

Minutes

Community Services Committee

June 5, 2025

Call to Order

The Community Services Committee met at the County Administration Building on the above date. The Chair called the meeting to order. The following members were in attendance:

Chair Dane Nielsen, Councillors Scott Greig, Scott Mackey, Warren Dickert, Ross Kentner, Barbara Dobreen and Warden Andrea Matrosovs.

The following staff were also in attendance: Randy Scherzer, CAO; Niall Loble, Deputy CAO; Anne Marie Shaw, Director of Community Services; Aaron Whitney, Architectural and Design Program Manager; Tara Cockerill, Manager - Early Learning and Child Care; Josh Gibson, Manager of Housing Programs, Housing; Sharon Irwin, Manager of Community Housing; Tara Warder, Clerk; Melissa McCulloch, Ontario Works Program Manager and Rob Hatten, Communications Manager.

Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Delegations

Items For Direction or Discussion

2024 Community Services Year in Review

Sharon Irwin addressed the Committee on the Community Services Year in Review from the last meeting. She spoke to new programs such as the energy programs like the heat pump project at Victoria Village, attic reinsulating, energy audits, housing projects such as upgraded kitchens in some of the units, a new fence at the high rise, patio, parking lot and window projects.

She noted that Santa also came to Alpha Street during the holiday season and spoke to the ongoing partnership building through events like BBQs and community gardens.

Josh Gibson then provided information on the Short Term Transitional Housing Project and statistics related to the length of stay and requests turned away. It was noted that the shelter was provided to 446 unique adults, 54 children under 16 and 375 households. The average length of stay was 25 days. Due to insufficient capacity, 1764 requests were turned away which translates to an average of about 4.83 per day.

Details were provided on the improved administration processes seen in the department, waitlist trends, and the additional capacity that the motel purchase as provided as well as a decrease in operating costs of the program.

Melissa McCulloch then addressed the committee and outlined demographics, trends and statistics in Ontario Works. She noted that 33 months is the average time on assistance. There were 163 cases in 2024 that had employment earnings and 577 cases were referred to Employment Ontario for pre-employment screening and 204 cases exited OW for employment in 2024.

It was noted that caseloads have increased in Dundalk, likely due to a higher influx of newcomers to this area. She provided information on stability support information and the benefits of these. Additional supports include refurbished laptops and phones. There is also a pilot project with the Brockton Family Health Team which connects OW clients with an registered nurse.

Tara Cockerill spoke to Early Learning and Child Care, noting that there are currently 27 active providers on the child care roster and another about to onboard in Markdale. Fee subsidy details were shared and the typical base wage for ECEs and impacts from CWELCC funding. Information was provided on Special Needs resourcing and infant and early years mental health. Clarification was provided on the differences between County Initiatives funding and special resources funding. Further clarity was provided on spaces in Early ON, noting that the program does not have spaces in the same way child care has assigned spaces.

CSR-CS-10-25 Rockview Fire Restoration Update

Anne Marie Shaw provided an update on the Rockview Fire Restoration project at 248 7th Avenue East in Owen Sound. It was noted that all residents were relocated temporarily the night of, but 19 tenants were relocated for the longer term. Winmar will be completing the restoration work. The need to more supportive housing was cited and the benefits of using the new building for this purpose.

CSC09-25

Moved by: Councillor Dobreen

Seconded by: Councillor Mackey

That report CSR-CS-10-25 regarding the Rockview fire restoration update be received for information.

Carried

CSR-CS-11-25 Homelessness Prevention Program

Josh Gibson addressed the Committee on this report. He provided highlights around the various supports and how funds were utilized in 2024-2025, including through community outreach and support, emergency short term accommodations, homelessness supports, sustainable housing benefit, supportive housing and administrative funding.

It was noted that the sustainable housing benefit is the biggest program which seeks to keep people housed before they experience unsheltered homelessness.

The emergency short term accommodation programs had a successful first year. The motel was operated at a rate of \$42 per occupied night. That is compared to an average cost of \$110 per night under the previous system. In addition to increased dignity for those using the program, the reduced operating cost was also a success.

Questions were addressed regarding how much money is spent on overflow for those that aren't able to be accommodated as part of the program. There are some people that the motel system can't support and these can be expensive from an operating perspective.

Questions were addressed regarding repairs and expenses. It was noted that some repairs are covered by federal or provincial funding while other smaller repairs are completed and funded by Grey County.

Further information was provided on residency requirements for participating in housing programs and how it is determined whether people are residents or have been here for 4-6 months. Staff noted that there will be limits on what services can be provided to those who are not eligible.

CSC10-25

Moved by: Councillor Dickert

Seconded by: Councillor Dobreen

That report CSR-CS-11-25 regarding Homelessness Prevention Program 2024-25 Year in Review be received for information.

Carried

CSR-CS-09-25 Rowes Lane Redevelopment

Anne Marie Shaw addressed the above noted report on the Rowe's Lane redevelopment. It was noted that the mapping between Grand River Conservation Authority and Southgate and Grey County differs. As such, GRCA has identified a portion of the site as wetland and within the floodplain, despite not being identified as Hazard Lands within Grey's mapping. Several studies are being requested by the conservation authority to support the development. Staff have met on site and the boundary of the wetland remains disagreed upon. A topographical analysis will determine next steps.

The project will be delayed based on these recent developments. It is anticipated that the survey and the study will help determine the buildable land and all parties can come to an agreement.

The Committee discussed the benefits that could be realized from exploring more underground parking rather than parking lots.

CSC11-25

Moved by: Councillor Dobreen

Seconded by: Councillor Kentner

That report CSR-CW-09-25 regarding an update on the Rowe's Lane redevelopment be received for information.

Carried

Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Next Meeting Date

Thursday, September 4, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.

Adjournment

On motion of Councillors Dickert and Mackey, the Community Services Committee adjourned at 3:42 p.m. to the call of the Chair.