

January 26, 2021

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## SCOR EDC Update on Cayuga Short Line Rail Discontinuance

The South-Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corporation (SCOR) provided Council with an overview of the issues facing the region particularly in relation to the discontinuance of the Cayuga Short Line Rail. The Cayuga Short Line Rail runs from New Sarum, through Aylmer and Tillsonburg and ends just west of Delhi. In 2020 CN issued a notice of discontinuance of the Cayuga Line and this process is underway.

SCOR noted that aging infrastructure particularly rail infrastructure, the discontinuance of the Cayuga Line and the global pandemic all pose threats to the growth of advanced manufacturing in the region.

The SCOR EDC Lead is working with a short line rail provider to develop a business case/feasibility study on the re-start of rail operations on the Cayuga Subdivision.

The full presentation from the SCOR EDC can be found in the January 26, 2021 Elgin County Council Agenda Package.

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## Council Provides Letter of Support for Broadband Application

At the recommendation of the Connectivity Committee, Council considered and consented to providing a letter of support for Xplornet for the company's application to the Universal Broadband Fund (UBF) for the installation of fibre infrastructure in several underserved locations across the County.

The Connectivity Committee continues its work towards finding a "Made in Elgin" solution for internet connectivity challenges facing residents in rural Elgin County. Providing letters of support for proposed projects in Elgin is one way that the Committee and County Council can advocate for better service for Elgin residents.

For more information about the activities of the Connectivity Committee please visit: [www.elgincounty.ca/connectivitycommittee](http://www.elgincounty.ca/connectivitycommittee)

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## Tree Commissioner Update

### **Quarterly Report – October – December 2020**

The Tree Commissioner provided a summary of activity related to the Elgin Woodlands Conservation By-Law for the period of October 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020 and weed inspection activity for the same period.

A total of 18 applications to harvest were submitted from October 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020. The total forested area involved in these harvests was approximately 655 acres. Applications for Woodland Clearings: Four (4) Council Exemption for Woodland Clearing applications were received between October 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020 for the clearing of approximately 3.89 hectares. No weed complaints were received during this time.

The Tree Commissioner also provided education regarding a series of invasive trees and shrubs including, Autumn Olive, Norway Maple, European Buckthorn and Tartarian Honeysuckle. More information about these invasive can be found in the January 26, 2021 County Council Agenda Package.

### **Annual Report 2020**

A total of 68 applications to harvest were submitted from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020. The total forested area involved in these harvests was approximately 1500 acres. There were 7 applications received to clear portions of woodlands within the county in 2020, for a total area to be cleared of approximately 6.39 hectares (~15.7 acres). A total of 12 complaints were received over the 2020 season.

### **Clearing Exemption Application**

Elgin County Council approved a Clearing Exemption Application for Part Lots 7 & B, Range 1, North of Lake Road in the Township of Southwold, on the condition that the applicant plant 420 trees as per the County's "No Net Loss" policy. The full report can be found in the January 26, 2021 County Council Agenda Package.

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## Terrace Lodge Redevelopment Budget Update

Councillor Purcell, Chair of the Terrace Lodge Redevelopment Steering Committee presented a report to Council regarding the budget for the Terrace Lodge Redevelopment project.

Tender bids have resulted in a Construction Manager cost of \$29,086,452 and ancillary/soft costs (includes design, project management and fixtures and equipment) of \$5,614,031 for a total project cost estimate of \$34,700,483. In December, the province confirmed changes to the funding for LTC development. The Construction Funding Subsidy per diem is increased to \$21.28,

providing the equivalent of \$1.9 million in incremental funding. Additionally, the province has announced a development grant of up to \$2,492,000.

The net impact of tender pricing and increased funding allows the Redevelopment Steering Committee to recommend that \$1.4 million of the provincial funds be directed to County Council for other purposes. It is anticipated that on-site work will begin in February 2021.

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## Elgin Awards Contract for Port Bruce Temporary Panel Bridge & Boat Launch Removal Engineering Services

County Council voted to sole source the provision of detailed design and contract administration engineering services associated with the Port Bruce Temporary Panel Bridge & Boat Launch Removal in the amount of \$29,380.00 (excluding HST), to CIMA Canada Inc. as part of the ongoing Meeks Bridge Replacement engineering assignment previously awarded to the company by Council on December 12, 2019.

