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**STAFF REPORT: Chief Administrative Officer**



**REPORT TO:** Committee of the Whole  
**MEETING DATE:** December 8, 2014  
**REPORT NO.:** CAO.14.14  
**SUBJECT:** New Council 2014 – 2018: Getting Started  
**PREPARED BY:** Troy Speck, CAO

### **A. Recommendations**

THAT Council receive Staff Report CAO.14.14, entitled “New Council 2014 – 2018: Getting Started” for information purposes;

THAT Council confirm their consensus that the four (4) theme areas identified in Report CAO.14.14 are areas on which the Town should focus over the next four years, subject to any further goals, plans and actions identified and prioritized by Council;

THAT Staff report back to Council at the January 12, 2015 Committee of the Whole meeting regarding currently ongoing and planned projects and initiatives that are related to, or address, the four (4) general themes outlined in Report CAO.14.14;

AND THAT Staff report back to Council at the January 12, 2015 Committee of the Whole meeting with options of possible processes for Council to consider to help Council and Staff develop and establish realistic goals and action plans for the term of Council, including goals and actions that build on the themes highlighted in Report CAO.14.14.

### **B. Background**

Subsequent to the recent municipal election, the Town’s Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) has now had an opportunity to meet individually with each member of the Town’s new Council for 2014 – 2018. The purpose of the meetings was to assist the CAO in getting an initial sense of: each Council member’s personal goals and top priorities as a member of Council over the coming four years; what things they feel the Town is doing well; and what things they feel could stand improvement. Ideally, discussions such as this help a CAO and Staff begin to identify common themes that Staff can then work with Council to build upon to prioritize goals and create action plans for the next 4 years.

### **C. Analysis**

#### What’s Going Well

Typically, things that are working well are not seen as “issues” or “concerns” and therefore receive less attention and discussion. However there seemed to be a definite consensus among members of Council that:

- a) The Town's budgets are generally being managed well and are in good shape;  
and
- b) Most Town services are being run efficiently and providing good service.

### Room for Improvement

Each member of Council had their own list of issues, interests, initiatives, projects or concerns they would like to see addressed. There were many that were mentioned by one member of Council, but not by others. This does not necessarily mean those issues or interests are not shared by other members of Council, just that they did not come to mind during the interview. But it would be difficult to encapsulate them all individually in a report of this nature.

However, there were four (4) fairly clear themes that appeared to be reflected in the comments of many of the members of Council as areas to be targeted for improvement. They were:

- 1) Economic Development, Customer Service & Whether the Town is Perceived as being "Open for Business";
- 2) Planning and Development;
- 3) Changing the County/Town Financial Arrangement; and
- 4) Communication & Council Process

For each of these themes, a summary of some of the comments received from members of Council is outlined below.

### **Economic Development/Customer Service/Open for Business**

Individual comments related to this theme included:

- The Town needs to be more open with retailers, trades, developers – the Town's Business Retention & Expansion (BR & E) project is a good start;
- Would like to see more collaboration with Collingwood and Meaford around economic development;
- Town needs an environment that welcomes and encourages entrepreneurship
- We need to restore the public's confidence in our relationship with them as our customers;
- Have heard some people/businesses say they don't feel like they've been helped when they come to Town Hall – they don't get all the information they need up front, and have to keep coming back (2);
- We need to find more ways to find middle ground when dealing with development applications;

- Our challenges around being perceived as not open for business are not always about Staff. Sometimes it's also a Council issue. We need some education for Council re: the planning process and Council's role in it.

