

COUNTY/CITY LIAISON MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 23, 2019

Accessible formats available upon request.

Elgin County Council and staff and the City of St. Thomas Council and staff met this day at the Administration Building at 4:00 p.m.

Welcome and Introductions

Warden McPhail and Mayor Preston welcomed all in attendance for joining them today. The meeting kicked off with all in attendance introducing themselves and sharing their positions for their respective local government. Both the Warden and Mayor mentioned how they were excited to finally have this meeting and hope this will help to strengthen the County/City relationship moving forward.

Overview of County Governance Structure – Julie Gonyou, CAO, Elgin County

Julie Gonyou, Chief Administration Officer provided a brief overview of the County structure and how the County and lower-tier municipal partners work together. Details were provided on how Council Meetings work at the County level, the different departments and what they are responsible for, and focused on how the County and constituent municipalities differ from each other and how they work independently of one another, but offer support for one another when needed.

Ms. Gonyou went on to provide details about shared services within Elgin such as an accessibility coordinator; integrity commissioner/closed meeting investigator; road maintenance agreement; legal services; fire trainer/community emergency management (starting at some point in 2019); and support with lower-tiers.

Overview of Shared Services – Wendell Graves, City Manager

Wendell Graves, City Manager, thanked Julie for her overview and mentioned how it was an important component for City staff to better understand how the County works and what its responsibilities are. Mr. Graves outlined some of the services that are currently shared between the County and the City which include emergency medical services; provincial offences courts; health recruitment; adult day program (Valleyview); and social services in a variety of ways.

Mr. Graves also highlighted services that are shared with the lower-tier municipalities such as animal control services, community recycling centre, mutual aid, primary/secondary water systems, access to pollution control plant, land use planning and winter maintenance activities to name a few.

Highlights from the County – Warden McPhail

Before providing County Council priorities, the Warden talked about the importance of neighbours working together and how important it is to get an action plan between the two local governments.

The Warden went on to underscore the 2019 Capital Budget and the County's 10 year plan. He mentioned the importance of understanding "wants" vs. "needs". Some of the major capital projects that were discussed include the Terrace Lodge Redevelopment, Provincial Offences Act Facility, Port Bruce Bridge, and broadband internet for the rural areas.

Warden McPhail discussed the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus and some of the initiatives they are working on and their general structure and key roles in helping neighbouring counties come together on different initiatives.

The Warden ended his presentation with the sentiment that neighbors should only need to call if they need help with any initiative.

Highlights from the City– Mayor Preston

Mayor Preston shared Warden McPhail's sentiment that the two parties need to work together and that getting together to have these discussions more often would be beneficial.

The Mayor presented those in attendance with some of the important City initiatives. The new affordable housing (with childcare) in the downtown core has been a major priority including other existing housing around the City; reviewing social services and long-term care/adult day programs is also being conducted. Urban Settlement Area is a major priority as the boundaries have expanded as far as they can go. Mutual respect and conversation between these municipalities is essential. A full review of the transit system is underway and they are looking at all the possibilities to improve the existing coordination. Industrial land has been purchased and finding the right businesses to bring to St. Thomas will be very important for economic development.

The Mayor gave credit to Councillor Steve Peters as well about the importance of making these neighbouring relationships as positive as possible and to make sure we help each other as best as we can.

Discussion

The Warden and Mayor agreed that the first line of action is to open up the communication lines and make sure that they continue to be open the next four years and into the future.

The CAO and City Manager were asked to come up with new ways to continue to strengthen this relationship. The Mayor also mentioned that the Regional Mayors and the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus would like to open lines of communications.

Councillor Koehler mentioned that there is a lot of low hanging fruit to combine on and show how these relationships can be successful. Councillor Stevenson agreed with Councillor Koehler's sentiment as it will show the citizens that they can work together and be successful.

Councillor Herbert asked for a list of everyone's name and titles to help remember County employees. Legislative Services Coordinator, Dan Scheid, will provide this information.

Councillor Peters asked how best to get the lower-tier municipalities engaged. Warden McPhail says he hopes that the information will flow down from the County Council. Another option he mentioned was that he and the Mayor visit each lower-tier. The Mayor mentioned that two-way communication will be important as the lower tiers will provide valuable information on what needs to be focused on and how everyone can help each other. Councillor Martyn mentioned that Minutes should be shared with the lower-tiers to ensure they are kept in the loop as well.

Councillor Peters referenced the former Elgin St. Thomas Municipal Association and asked if a similar joint event could be arranged so everyone can meet each other and help understand where everyone is coming from. Warden McPhail mentioned that the City-County Liaison Committee could arrange for this to happen and the Mayor was in agreeance.

Councillor Stevenson mentioned that it may help if a third party was present to facilitate a structured meeting. The CAO and City Manager will help with this process.

Discussion came to an end at 5:08 p.m.