



Committee of the Whole Report

Report Number ED 2020-023

Meeting Date: November 3, 2020

Title: Economic Recovery Task Force Recommendations

Description: Action Plan recommendations from the Economic Recovery Task Force

Author and Title: Rebecca Mustard, Manager of Economic Development

Recommendation(s):

That Report ED2020-23, **Economic Recovery Task Force Recommendations**, be received;

That permit fees for park use, patios and events in 2021 be waived, with forecasted reduced revenue identified in the 2021 budget;

That the downtown Fenelon Falls reconstruction project be included as a decision unit in the 2021 capital budget;

That an increase in garbage cans and frequency of waste pick up in our downtowns and major parks be costed and included as a decision unit in the 2021 budget;

That portable washrooms and associated directional signage in our downtowns and parks be costed and included as a decision unit in the 2021 budget;

That accelerated investment in our boat launches and trails for improved access and enjoyment be costed and included as a decision unit in the 2021 budget;

That Council supports the work of EORN and EOWC for the Eastern Ontario “1 GIG” proposal for increased broadband capacity;

Department Head:_____

Financial/Legal/HR/Other:_____

Chief Administrative Officer:_____

That Council directs staff to develop a cultural sector recovery grant program for 2021, which could be applied to operating costs for our arts and culture community, and report back to council on the scope of the program by end of Q1 2021;

That Council approves a modified extension to the Kawartha Lakes Innovation Cluster Pilot program until December 31, 2021, through in-kind support to provide specific support for high growth businesses;

That Council endorses the Economic Recovery Task Force Action Plan as provided in Appendix A to this report; and

That these recommendations be brought forward to Council for consideration at the next Regular Council Meeting.

Background:

At the Council Meeting of May 26, 2020, Council adopted the following resolution:

CR2020-124
Moved By Councillor Veale
Seconded By Councillor Dunn

That Report ED2020-016, **Economic Recovery Taskforce Terms of Reference**, be received;

That the Economic Recovery Terms of Reference as outlined in Appendix A to report ED2020-016, be approved;

That Mayor Letham, Deputy Mayor Councillor O'Reilly, Councillor Seymour-Fagan, and Councillor Veale, and the Directors of Development Services and Engineering and Corporate Assets be appointed to the Economic Recovery Taskforce; and

That the appointed Task Force members be delegated the authority to appoint the community representatives to the Task Force from the sectors as identified in the Terms of Reference.

Carried

The Economic Recovery Task Force Terms of Reference included the activity to “guide the development of a Kawartha Lakes Economic Recovery Plan”. This report addresses that direction.

Rationale:

The Task Force was established to provide advice and recommendations to Council and Staff on resources and support to stimulate local economic recovery from the of the COVID-19 pandemic with a focus on three (3) strategic areas;

- i. **Critical infrastructure investments:** Refinement, prioritization and promotion of critical infrastructure projects that will stimulate construction and job creation including; active municipal and 3rd party construction projects; potential upcoming construction work; development driven construction;
- ii. **Planning and Development Stimulus:** Advance a focused approach to a streamlined execution of development policy and approvals for shovel ready planning and development projects to stimulate private sector construction and residential and non-residential growth;

iii. Business Recovery and Support; Survey of local businesses to understand the Kawartha Lakes business experience, and identify gaps in current funding and support programs, and propose initiatives to address immediate and future challenges to support business.

Between June and October, 2020, the Task Force met regularly. Input to the Task Force was received from the 502 Kawartha Lakes COVID-19 Business Survey responses, sector based Working Group sessions held in June and September, and the Jump-In online engagement platform. Update memorandums were presented to Council during this time for immediate decision to support economic recovery.

The Economic Recovery Task Force Action Plan: Transformational Change

During the Task Force discussions, and input received from the local business community, it became evident that the directions of existing strategic plans were well positioned to support local economic recovery and required a re-prioritization of identified actions to address the economic realities of the pandemic.

The Economic Recovery Task Force Action Plan (Appendix A) is a strategic, transformational response to support local economic recovery. It proposes to shift the priorities and timelines of existing activities, and in some cases, to accelerate plans for the benefit of economic recovery. The Action Plan maintains a focus on the three strategic focus areas; critical infrastructure investments, planning and development stimulus, and business recovery and support.

Overall, the most important priority is the improvement of broadband across Kawartha Lakes. The City is currently working with the Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) and the Eastern Ontario Warden's Caucus (EOWC) on the Gig Project to deliver ultra-fast internet speeds to homes and businesses.

Another major focus of the Task Force was to look at improving the efficiency and timeliness of the Planning Application process and as a result the customer service to the public. In order to achieve this, a Development Task Force Sub-Committee was established to address these issues. Three initiatives that came out of this Sub-Committee include:

1. Fast tracking a number of "shovel ready" Planning applications to ensure that these developments could get started as quickly as possible. This included 280 apartment units, 178 Townhouses and 300 sq. m. of commercial development;
2. The creation of a planning application spreadsheet that identifies every ongoing application along with the planner that is working on the application and what stage in the process the application is at. This spreadsheet will be an important tool to provide staff, management and the public with more timely responses to inquiries and to schedule applications for upcoming Planning Advisory Committee meetings;

3. Development and implementation of the Kawartha Lakes Development Concierge Pilot Project; a nine (9) month pilot project focused on Site Plan applications. The intent of this project is to use an Economic Development Officer (Emily Turner) to provide additional help to the applicant in going through the steps in a Site Plan application process. This project will not only improve the customer service but reduce some of the time Planning staff need to spend guiding the applicant through the application process. This pilot project will be reviewed with the potential to expand to other planning applications (Appendix B).