Following the collapse of the Imperial Road Bridge in 2018, a temporary bridge was installed to restore vehicular and active transportation traffic across Catfish Creek. Impacts associated with this temporary bridge's location and footprint prompted the need to install a temporary boat launch on Rush Creek Line. Prior to the installation of this temporary boat launch, the County of Elgin obtained the required agency approvals from the provincial Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority and acquired short-term jurisdiction over affected road allowances from the Township of Malahide. As part of these approvals and agreements, the County of Elgin is required to remove the temporary boat launch and restore the disturbed areas to pre-existing conditions after the construction and opening of the replacement bridge on Imperial Road.

The temporary bridge will be relocated and utilized for the replacement of Meeks Bridge in Southwold Township.

More details about the removal of the Port Bruce Temporary Bridge and the Temporary Boat Launch are contained within the January 26, 2021 County Council Agenda Package.

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## Renovations of Council Chambers, Administration Building Lobby and Reception Kiosk

As identified in the proposed 2021 Capital Budget, Council approved additional architectural design and construction administration scope of services to be included in L360 Architecture's ongoing Administration Building Accessibility Elevator Addition and Basement Public Accessibility Washroom Upgrades Project assignment.

These additional services are associated with the renovation of Council Chambers, the establishment of a designated front lobby reception

service kiosk, and decommissioning of the existing elevators. This combined scope of work will result in a more efficient and consistent design, and contract administration. Once completed, the project will comply with the Province's Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act requirements for redeveloped public facilities.

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## CSWB Plan Update

The County of Elgin continues to work in conjunction with the Town of Aylmer and the City of St. Thomas to develop a Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan in accordance with the requirements of Bill 175 – The Safer Ontario Act. The Plan will identify priority risk factors as well as threats to safety and well-being and outline strategies and actions to improve safety and well-being for our community.

Planning for a CSWB Plan has been ongoing since March 2020. The planning process includes four (4) Phases:

Phase 1: Project Planning and Onboarding  
Phase 2: Research and Asset Mapping  
Phase 3: Community Engagement  
Phase 4: Plan Development

Community Engagement is ongoing throughout the process and Plan Development is now underway. The deadline to adopt this Plan is July 1, 2021.

A detailed account of Committee activities is contained within the January 26, 2021 County Council Agenda Package.

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## Council Approves Strategic Work Plan for 2021

Elgin County Council continued its work on the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan at a planning session held on January 20, 2021. At this meeting, Council developed a 2021 Council Work Plan with associated timelines. Council formally approved this work plan at its meeting on January 26, 2021. Click [here](#) for a copy of the 2021 Council Work Plan.

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## Elgin County Approves Environmental Committee Priorities for 2021

Elgin County Council approved the following Environmental Advisory Committee priorities for 2021:

- 1) Advise County Council on environmental policy and sustainable matters and programs to promote the protection, enhancement, and management of the County's natural and built environment;
  - Move to a paperless environment
  - Look at ditches along roads as ecosystems

- Environmental Committee Members can participate in the 2021 Official Plan 5-year review/Natural Heritage System Study review public consultation process.
- Naturalized spaces north of the County Building
- Identify ways to increase habitats for local species (e.g. Bat boxes, etc.)

2) Research environmental sustainability practices to improve information available to County Council.

- Research best practices associated with sustainable green purchasing policy (in collaboration with Local Municipal Partners)

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## Council Sets Service Delivery Review Priorities for 2021

In November of 2020 Elgin County Council received the Final Service Delivery Review Report which included 110 unique recommendations for improvements to Elgin County's services. At its meeting on January 26, 2021, Elgin County Council determined which priorities would be included in the 2021 draft Budget. These priorities are as follows:

### **Long-Term Care Homes**

- Monitor provincial policy changes and how it affects the County homes (ongoing);
- Continue to advocate for increased funding to offset the Homes costs to the County (ongoing);
- Continue to explore recruitment initiatives with Human Resources (ongoing);
- Invest in online scheduling and online recruitment software (2021); and,
- Include annual direct costs of \$38,000 and annual direct savings of \$60,000 in the Draft 2021 Budget to support the aforementioned initiatives.

### **Organizational Review**

- Staff were directed to consider the options included in the Service Delivery Review for an improved Organizational Design and present options to Elgin County Council in 2021 for implementation in 2022.

### **Improvements to Manual Processes**

- County Council directed staff to create training manuals for digital tools, as needed; and
- To formalize an internal Project Management structure to support initiatives identified in the Service Delivery Review to improve manual processes.

### **Information Technology (IT)**

- Elgin County Council directed staff to develop a 2021 Action Plan followed by a three-year digital transformation strategy in 2022; and
- To include a placeholder of \$170,000 in the draft 2021 budget and consider adding an IT Director to the current staffing complement.

