

Municipality Of Chatham-Kent

Community Development

Planning Services

Information Report

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Gabriel Clarke, MES, BA
Environmental Planner I

Date: May 31, 2021

Subject: Community Engagement Process to Support Council's Motion on Woodlots

This report is for the information of Council.

Background

At its meeting held on April 26, 2021, Council approved a Motion brought forward by Councillor Aaron Hall regarding woodlots in Chatham Kent. Council's actions enacted a by-law to regulate the removal of woodlots for a period of 120 days. Administration was directed to undertake a number of actions, including:

1. Consider an incentive program, with the goal of preserving woodlots in the community and providing land owners with tangible and flexible options for being included in the program.
2. Launch a full public consultation process with interested parties, including virtual meetings and opportunities for comment on the Let's Talk Chatham-Kent portal.
3. Conduct an analysis of best practices for incentive programs and woodlot preservation across Ontario.
4. Revise and update, for Council's consideration, the current natural heritage policy.
5. Revise and update, for Council's consideration, the by-law from February 11, 2013.

6. Present to Council all summaries, findings, analysis, comments, feedback, updated policies and bylaws in a report with recommendations, within 90 days of this motion being approved.

Administration is undertaking to fulfil the direction of Council. The purpose of this report is to provide Council and the public with information about the public consultation process, specifically related to Item 2 outlined in the above directions.

Comments

Launching a Full Public Engagement Process

Administration has been directed to implement a full public engagement process to develop options for Council's consideration regarding woodlots in Chatham-Kent. In order to fulfill this direction, administration has implemented a community engagement process that includes the following elements:

1. A dedicated page on www.letstalkchatham-kent.ca. This page serves as the main public-facing project portal and contain a library of relevant documents, a registration function that allows interested residents to receive updates on the initiative and a link to a purpose-built online community engagement platform. The www.letstalkchatham-kent.ca page is planned to be launched on June 10, 2021.
2. Using the Ethelo online community engagement platform. Ethelo is a highly customizable community engagement platform that is designed to support democratic decision-making and assist communities to consider a range of alternatives on polarizing issues. The use of Ethelo to manage engagement activities provides a number of advantages that go beyond the traditional poll or survey, including:
 - a. A customized and professionally designed platform configuration process and layout that employs input instruments specifically tailored to the nature and goals of this community engagement.
 - b. A dynamic user feedback function that allows members of the public to identify their priorities and receive feedback on the implications of individual decisions on their larger priorities as they are going through the process and providing input.
 - c. A recorded introductory online engagement event modeled on the "world café" in-person community engagement process that includes an online discussion panel, professional third party facilitator and virtual small group discussions. The recording will be made available to those who are unable to attend the live event and serve as a background reference.
 - d. A temporary increase in available expertise and technical capacity.

The Ethelo engagement platform will serve as the primary instrument for collecting community input. The platform will be publicly launched to coincide with the June 14, 2021 Council meeting. Administration will provide Council and the public with a live demonstration of the platform at the Council meeting. The platform will remain live until July 9, 2021.

3. A multi-faceted community awareness and outreach campaign. Given the importance of the subject to Council and the community, administration have developed a diverse communications campaign that employs a variety of media to bring awareness to the engagement process. This campaign includes:
 - a. Direct mail-outs sent on June 10, 2021 to all landowners of woodlots that may potentially be impacted by future decisions. It is planned these will be received by landowners during the week of June 14, 2021. This mailing includes approximately 6000 recipients.
 - b. Soliciting written submissions directly from interested stakeholder groups and organizations, and inviting interested stakeholder groups and organizations to make submissions.
 - c. A media release to be published on June 15, 2021.
 - d. A radio ad campaign on local Chatham-Kent stations for the weeks of June 14 & 21, 2021, including CFCO and CKSX.
 - e. A newspaper ad campaign that will appear in newspapers with local circulation during the weeks of June 14 & 21, 2021, including:
 - i. Blenheim News Tribune
 - ii. Chatham Voice
 - iii. Chatham Daily News
 - iv. Chatham This Week
 - v. Ridgetown Independent News
 - vi. Southpoint Sun
 - vii. Sydenham Current
 - viii. Thamesville Herald
 - ix. Wallaceburg Courier Press
 - f. A social-media ad campaign targeted to residents of Chatham-Kent.

Consultation

No consultation was required for this report.

Financial Implications

The use of the Ethelo engagement platform for this initiative is funded through the Planning Services budget for the Climate Change Action Plan. Media advertising costs are funded through the Planning Services budget for advertising.

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Attachment(s): none