## **Planning & Development**

Individual comments in this regard included:

- Concerned about Council not being aware of/having enough advance information about what developments are in the works/coming forward;
- Concern about there being too much high density development
- Council doesn't get enough input early on in the development application process to identify what they might support and what concerns they might have, and to ensure that developments match the community's vision for itself;
- Concern about the increased density in the revised Official Plan and about ensuring that the Town receives improvements/projects instead of cash-in-lieu;
- We need a scheme to put certainty into the process, and a means of quantitatively measuring the compatibility of new development proposals with the existing neighbourhoods;
- We need some education for Council re: the planning process and Council's role in it

## **Changing the County/Town Financial Arrangement**

Though not specifically raised by all members of Council, this was a common theme and appeared to be an election issue. Individual comments included:

- Current situation, with Town contributing 26% to County levy despite a much smaller proportion of the population, is inequitable;
- May require the Town to lobby the province for changes to legislation;
- Would like to assess where the County Transportation Management Plan stands, but do want to look at the County/Town arrangement;
- Would like to have an understanding of the existing relationship between the County and the City of Owen Sound re: maintenance of County roads within Owen Sound;
- We need to be prepared to go to the County with specific requests, not just complaints that we don't get enough for our tax dollars – determine what services or investments the Town needs that the County could bring/make to support the Town and maintain the Town as the economic engine of the County;

## **Communication & Council Process**

Individual comments under this theme included:

- Would like to see more frequent updates to Council re: ongoing projects;

- Would like to see better use of technology to provide public access to Council meetings and encourage our seasonal and part-time residents to become more involved – web casting meetings is one option – need to find new ways to communicate with residents, receive input, solicit ideas, create community discussions;
- Would like to see more public participation;
- Would like to see some changes to how we do in camera meetings
- Need a way to develop a strategy for the term of Council, to establish realistic goals and have Council provide direction on reaching our goals.

### Next Steps

It is suggested that, at the December 8, 2014 Committee of the Whole meeting, members of Council have some discussion about the four (4) theme areas highlighted above, along the lines of:

- Do you agree/is there a consensus that these are areas that need to be focussed on for improvement?
- Are there other broad themes (as opposed to specific operational items/issues) that Council, as a consensus group, feels are not reflected in these four themes?

### **Ongoing/Planned Actions**

Fortunately, there are already some ongoing and planned projects and initiatives that address aspects of the theme areas identified in the discussions with members of Council, and which may also address any other themes identified by Council. It is recommended that Staff bring a report back to Committee of the Whole on January 12, 2015 to identify and explain those projects and initiatives and their status.

### **Future Actions**

For each of the general theme areas identified earlier in this report, individual members of Council had their own thoughts and ideas about specific actions that could be taken to help make improvements. Not all of those thoughts and ideas necessarily complimented each other, and so Council will need to find a way to come to consensus regarding how to identify and prioritize actions moving forward. As one member of Council put it, Council needs a way "...to establish realistic goals for the term of Council and provide direction on how to reach those goals."

There are a number of approaches that can be taken to help Council build consensus about goals and identifying additional projects/initiatives/actions. In past, the Town has completed a number of strategy documents, such as its 2005 Strategic Plan; The Blue Mountains Sustainable Path; The Red Hot & Blue Economic Development Strategic Plan; Community Improvement Plan; Official Plan, etc.

In terms of helping Council identify and establish goals and action plans for the next 4 years, at the December 8, 2014 Committee of the Whole meeting, it would be helpful for Staff to get a sense from Council as to whether they envision engaging in a full-blown

community strategic planning exercise to achieve that end; or whether Council perhaps envisions a simpler process of reviewing existing strategic documents and perhaps having facilitated Council discussions/workshops geared toward identifying and prioritizing goals and actions flowing from those existing documents and feedback from members of Council and Staff.

Using that feedback received from the Committee on December 8, it is recommended that Staff report back to Council at the January 12, 2015 Committee of the Whole meeting with options for possible processes for Council to consider to help Council and Staff develop and establish realistic goals and action plans for the term of this Council, including goals and actions that build on the themes highlighted in this report.

#### **D. The Blue Mountains' Strategic Plan**

*"Providing a strong, well-managed Municipal Government."*

#### **E. Environmental Impacts**

N/A

#### **F. Financial Impact**

N/A

#### **G. In Consultation With**

Senior Management Team

#### **H. Attached**

None.

Respectfully submitted,

Troy Speck  
Chief Administrative Officer