

Township of Southgate

Administration Office

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Staff Report CAO2022-072

Title of Report: Southgate CAO Update Report

Department: Administration

Council Date: October 5, 2022

Council Recommendation:

Be it resolved that Council receive Staff Report CAO2022-072 as information; and

That Council provide direction to staff on the issue of 2023 budgeting for increased police services and agreement enhancements for Southgate.

Background:

The CAO is providing this report as a general update and on issues that we believe need to be considered in the 2023 budget and in the next term of Council.

Staff Comments:

Police Service Enhancements

Over the last year we have had discussion with the OPP regarding service enhancements in the Township of Southgate. Staff are seeking direction if we should request a price for this increased level of service in the 2023 police operating budget.

Vacancy Taxation for Non-Agriculture Property

Recently the Township of Southgate and the County of Grey eliminated the vacancy tax rebate for commercial and industrial properties to remove support for vacant buildings. The Township has also created a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) to support investments in commercial spaces. This has had minimal effect of building upgrades and works being completed. Some buildings now have had plywood installed to cover the windows and another group of buildings have seen no progress to restate them as future business location in downtown Dundalk. Considerations should be explored to implement increased taxation for vacant commercial-industrial buildings and/or by-laws to increase building standards related to public safety and impacts on neighbouring businesses. This would support business growth, a more attractive business section related to building exteriors to attract commerce and local events, create new local jobs, increased housing on upper levels in some cases and building rental rates in line with local affordability. This is a discussion for the next term of Council to support commercial, industrial and attainable housing in our community.

2022 Healthy Community Conference Report

On September 28, 2022 the CAO attended the 2022 Healthy Community Conference at the Bayshore Community Centre in Owen Sound. The title of this years conference was "Fostering Sustainable Communities in Grey-Bruce". Much of the conference focused on rural mental health and the disruption cause by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first speaker was Dr. Leith Deacon, Associate Professor, Rural Studies Program for the School of Environmental Design & Rural Development at the University of Guelph. He talked about the unprecedented challenges we have seen related to business closures, employment disruption, loss of revenue and the inability to maintain service delivery on rural communities. All these issues have contributed to a major increase in mental health problem in our rural areas because of isolation that has cause lower reporting of health issues and physical activity causing increased obesity, smoking, alcohol consumption and drug use. Dr. Deacon reported on the survey of 38 questions he developed and coordinated in Bruce, Dufferin, Elgin, Grey, Huron, Middlesex, Perth and Wellington as rural communities to assess mental health and the challenges

His recommendation is to solve rural mental health issues we need to collect local data, have an education campaign on what does mental health mean to remove the stigma, provide targeted supports for females under the age of 40, increase social service funding/support and recruiting health care providers in the field of mental health.

The other speakers were Nicole Norris and Irea Pozgaj-Jones from Georgian College from the Centre for Changemaking and Social Innovation. Georgian is now recognized as Canadian designated changemaker college by AshokaU. They spoke on Rural Innovation and their recent research project in Grey County and the tools they have developed to create community engagement to empower change.

The CAO attended a breakout session lead by SEGCHC on community governance and how it is essential for establishing sustainable local healthcare solution in our communities. Good session on recruiting experts and subject matter specialists needed on Board of Directors of community organizations.

Financial Impact or Long-Term Implications

The no financial impact to the 2021 Budget to the municipality that will impact ratepayer taxation at the present time.

Communications & Community Action Plan Impact:

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

Concluding Comments

1. That Council receive staff report CAO2021-070 as information.
2. That Council provide direction on policing services and our 2023 budget.

Respectfully Submitted, **CAO approval:** Original Signed By

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