
ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AGENDA

Wednesday, March 31, 2021
10:00 a.m.
Meeting to be held electronically.

Agenda

1. Approval of Agenda
 2. Adoption of February 24, 2021 Minutes
 3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest
 4. Kettle Creek Conservation Authority Update – Naturalized Areas at County Administration Building – Councillor Jones
 5. Green Procurement Update – Sarah Emons
 6. Roadside Environments – Brian Lima, Director of Engineering Services
 7. Official Plan Review Stakeholder Discussion – Nancy Pasato, Manager of Planning
 8. Correspondence – none.
 9. Date of Next Meeting
 10. Adjournment
-

Meeting: Environmental Advisory Committee
Date: February 24, 2021
Time: 11:00 a.m.
Location: Webex

Attendees: Tom Marks, Warden
Grant Jones, Councillor, Chair
Sally Martyn, Councillor, Vice-Chair
Robert Braam, Community Member
Sarah Emons, Community Member
Michaela Lenz, Community Member
Ray Price, Community Member
Kim Smale, Community Member

Staff: Julie Gonyou, Chief Administrative Officer
Katherine Thompson, Supervisor of Legislative Services
Carolyn Krahn, Legislative Services Coordinator

DRAFT MINUTES

1. Call to Order

The Environmental Advisory Committee met this 24th day of February, 2021. The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m.

2. Approval of Agenda

Moved by: Sarah Emons
Seconded by: Councillor Martyn

Resolved that the agenda be approved as presented.

Recorded Vote

	Yes	No
Warden Marks	Yes	

Councillor Martyn	Yes	
Michaela Lenz	Yes	
Ray Price	Yes	
Rob Braam	Yes	
Kim Smale	Yes	
Sarah Emons	Yes	
Councillor Jones	Yes	
	8	0

- Motion Carried.

3. Adoption of January 27, 2021 Minutes

Moved by: Warden Marks

Seconded by: Rob Braam

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting be adopted.

Recorded Vote

	Yes	No
Warden Marks	Yes	
Councillor Martyn	Yes	
Michaela Lenz	Yes	
Ray Price	Yes	
Rob Braam	Yes	
Kim Smale	Yes	
Sarah Emons	Yes	
Councillor Jones	Yes	
	8	0

- Motion Carried.

4. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

None.

5. Environmental Advisory Committee Priorities – Updates

- a. Naturalized spaces north of the County Administration Building – Councillor Jones



Councillor Jones presented an update from his conversation with Betsy McClure from Kettle Creek Conservation Area Authority regarding the naturalized spaces north of the County Administration Building. She is interested in looking at a possible project, but would like to wait until the snow is not quite as deep. Councillor Jones will follow up with Betsy McClure once conditions are more favourable.

b. Green Purchasing Initiatives Update – Sarah Emons

Sarah Emons presented an update on green purchasing initiatives. Sarah Emons and Ray Price have reviewed the Elgin County procurement policy and have spoken with the County's Procurement Coordinator. They have reviewed policies from other municipalities, the private sector and universities. There is some language around environmental considerations in the County's procurement policy, but there is room for some improvements.

A formal policy around sustainable purchasing should include a clear definition of the word *sustainable*, which would include specific environmental parameters such as pollutant releases, toxicity, waste generation, water efficiency, greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumptions, renewable energy, depletion of natural resources, recyclability, and recycled content. These factors would be used to determine not just the least expensive option, but also to consider other costs related to the life cycle assessment.

Sarah Emons and Ray Price will follow up with the Purchasing Coordinator and report back to Committee at a future meeting.

c. Outline of Official Plan Review and Roadside Vegetation Management – Rob Braam

Rob Braam provided a presentation on roadside vegetation management and the benefits of integrated roadside vegetation management.

The presentation will be reviewed by the Manager of Planning and Director of Engineering Services, who will provide more information about roadside vegetation management at an upcoming meeting.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee will meet again on Mach 31, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.

7. Adjournment

Moved by: Rob Braam

Seconded by: Councillor Martyn

RESOLVED THAT the meeting be adjourned at 11:49 a.m.

Recorded Vote

	Yes	No
Warden Marks	Yes	
Councillor Martyn	Yes	
Michaela Lenz	Yes	
Ray Price	Yes	
Rob Braam	Yes	
Kim Smale	Yes	
Sarah Emons	Yes	
Councillor Jones	Yes	
	8	0

- Motion Carried.



REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

FROM: Brian Lima, Director of Engineering Services
Peter Dutchak, Deputy Director of Engineering Services

DATE: March 31, 2020

SUBJECT: Roadside Environments

RECOMMENDATIONS:

THAT the report titled, "Roadside Environments", be received and filed.

INTRODUCTION:

The County, through our Road Maintenance Agreement (RMA) with our municipal partners, maintains the road property right of ways (ROWs) primarily to maintain sightlines and ensure drainage facilities function as designed. Based on experience with the current RMA, some vegetation control obligations have been difficult for municipalities to complete. This report will discuss the intent and options for municipalities to manage roadside environments.

DISCUSSION:

Elgin's municipal partners have been maintaining County roads since 1998 through Road Maintenance Agreements (RMAs). One of the important maintenance activities is to maintain the roadside environment. The main goals of vegetation control within the roadside ROW includes:

- Keeping signs, road geometry and intersections visible to motorists;
- Keeping road users (vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians) visible to drivers;
- Improving visibility of wildlife near the road;
- Removing trees which could pose a collision hazard;
- Improving winter road maintenance by reducing drifting and shading;
- Ensuring drainage systems function as designed;
- Preserving pavements through daylighting and root system control;
- Controlling noxious weeds and invasive species; and,
- Aesthetics

Historically, vegetation control within the County ROWs has been completed with two (2) cuts along the road shoulders, a minimum of 3.6m wide cut in the spring, and, a minimum of 1.8m wide cut in the fall annually. In addition, vegetation around guide rails and in the vicinity of intersections is also cut to uncover roadside hazards and maintain sightlines.

Following many years of this scope of roadside vegetation management, it was evident that mature growth (small trees, sumac, bushes, etc.) had begun to creep into the ROW

and simply cutting was insufficient to push the growth back to reclaim the road property limits. Therefore, the current RMA (effective 2018) included additional vegetation control requirements in an attempt to reclaim the county road property by cutting the ROW to its full width once every 3 years. These additional services would be paid for at a rate per kilometre in addition to the annual allocation provided to municipalities for road maintenance services.

After 2 years' experience with the new RMA requirements, staff has received feedback from the local municipal road supervisors citing difficulty in achieving the intended results due to roadside topography, the need for specialized equipment and difficulty securing contractors to complete the cutting.

As a result of these discussions with the local road supervisors, municipalities are afforded two options to manage the vegetation within the ROW, in the area between the annual 3.6m wide cutting to the road property limits.

1. Municipalities may mechanically cut the ROW to the road property limits, once every 3 years as specified in the RMA and be reimbursed as per the rate identified in the RMA.
2. If full width ROW cutting is not selected, municipalities may allow this area to grow and become naturalized so long as sight lines are maintained and drainage facilities are not impeded. In this scenario, municipalities are further obligated to eradicate invasive and noxious weeds either mechanically or by adhering to the County's approved herbicide spraying policy (attached for Council's information). The eradication and control of invasive phragmites is being managed separately though the Council approved Phragmites Action Plan beginning in 2020.

Regardless of the method selected to manage the roadside environment, municipalities shall continue to cut back larger vegetation before the canopy begins to encroach the road property when it becomes more difficult and costlier to remove.

CONCLUSION:

The spirit of the Road Maintenance Agreement with the County's municipal partners has always afforded each respective municipality the option of completing road maintenance services in the manner in which they choose so long as the end result is achieved. This flexibility allows municipalities to operate effectively with the resources they have available.

Vegetation control within the roadside environment is an important maintenance activity. The current RMA includes a responsibility to remove vegetation to the road property limits once every 3 years in order to manage growth from becoming larger and difficult to remove. Flexibility exists for member municipalities to perform mechanical cutting or to allow naturalization of the ROW. Regardless of the methods selected, larger growth (trees, sumac, etc.) shall be removed before it becomes more difficult and costlier. Eradication of invasive species and noxious weeds can be managed following the County's spraying policy.

All of which is Respectfully Submitted

Approved for Submission

Brian Lima
Director of Engineering Services

Julie Gonyou
Chief Administrative Officer

Peter Dutchak
Deputy Director of Engineering Services



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- MTO Maintenance Manual – Environmental Protection
- MTO Maintenance Manual – Occupational Health and Safety Hazards

NO SPRAY POLICY

The "blanket" spraying of herbicides to proactively destroy unwanted vegetation is not permitted by the County of Elgin. Spraying herbicides strictly for cosmetic purposes is also not permitted.

