



## **The Business Development and Planning Advisory Committee (BDAPAC) Meeting**

Virtual Meeting – E-invite  
Monday July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021 -9:00- 11:00 am

**Present:** Mike Lessard, Tauri Caputo, John Edelman, Art Bluhm, Adam Peet, John Vanderzanden, and Matt Reniers.

**Staff:** Mike Evers, General Manager of Community & Development Services, Lidy Romanuk, Manager of Economic Development & Tourism, Alison Earls, Senior Economic Development Officer, and Breanna Beauchamp, Division Support.

**Regrets:** Mayor Hewitt (Chair), Kellie Stephan, Phil Hauser, Trudy Parsons, Chris Hibbs

### **1.0 Welcome and Introduction**

Meeting is called to order by Manager of Economic Development and Tourism at 9:00 a.m.

### **2.0 Update from Council**

Councillor Shirton provided an brief update on Council, key highlights included facing challenges with out of town tourists, by-law infractions and provided an update on road construction and the broadband internet project.

A discussion then ensued.

### **3.0 Official Plan Update**

M. Evers addressed the committee, and provided an introduction to Matt Reniers, the consultant for the Official Plan Update.

M. Reniers provided a brief update on the Official Plan, delivered his presentation and began to review the discussion points that were distributed to the committee, prior to the meeting.

**Do you think the pandemic will create long lasting impacts of the structure and function of downtown cores? How can the County help manage these changes to maintain the vibrancy of downtowns?**

The committee expressed that the function of the downtown cores in Haldimand County have fundamentally changed. Downtown businesses need to offer unique experiences to consumers to drive the traffic back to the area. Patterns of purchasing have changed for consumers, and there needs to be something to drive the consumer out to the retail shop and give them a reason to shop. There is a need to draw people downtown by animating the downtown. The

County needs to focus on how they can help businesses deliver these experiences, and give them the support to provide these options. From an Official Plan perspective, allowing increased flexibility in what is allowed/ permitted in the Downtown core is essential in the continued growth of Haldimand County.

The committee also added that increased online training for businesses to help pivot their stores online is needed in the community.

**Many municipal official plans differentiate between downtowns and other commercial areas Haldimand includes both downtowns and commercial strips in its Community Commercial designation. Is separate downtown designation needed? If so, what should the primary policy be?**

The committee expressed that the policies should have a separate downtown designation to uphold urban design guidelines to ensure there is a common aesthetic for consistency in the downtowns. There should also be flexibility in policy, so that the County can allow additional patios, events like the farmers markets to operate downtown, host buskers, on street vendors, and entertainers etc. The downtowns may need to be reinvented to make them more fun this could include – curbside patios, on-street vendors, arts & craft space.

The committee agreed that any additional ways we can create policies to allow more flexibility and freedom for businesses to pivot their model and have success should be encouraged.

**What is currently working in the County's downtowns? What is not working? How can the County rectify what is not working? How can the County make the downtowns more vibrant?**

The committee expressed that there is an opportunity to attract young entrepreneurs in the downtown core. Many of the new downtown businesses are the millennial generation with a vision. We should be trying to attract more young business owners to the downtown core.

The committee also expressed desire to see an increased percentage of funding available through the CIP program to assist businesses. There is an opportunity to encourage more co-working/collective workspace and have like-minded entrepreneurs work together on creating new businesses.

**In commercial areas should there be a greater emphasis on design, facades, entrance location, signage, etc. to achieve a desired form and appearance**

**Is parking a concern in downtown areas? In commercial strips? What improvements would you like to see?**

The committee expressed the need for a variety of businesses in Haldimand County's downtowns including accommodations, and echoed their earlier comments that there needs to be flexibility in the policies.

Although they expressed the need for flexibility in the policies, the committee does see the importance in keeping urban design guidelines/façade requirements in commercial areas to ensure consistency in the downtown. There may be a benefit to allowing for residential and/or

commercial accommodations in the downtown cores to encourage tourists. The façade should still look like a street front and be appealing and inviting.

The committee provided that the parking in the downtowns and the commercial strips is sufficient, but additional signage to inform visitors of free parking may be beneficial.

It was also noted that there should be flexibility on policies for what is allowed on public property, sidewalks, and roads for downtown businesses to encourage increased traffic.

To continue to enhance the streetscaping that has previously been implemented, the County should look for ways to connect and upgrade assets such as the river access to downtowns and improve boat access.

Overall there should be increased river enhancements to encourage tourists that will then access the downtowns. Creation of canoe routes and experiences, and to create opportunities for canoe rentals/ outfitters would be beneficial. There is a need for more boat launches in Cayuga and Caledonia.

### **What business types should be accommodated in the employment areas?**

The committee provided that online businesses are experiencing exponential growth now, and warehousing businesses should be accommodated in the employment areas to support this growth.

It was also noted that it is essential that all policies in the employment areas are flexible and could be open for interpretation, as we want to foster growth and have a wide variety of businesses in these areas. We are in an evolution of change right now and there may be new scenarios that we aren't currently aware of.