### **Collaborative Initiatives with Elgin's Municipal Partners**

- Elgin County Council directed staff to undertake the following actions as recommended in the Service Delivery Review: codify consultation processes for new shared services; codify risk mitigation strategies into new agreements; undertake independent appraisals for the costs of delivery for shared services (costs to be shared); avoid using a weighted County levy option for cost structures going forward; add shared services as a standing item on the County-Local Municipal Partner CAO meeting agendas; establish governing processes for the current advisory committee (Public Works Managers Working Group) for road maintenance agreement; and conduct annual review of all shared services.

### **Road Maintenance Agreement**

- Staff were directed to work with Local Municipal Partners to review Schedule C – Scope of Services Expectations and prepare a Request for Proposal for review by Local Municipal Partners and Council prior to issuance; and
- The Warden was directed to notify Local Municipal Partners that Service Coordination – Road Maintenance Agreement Review has been identified by Council as a priority for 2021; and
- To include a placeholder of \$150,000 in the 2021 Draft Budget for consultant fees associated with a review of the RMA.

### **In-House Engineering Design & Adjusting Job Titles to Reflect Roles and Responsibilities**

- Staff were directed to prepare a business case for Council's review that includes costs, opportunities, and savings associated with the recommendation to deliver engineering design in-house for consideration in 2021; and

- To include placeholder of \$110,500 in the 2021 Draft Budget to support the capital cost-savings opportunity associated with bringing Engineering design in-house.

### **Development Services**

- Council will include \$10,000 for software subscriptions in the 2021 Draft Budget to support a streamlined process of submitting forms for review by the Land Division Committee.

### **Human Resources**

- Staff were directed to present information with respect to an hourly HR Consulting services rate and list of offerings, following a discussion with LMPs, for Council's consideration and direction in July/August 2021.

### **Library Services**

- Staff were directed to work with St. Thomas Public Library to identify opportunities for enhanced partnerships and opportunities to jointly plan for a future library location in a coordinated approach to reduce future capital and operating expenses; and,
- To work with St. Thomas Public Library on joint procurement initiatives that target savings of \$15,000 - \$45,000 for the draft 2022 budget.

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## **Elgin County Launches Official Plan Process**

The County of Elgin has launched its Official Plan Review process. This process will include considerable public and stakeholder consultations over the course of 2021 and will begin with a Special Meeting of County Council scheduled for February 25, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

An Official Plan is a legal statutory planning document required by the province that describes the County's land-use strategy. The County of Elgin's Official Plan includes the vision, goals and policy directions of the County, as established by the community, and provides guidance for land use planning decisions in the County; including:

- locations for settlement areas, agricultural lands, and natural heritage;
- when and in what order parts of our communities will grow; and
- protection for agricultural, mineral and environmental resources.

The County is required to update its Official Plan at least every five (5) years, in accordance with Section 26 of the Planning Act. The 2021 Review will ensure that the community vision/values, directions, policies and actions contained within the Plan reflect changes in the community



and meet the future needs of residents. It is also critical that the plan reflect any changes to the [Provincial Policy Statement](#) – a key document that governs planning in Ontario.

“The Official Plan acts as a road map for future development in Elgin County,” said Warden Tom Marks. “This document will shape how our communities grow and what they will look like in 25 years from now. It is important that this Plan reflects the values, needs and unique realities of our rural communities and urban centres alike. I encourage residents and stakeholders to take the opportunity to provide the County of Elgin with feedback throughout the process so that our Plan is in alignment with community priorities.”

The Special Meeting of County Council to discuss the Official Plan Review and hear comments from the public will be held on **Thursday February 25, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.** As a result of COVID-19 restrictions, the meeting will be held virtually and live-streamed over Elgin County’s Facebook page – [www.facebook.com/elgincountyadmin](http://www.facebook.com/elgincountyadmin). Any person is invited to attend and make comments at this meeting both over the phone or online via WebEx. **Only those that register will be permitted to participate during the meeting.** To register, send your request via email ([opreview@elgin.ca](mailto:opreview@elgin.ca)) or by phone (519-631-1460 ext. 183) no later than 4:30 p.m. on Monday, February 22, 2021.

Please include your first and last name, phone number, home address with postal code, and any prepared speaking notes with your email request.

For more information about the Elgin County Official Plan Review Process or to review a copy of Elgin County’s current Official Plan please visit [www.elgincounty.ca/officialplanreview](http://www.elgincounty.ca/officialplanreview).

## Contact Us

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The complete January 26, 2021 County Council Agenda package can be found [here](#).