Road side spraying is not permitted unless, in the opinion of the Road Supervisor, one or more of the following criteria presents itself:

EXCEPTIONS:

- 1) **Inaccessible areas**- some road properties cannot be accessed by mechanical equipment or workers due to unsafe working conditions. For example, this would include steep slopes and farm entranceways where safety is a concern.
- 2) **Public safety concerns**- road properties that contain overgrown and invasive species as well as noxious weeds that have the potential to create unsafe conditions along the roadway. Sight line obstructions at intersections and around fixed hazards close to the travelled portion of the road must be addressed.
- 3) **Noxious weeds**- densely populated areas of invasive species and noxious weeds (as identified by the Weed Control Act) shall be removed in a manner that prohibits their return or spread to an adjacent area.
- 4) **Previous Mechanical Removal Attempts Were Unsuccessful** - when previous attempts of removing unwanted vegetation have not been successful, these previous attempts shall be documented.

If and when herbicides are used, they must be applied in strict accordance with Provincial regulations and manufacturer's directions. This includes and is not limited to public notices, climate restrictions and avoiding environmentally sensitive areas. The County of Elgin's Salt Management Plan identifies sensitive areas adjacent to county roads and should be used as a minimum baseline guide identifying sensitive areas not to use herbicides. Herbicides shall be selected to target specific unwanted species and be approved for use by Health Canada.



OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW



Official Plan Review

County of Elgin
Stakeholder Discussions
Environmental Committee



ElginCounty
Progressive by Nature

Environmental Policy in Ontario

- Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) - Natural features and areas shall be protected for the long term; water conservation/protection; natural hazards; NEW climate change
- County Official Plan - reflects PPS; more detailed policies on natural heritage features, determining significance, Environmental Impact Studies (EIS), water resources, natural hazards
- Local Official Plan(s) - same as County, more detail, many include hazard lands
- Other documents: Natural Heritage Reference Manual, Ontario Wetland Evaluation System, Significant Wildlife Habitat Technical Guide
- Role of Conservation Authorities - wetlands, stormwater management, source water protection, hazards and erosion

Elgin Natural Heritage Study

- 2013 County OP *"It is a policy of this Plan that the establishment of a natural heritage system be considered at the time of the next Official Plan Review"*.
- 2019 draft Elgin Natural Heritage Systems Study (ENHSS) - evaluates the existing ecologically important terrestrial (land) resources of the county based on 2015 aerial photography (orthoimagery) using scientific methods and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) modeling

Official Plan 5 year Review - Discussion

1. What is the mandate of your organization?
2. What role does your organization play/ how is your organization affected by development?
3. What is your organization's position on development in the County of Elgin?
4. What, if any, legislation or policy changes have occurred since the last Official Plan (2013) process related to your service/area?
5. What is your vision for the County of Elgin?
6. What do you want the Elgin County Official Plan to prioritize over the next 5-10 years?
7. What sections of the current Official Plan would you like to discuss? Which provisions are critical to maintain? Are there areas of concern?
8. What are your key priorities for the next 5-10 years?
9. Are there sections/provisions contained within the Provincial Policy Statement or Planning Act that you would like to discuss?
10. How can the County of Elgin work with you?

Comments from last meeting

- Naturalization of drains and roadside management - no policy at this time; explore what could be done i.e. Management Plan; add policies to OP; privately owned lands vs. County owned lands vs. local municipality?
- Enhance corridors and linkages - ENHSS did not presume where linkages could be done; identify potential linkages would require study and funding; presume that exploration of corridors and linkages would be done through future applications as part of an EIS
- Implement Climate Change Action Plan - land use planning - PPS includes climate change considerations in local and County plans; make climate change mitigation and adaptation mandatory in municipal official plans
- Enhanced education - education is key for residents to understand impacts and stewardship
- Studies on features - no funds at this time; would need landowner support in order to conduct these types of studies
- Others?

Next steps

- Comments from Environmental Committee on current OP
- Members can also comment individually:
 - ✓ www.elgin.ca/officialplanreview
 - ✓ Email: opreview@elgin.ca
 - ✓ Survey on webpage
 - ✓ Call: 519-631-1460
 - ✓ Mail: OP Review, 450 Sunset Drive, St. Thomas, ON, N5R 5V1
 - ✓ Deadline: April 15th
- “What we heard” , issues scoping
- Elgin Natural Heritage Study - posted on webpage soon, comments and public meeting July/Aug on draft