

Minutes

Community Services Committee

March 6, 2025

Present: Councillor Greig, Councillor Nielsen, Councillor Dickert,
Councillor Kentner, Councillor Dobreen, Councillor Mackey,
Warden Matrosovs

Staff Present: Kim Wingrove, CAO, Tara Warder, Clerk, Anne Marie Shaw,
Director of Community Services, Josh Gibson, Manager Housing
Programs, Tara Cockerill, Manager of Early Learning and Child
Care, Melissa McCullough, Ontario Works Program Manager,
Vince Willan, Ontario Works Client Services Manager, Sharon
Irwin, Manager of Community Housing, Rayburn Murray, Deputy
Clerk.

Call to Order

The Community Services Committee met at the County Administration Building on the above date. The Deputy Clerk called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m. with all members present.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

CSC01-25

Moved by: Councillor Dickert

Seconded by: Councillor Mackey

That Councillor Nielsen be elected Chair of the Community Services Committee for 2025.

Carried

On motion by Councillor Dobreen and Warden Matrosovs, nominations closed.

Councillor Nielsen was acclaimed as Chair for 2025.

CSC02-25

Moved by: Councillor Kentner

Seconded by: Councillor Dobreen

That Councillor Dickert be elected Vice-Chair of the Community Services Committee for 2025.

Carried

On motion by Councillors Kentner and Nielsen, nominations closed.

Councillor Dickert was acclaimed vice chair for 2025.

Councillor Nielsen then assumed the Chair.

Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Delegations

Public Health Grey Bruce - Hookah Lounges (Alen Hawes)

Alen Hawes from Public Health Grey Bruce summarized the current landscape related to smoking and vaping. Mr. Hawes referred to Grey County's Smoke Free Municipal Space By-law 4872-14 and noted possible updates for modernization, including limiting the impact of commercial tobacco products and e-cigarettes. Additionally, he noted the health concerns related hookah lounges, and the further lack of authority to prevent and control use. He requested that an updated by-law include restrictions in more public locations and include no smoking or vaping of any substance. Further consideration for municipal owned parks, trails, beaches, food service patios, and more was highlighted. He referred to policies and by-laws from other Counties and Regions and the consideration of a retail licensing fee.

Committee members expressed caution around the retail licensing fee option and discussed the role of the Province and Board of Health in supporting regulatory approaches. Discussion surrounding the enforcement options and recognition for the safety of individuals was also included.

CSC03-25

Moved by: Councillor Greig

Seconded by: Councillor Dobreen

That staff be directed to bring back a staff report outlining possible options for updates to By-law 4872-14 - Smoke Free Municipal Spaces.

Carried

Canadian Mental Health Association - 14th Street Project (Scott McKay)

Scott McKay from the Canadian Mental Health Association presented information on the 14th Street project, a 12-unit supportive housing centre program in partnership with Grey County. He summarized the ongoing focus on addressing homelessness and improving the well-being of vulnerable individuals via a harm reduction focused approach. The approach combines affordable housing with essential support services for people who are experiencing homelessness, struggling with mental health issues, or facing other challenges. He referred to the process for individuals to apply and the resources that are made available.

Sharon Irwin, Manager of Community Housing, indicated that the first individual graduated in July of 2024 and 8 individuals have graduated since. It was noted that the full staff compliment as of August 2024 should ensure appropriate support is provided.

Members of the Committee thanked Mr. McKay and staff for their ongoing work. Furthermore, they expressed the importance of sustainability being viewed from a social perspective, consideration of Council resolutions in support, and continuing to communicate the success. Committee members discussed the opportunity for County Council to submit a delegation request with the Ministry of Health to share the success and express a thank you for funding support.

In response to questions, Mr. McKay referred to the supports available after graduating the program, specifically the importance of food support, and the ongoing connections with CMHA and Bruce County. Staff supported the comments of working together to gather funding and share successes at other levels. Brief comments surrounding the ongoing coordination of efforts being made by staff to ensure funding opportunities from the Ministry are monitored were made.