Transportation should also be addressed when creating these plans, as transporting employees and ensuring businesses can easily access major highways for shipments, will be essential in the success of these employment areas. Industry and transportation are cohesive, good access will attract bigger industrial businesses.

### **Should the industrial designations be simplified?**

The committee agreed that allowing designations to be more flexible/ simplified would be beneficial for businesses.

The committee also expressed interest on additional flexibility, specifically in the Frank Marshall Business Park, we want to encourage businesses to re locate or expand in Haldimand County, not hinder them and should move forward with any process/ policies to foster that environment.

The committee also added that there is a need to define and clarify the floodplains, and specify what can be developed within the floodplain.

### **Should the Official Plan have stronger policies to improve the appearance and layout of industrial developments?**

The committee shared that there should be flexible policies in place ensure to commercial spaces look appealing, but want to ensure these guidelines do not hinder businesses in any way.

The County needs to be mindful of the cost associated with façade requirements for businesses, and the opportunity for growth in the future and not to create too much policy so that it is too onerous for a business.

**The County is proposing two new employment areas in Caledonia and Hagersville. What should the County's role be in the development of these employment areas?**

The committee expressed that there is no concern with the County taking a more proactive role in the development, but noted that the County must adhere to the same policies and requirements that developers in the private sector follow, and ensure it is fair and equitable.

The committee stated that development of Caledonia is low risk for the County to proceed with especially considering the development just north at the Hamilton airport. Caledonia location is a good location and the County should be able to attract a developer to develop the location, perhaps there is even an opportunity to discuss an employment land development with Empire.

L. Romanuk provided a brief update on the North Caledonia Lands. M. Evers added that Council has approved to conduct a study of the North Caledonia Lands, once a consultant has been on boarded, we can share with the committee what the county is hoping to glean from this study.

**Should the County expand incentive programs to encourage more commercial and tourism-related development in downtowns and rural areas?**

There is value in ensuring that more tourism businesses qualify for these incentives. These may include the development of a canoe system, boat launches, bed and breakfasts etc.

**Should the CIP program be expanded to include industrial areas such as the Lake Erie Industrial Park?**

The committee provided that the CIP programs continue to be a successful program for new and existing businesses, and believe expanding this program to the Industrial area would be beneficial. The committee noted that there needs to be flexibility in the policy, to ensure this provides opportunity for businesses.

**How can the Official Plan do more to encourage the development of tourism attractions and support facilities?**

**How can the County better utilize the Grand River and the Lakeshore to promote tourism?**

The committee expressed that we can encourage development of tourism attractions by ensuring there is ability in the policies to add more access points/ boat launches to the lake and river.

In addition, they saw value in the flexibility to allow commercial development along the river/ businesses to open in the parks to offer recreational activities like kayaking, and canoeing etc. They also inquired if the CIP grant could include assistance with creating access to the river, or

assist in application fees for these businesses. Any policies should be simplified and flexible to encourage these riverside commercial businesses to open. Signage should be installed for public beaches and maintenance of the beaches needs to take place

The committee also noted that the County needs increased experiential development.

**How can the County encourage the development of more roofed accommodations for tourists?**

The committee expressed that an increase in roofed accommodations could come from providing the public with education for interested homeowners/ entrepreneurs, not only on the process, but the ability for income generation. It may be beneficial to highlight the accommodation education piece at one of the upcoming Tourism Network meetings.

There was also discussion on the opportunity of finding one larger accommodation business to locate to Haldimand County, rather than finding various smaller bed and breakfast options.

Policies should be simplified and flexible, and allow for interpretation to welcome new initiatives and streamline the process for opening accommodations locally.

**Is the County lacking farm infrastructure or agriculture-related businesses to support the agricultural industry in Haldimand County?**

**If so, where are the gaps and how do you propose the County attract this infrastructure and these businesses?**

The committee provided that offering increased incentives, opportunities and any flexibility in policy for micro processors, or abattoirs should be prioritized. There was also a recommendation of the development of a strategy to help support and attract smaller agriculture businesses.

Policies and land use permissions in rural areas should be flexible and simplified for agriculture to allow micro processing for the smaller farmers and abattoirs.

These policies should also allow the possibility for mobile food processors and/ or the ability for a processing plant that is used for multiple farms.

**Are there non-agricultural businesses, such as eco-tourism, that the County should support in the agricultural area?**

**Are there non-agricultural businesses or events that the County should not support in the agricultural area because they are a detriment to the agricultural area?**

**Should a wider range of on-farm diversified uses be permitted provided that the use is secondary to the principal agricultural use of the property?**

**How can the County attract or assist entrepreneurs to invest in on-farm diversified uses?**

**How can the County assist farmers better through the approvals process?**

The committee felt that farmers shouldn't be restricted in what they can do on their farms from a business perspective, but added that it should be directly related to an agricultural industry. It was also noted that any supplementary income should be taxed appropriately, and policy should reflect that.

M. Reniers thanked the committee for their input and direction, and will return to continue this discussion later in the year.

**8.0 Adjourned at 11:05 am**