamated area which resulted in the closure of the Clinton detachment. That general coverage contract was in place until 2011 when the Municipality of Central Huron opted to pay for a satellite detachment out of Clinton Hall again. In closing, Mr. Doherty suggests Central Huron's OPP situation isn't really comparable with what North Huron has on the table. Central Huron suggests Goderich's situation is probably more comparable.

With respect to Goderich, CAO Larry McCabe advised that based on his experience and as a member of the Goderich Police Services Board, the crime rates have not increased. He also commented that the OPP have more resources than the Town of Goderich ever had with the local service. In an email addressed to Lisa Hearnden, Susan Armstrong, Goderich BIA Manager, comments that her dealings with the OPP, though not numerous, have always been positive, timely, helpful and sensitive. The Goderich BIA works with the OPP when organizing any events in Town and in her opinion, Ms. Armstrong states that the Goderich BIA has well established contacts for both the BIA emergency plans and the seasonal Farmers and Flea Market.

In 3 examples where Ms. Armstrong has required assistance for the OPP (a break in at the office; a person causing a disturbance at the market; and a discomfoting repeat visitor to the tourism centre), the OPP responded quickly and dealt with the matter at hand in an efficient and sensitive matter. In the same email, Ms. Armstrong acknowledges that because Goderich has a Court House in the centre of town and especially when court is in session, she expects to see a higher number of OPP officers walking around downtown than what others might be accustomed to in other municipalities. She also comments that the OPP station is right on the Square and has two parking spaces reserved for OPP parking so cruisers are parked directly in front of the OPP station. Ms. Armstrong concludes by stating, "I imagine we are likely to have a higher than average OPP presence felt by both visitors and businesses, because the Courthouse and OPP station in our downtown core. Overall, [she] feels that the OPP bring an important aspect of the "safety" vibe to the down core. They are approachable, courteous and helpful".

In a related but separate email, Elizabeth Van Den Broeck, Chair of the Goderich BIA, comments that she agrees with Ms. Armstrong's observations noting her business is located adjacent to the downtown station and she sees them coming and going every day. In closing, Ms. Van Den Broeck invites further discussion with the Goderich BIA Board and businesses.

With respect to Pembroke, the Deputy Clerk provided notes and information. The notes outline the process undertaken (similar to the process undertaken in North Huron). After an extensive process, Pembroke constructed a new OPP station and leases the building to the OPP. The estimated initial start-up costs contained in the OPP proposal came in \$18,500 under the estimate.

Pembroke's additional costs during the transitional period totalled 1.5 million, including the OPP start-up costs of \$337,000. The additional costs were the result of file review, transfer, archive, storage and destruction of media files; termination of leases and contracts; payouts of vacation and overtime banks; severance, pension top-up; legal fees; benefit continuation to age 65 for retirees; OPP initial start-up costs and internet. Based on current dollars, the total projected savings for Pembroke when the phase in is complete in 2018 is \$2,028,586 annually.

The notes indicate the municipality is happy with the level of service that the OPP is providing and since transitioning to the OPP, one public complaint has been received. The general feeling is that the Pembroke community is happy with the level of service the OPP is providing. The notes suggest other considerations include, but are not limited to, less workload on the Treasury department (e.g. payroll); loss of special constables who did by-law enforcement; dispatch contract termination cost; annual reconciliation has resulted in money back to the municipality every year; and dealing with files and records not assumed by the OPP.

Further to a discussion regarding policies between Reeve Vincent, Councillor Ritesma-Teeninga, CAO Evans and Administrator Clerk-Treasurer Rebecca Clothier (Perth South) at the ROMA Conference recently held in Toronto, the CAO reached out to the Town of St. Mary's to get more information. Policing services in the Town of St. Marys are currently delivered as provided for under Section 5. (1) (5) of the Police Services Act where the Town directly contracts with the OPP. The services delivery arrangement is described in a police services agreement with the municipality and the Town's contract with the OPP expired at the end of a three year fixed term contract, on December 31, 2017.

At the request of Council, St. Marys CAO Brent Kittmer prepared and presented a report regarding alternative methods for providing policing in the Town. Seven options were presented and three were determined to be viable: (1) reconstitute a municipal police force; (2) continue to contract with the OPP; or (3) contract with the City of Stratford for policing services. In a letter to the Ontario Civilian Police Commission, dated January 12, 2017, CAO Kittmer states, "Through the Town's research and analysis it has been determined that contracting with the City of Stratford's Police Services will provide a higher level of policing services and reduced annual costs to the Town compared to the current OPP model. It has also been determined that the requirements of O. Reg. 3/99 Adequacy and Effectiveness of Policies Services will be met or exceeded by the Stratford Policing model".

FINANCIAL IMPACT

As reported at the December 4, 2017 regular Council meeting and the January 17, 2018 public information session, there will be an increase in policing costs for Wingham ward residents should Council decide to accept the OPP's 3+ year transitional contract. Based on the OPP's current billing model, there will be annual savings of approximately \$400,000 starting in 2020 and every year thereafter. When the 5 year cost of OPP policing for the Wingham ward is compared to policing by the Wingham Police Service, there are minimal savings. Approximately \$2 million savings are projected after an initial 10 year time period. The average OPP Cost per Property during the initial 5 years is projected to be \$730. During this same time period, the average Wingham Police Service cost per property is \$770. During the initial 3+ year transitional period, Wingham residents would pay, on average, \$100-\$200 more per year. The average OPP cost per property after the initial 3+

transitional period reduces to approximately \$500. These average costs per property do not include one exit costs.

If the Wingham Police Service is maintained, the average cost per property for Wingham residents is projected to climb from approximately \$750 to \$800 over a 5 year period. This projection is based on the current level of service and staffing. If additional staff are hired, the average cost per property will increase accordingly.

If the Wingham Police Service was expanded to include the Blyth and East Wawanosh wards, the average cost per property across the entire municipality is approximately \$660. Over a 5 year period, this is projected to increase to \$680 over a 5 year period. If the expanded service model was area rated, Wingham residents would be responsible for approximately \$1,000,000 of the project cost whereas the Blyth and East Wawanosh wards would be responsible for approximately \$650,000. The projected costs for an expanded Wingham Police Service includes approximately \$78,000 in needed capital purchases.

The Blyth and East Wawanosh wards currently receive policing services from the OPP at a cost of approximately \$320,000 per year. The average cost per property for Blyth and East Wawanosh ward residents is \$340/year for OPP services.

As previously reported, the one-time exit costs are estimated at \$450,000.00 - \$480,000.00. In order to mitigate the impact to the Wingham ward ratepayers, council can consider using the funds accumulated in the Westario Shareholder Reserves in the amount of \$382,329.00. Staff are also investigating deferring the one time exit costs until savings are realized in future years.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to costs, Council needs to consider the ability of the Wingham Police Service to remain competitive and recruit personnel. Council also needs to future provincial requirements and standards which may be imposed on all police services. For example, the Safer Ontario's Act (Bill 175) is currently being debated in the legislative and if passed with no changes, the Wingham Police Service will be responsible for navigable waterways. This will require training and equipment for Wingham Police personnel. Further, it is noteworthy that there is no guarantee that the OPP Billing model will not change, positively or negatively. Through the Police Services Act, the OPP also has the ability to impose costs for services currently not billed to municipalities. On a final note, should Council decide to accept the OPPs proposal, the future of the existing Wingham Police Facility will need to be determined. Preliminary information suggests the facility is in a state of much needed repairs.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal #3 Our community is healthy and safe.

Goal #4 Our administration is fiscally responsible and strives for operational excellence.



Dwayne Evans, CAO