CSC04-25

Moved by: Councillor Dickert

Seconded by: Councillor Kentner

That the presentation regarding the 14th Street Project be received for information.

Carried

Items For Direction or Discussion

CSR-CS-04-25 - Ontario Works 2025 Service Plan

Melissa McCullough, Ontario Works Program Manager, reviewed the Ontario Works 2024 Service Plan as submitted to the Ministry in February. She summarized the report, noting an increase in unemployment and homelessness and an increasing demand for mental health support, skills training, and food services. She reviewed service strategies that are used to achieve performance measures and identified two areas as being at medium to high risk:

1. Earnings from employment are insufficient to exit social assistance.

2. Low level of client readiness to deal with challenges of economic independence (such as financial literacy) at time of exit.

Finally, she referred to the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion training that occurred throughout 2024 and the ongoing training efforts throughout 2025.

In response to the questions and comments from the Committee, staff indicated that there can be a lag in the transition from Employment Insurance to Ontario Works as well as the timeline from Ontario Works to Ontario Disability Support Program. Staff highlighted the current workload and demand on the Case Workers.

CSC05-25

Moved by: Councillor Mackey

Seconded by: Councillor Dobreen

That Report CSR-CS-04-25 regarding the Ontario Works 2025 Service Plan be received for information.

Carried

CSR-CS-05-25 - Community Housing Waitlist Review 2024

Josh Gibson, Manager of Housing Programs, referred to the Community Housing Waitlist. He noted that the active applications grew 248% from year end 2020 to year end 2024 and that the average number of monthly applications has grown from 54 in 2020 to 88 a month in 2024. Furthermore, around 70% of the households seeking housing are from Grey County and 4.57 years is the average wait time. He summarized customer service improvements have been made to ensure wait lists are as accurate as possible (ie. calling instead of mailing individuals on the wait list).

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Gibson further summarized the short-term emergency housing program at 713 9th Avenue East which has been at 100% capacity for the winter. Unfortunately, individuals continue to be turned away due to the large demand. He indicated that a higher basic level of income and rent control are possible solutions to improving wait list timelines.

CSC06-25

Moved by: Councillor Mackey

Seconded by: Councillor Dobreen

That Report CSR-CS-05-25 regarding the Community Housing Waitlist Review 2024 be received for information.

Carried

CSR-CS-06-25 - Last Mile Funding

Anne Marie Shaw, Director of Community Services, summarized the report, application, and the steps to be taken to work with Lutheran Social Services Owen Sound for the renovation.

CSC07-25

Moved by: Councillor Dickert

Seconded by: Councillor Mackey

That report CSR-CS-06-25 regarding Last Mile Funding be received;

That the Warden and Clerk sign the funding letter for an additional \$182,000 through the Canada Ontario Community Housing Initiatives Program;

That the County enter into an agreement with Lutheran Social Services Owen Sound for the renovation of one affordable housing unit; and

That the funding letter be signed prior to County Council approval in accordance with Section 26.6 (b) of Procedural By-law according to Procedural Bylaw 5134-22.

Carried

Correspondence

Service System Manager - Consortium Member Council Information Report

No questions and comments were raised from the Committee.

CSC08-25

Moved by: Councillor Mackey

Seconded by: Councillor Kentner

That the Service System Manager Semi Annual Report be received for information.

Carried

Other Business

2024 Year in Review for Community Services

The Committee requested that staff review the presentation at the next Community Services Committee meeting due to timing. Brief discussion surrounding the Emergency Pantry occurred, including the consideration for Council members to be involved.

Next Meeting Date

Community Services Committee - June 5, 2025, at 2:00 p.m.

Adjournment

On motion of Councillors Dobreen and Mackey, the Community Services Committee adjourned at 4:00 p.m. to the call of the Chair.