

## **Township of Southgate**

### **Administration Office**

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## **Staff Report CAO2020-051**

**Title of Report:** Southgate Community Historical Identity Signage & Economic Development Benefits

**Department:** Administration

**Council Date:** August 5, 2020

### **Council Recommendation:**

**Be it resolved that** Council receive Staff Report CAO2020-051 as information; and **That** Council provide direction and feedback to staff on developing a plan, signage and process to engage members of the community, Southgate schools, students and area historians to develop stories on history of our lost hamlet identity in the rural areas of the Township for this historical information to be posted as a tourism feature of our community.

### **Background:**

The CAO was approached a few years ago and again recently by a member of the community requesting the Township should consider creating a history for some of the rural hamlets that are losing their identity and stories over time. This request was to erect signage and document the story about "Campbell's Corners" in Southgate, former Proton Township. There are 2 people interested in seeing that this gets done and offered to assist with funding the cost of the signage.

We have many unique names, community identity locations and stories that will be lost in time if some of these places are not located by signs and the history documented for future generations and visitors to our community to experience and enjoy. From my initial research we have Bethel, Birdell, Boothville, Gildale, Keldon, Kingscote, Lankerton, Riverside, Robbtown, Tartan, Thistle, Ventry, and Yeovil. I am sure others will be identified in time. There are likely other stories out there about the old one room schoolhouse locations like Swamp College, Hillside Academy, etc. that should also be captured in time.

### **Staff Comments:**

#### **The Plan to Implement the Project**

The plan would be to first identify and engage the community to find all the historic locations in Southgate that have a story. As part of that process we would seek out sponsors for each location, if possible. If we are fortunate, we will be able to find a historian with information to provide some of the stories for each hamlet or historic location. Staff suggest we could work with the local schools and create a project for Grade 7 and 8 students to gather and write these stories by contacting seniors by phone in our community or through researching on the internet and local history books. The information would be posted on the Township or Library website as the host of the stories so they can be found by tourist traffic in our community, read by library patrons and updated as new history is received.

The 2 or 4 location signs (4 if corner location) would be erected with the name of the Hamlet or the historically significant site and an identifier QR code to access the story electronically at the location. The QR code provides an access to social media platforms through mobile devices and access to a landing page to access the historical information for each of the locations. The QR codes can also be used to promote the information profiles of other historical locations, places of community interest and places of commerce across the Township. An example of a QR code is included in this staff report as Attachment #1.

### **Community Benefit**

This project will be an effort to capture the past history of our lost hamlet communities, to engage our youth to gather and document the historical information, to promote tourism experiences and identify farm gate sales/experience locations for visitors. The QR code for each site will launch the site information, promote other historic Southgate communities as part of the experience and provide access to other areas of interest in the Township.

The Township is rich in rural history and culture for visitors to experience. At the same time we would promote the rural commerce by advertising farm gate sale locations (produce, furniture, services and manufactured goods) through the Grown in Grey sign program, recreational locations (golf courses and trails), visual destinations (Holstein pond) and experiential opportunities (buggy rides, etc.).

### **Financial Impact or Long-Term Implications**

There is no financial impact to the municipality as a result of this report other than signage costs, if there is not a sponsor found for the location, a signpost and staff time to install the signage.

### **Communications & Community Action Plan Impact:**

This report has been written and presented to Council to communicate accurate information to the public.

### **Goal 1 - Attracting New and Supporting Existing Businesses and Farms**

**Action 1:** The residents and businesses of Southgate envision a growing and diverse local economy, which respects our agricultural background while also attracting new businesses and new employment opportunities in keeping with the renewed growth of our population.

### **Concluding Comments**

1. That Council receive staff report CAO2020-051 as information.
2. That Council provide feedback to staff on this idea of this project as an economic development and tourism strategy for Southgate.

3. Maybe we need to do more of this type of initiative, to make more people "SMILE" in our community and learn our history. To report specifically on the issue of the "SMILE" sign, initially it started out with a bit of controversy between two Facebook groups. Since that time, I would suggest that it has disappeared or subsided and we are now receiving very positive comments that we should take advantage of this signage and promote in our community. I suggest that we make it a positive, as it is meant to be, and to promote Southgate as a welcoming and inclusive community. We are now seeing smaller versions of this sign and an offer from the group to locate one on the Library property. We could make it a part of this promotion. Maybe these hamlet signs could incorporate the word smile as a way to promote the locations. Something like the sign saying "CAMPBELL'S CORNER A Place to SMILE", could be a way to promote this program.

Respectfully Submitted,

**CAO approval:** Original Signed By

Dave Milliner – CAO

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- Attachment 1 – Sample QR Code for Historic Location Signs