Other actions that were implemented over the last 6 months to support an immediate response to the pandemic include;

- Development and execution of Shop Kawartha Lakes and Tourism marketing campaigns. Both campaigns are underway and have been strategically created to respond to the changing travel and health requirements of the pandemic while supporting consumer spending in local businesses;
- Million Dollar Makeover program (Strategic Community Improvement Plan) opened the next application intake in mid-October and is accepting a broader range of grant and loan applications to stimulate private sector investment in property improvements;
- Patio expansions to parking lots and sidewalks were allowed throughout 2020 to help businesses adapt to health and social distancing requirements;
- Fees for the use of parks, patios and events were waived in 2020 to encourage and recognize new ways of doing business and events;
- Three (3) property tax payment due dates were deferred in recognition of the financial challenges caused by the pandemic on all property owners;
- Exemption for payment of industrial and up to 2,500 sq.ft. commercial Development Charges remain in place until 2021 to stimulate new development;
- Support for the digital transformation of local businesses through the Digital Main Street and other affiliated programs.

Actions for Council's 2021 budget deliberations include;

- Increased program support for garbage collection and removal in downtowns and parks to promote community pride and tourism;
- Investing in tourism infrastructure to strengthen Kawartha Lakes' long term position as a destination through the redevelopment/reconstruction of Downtown Fenelon Falls, boat launches and trails for improved access and enjoyment, and increased signage and portable washrooms in downtowns;
- Direct funding support to local cultural organizations to support the acute needs of this sector that is a strategic, long term driver of the local economy.

An extension to the Kawartha Lakes Innovation Cluster pilot project is also requested until December 2021. The pilot project provides specialized support

services to high growth businesses to assist with the development and attraction of innovation companies in Kawartha Lakes. Despite closing the Lindsay incubator space in March, 2020, the Innovation Cluster has been successful in meeting client targets using virtual platforms. The pilot program concludes December 31, 2020, with an opportunity to extend the pilot project. Due to the success of the project to date in difficult pandemic circumstances, the request is to extend the project until December 2021 with in-kind support through the provision of low cost or no cost space.

Longer term actions include;

- Investing in improved broadband in Kawartha Lakes through the EORN “1 Gig” project or, if the project proposal does not go forward, consideration for investing in a ‘made in Kawartha Lakes’ solution;
- Accelerating the timelines to implement a cultural organization funding model identified in the Kawartha Lakes Cultural Master Plan to ensure the sustainability of this sector to stimulate economic growth throughout the community;
- Accelerating the Transit Master Plan actions to support workforce and education needs. This includes both intra-regional and inter-regional transportation solutions that move workforce and students to and from their place of work and study and supports the labour force needs of local businesses;
- Increasing the number, and diversity, of housing stock across the City with an interest in repatriating and attracting residents to build a sustainable and strong local workforce and welcome entrepreneurs;
- Recognizing the importance of post-secondary institutions in shaping the future workforce, with a continued focus on working with Fleming College – Frost Campus and other academic partners to meet the local labour market needs of tomorrow.

All the priorities identified support the direction of existing strategic plans through reshaping and/or organizing actions to position Kawartha Lakes in economic response and recovery.

Kawartha Lakes Economic Development Strategy

The Action Plan addresses a municipal wide response to support economic recovery in the pandemic. The actions support the direction of the Kawartha Lakes Economic Development strategy which is focused on building a strong local economy through collaboration; bringing people and resources together to invest in places, spaces, sectors and people. Since the pandemic, Economic Development goals have remained the same, however Staff have needed to be flexible in working to achieve these goals and will continue to be responsive and forward thinking to support local businesses and the local economic climate.

Going forward, the Kawartha Lakes Economic Development Strategy is scheduled to be renewed in 2022. The timing for this next Economic Development Strategy works well to follow through with implementation of the actions listed above to lay the groundwork for a renewed strategy to support a vibrant and growing economy in a transitioning economic reality.

Other Alternatives Considered:

The Recommendations and Action Plan are considered a strategic and financially sustainable response to supporting economic recovery. Council may choose to adopt the Recommendations in part, however this is not recommended as they are presented to provide Council with a structure to receive more detailed information and support future decision making while maintaining focus on the three strategic areas; critical infrastructure investments, planning and development stimulus, and business recovery and support.

Alignment to Strategic Priorities

The Economic Recovery Task Force Action Plan continues to implement existing strategy plans including the 2020-2023 Kawartha Lakes Strategic Plan with a strong priority on A Vibrant and Growing Economy and the Kawartha Lakes Economic Development Strategy. Maintaining focus on the goals, outcomes and priorities of these strategies is important.

The Action Plan proposes to rethink and reprioritize the actions within these strategic plans to be relevant to the current realities of the pandemic and address the immediate needs and support economic recovery.

Financial/Operation Impacts:

This report does not have a significant financial impact. The Recommendations presented and the Action Plan defer most financial decisions to the 2021 budget process, or provide Staff with direction to accelerate projects to present to Council for decisions at future meetings.

Consultations:

Economic Recovery Task Force

Attachments:

Appendix A – Economic Recovery Task Force Action Plan



20201103ERTFActionPlan.pdf

Appendix B – Concierge Pilot Program Background



Concierge Pilot
Program Background

Department Head E-Mail: cmarshall@kawarthalakes.ca

Department Head: Chris Marshall, Director Development Services