

**Windsor Public Engagement Meeting RE. Strategic Priorities
MINUTES**

January 11, 2017

6:00 – 8:45 p.m.

Present: Anna Allen Mayor
Laurie Murley Deputy Mayor
John Bregante Councillor
Jim Ivey Councilor
Shelley Bibby Councillor

Louis Coutinho CAO
Todd Richard Director of Public Works
Shelleena Thornton Municipal Clerk
Matt Povah I.T. Specialist
Doug Armstrong Director of Finance
VanEssa Roberts Director Community Development, Tourism & Recreation

Regrets: None

Public: Colin Chisholm Valley Journal Advertiser
41 signed-in (Identified as 27 from Windsor; 14 from West Hants)

CALL TO ORDER – The meeting commenced at 6:00pm. The Mayor of Yarmouth, Pam Mood was introduced as the facilitator for the public engagement session.

OVERVIEW – Mayor Mood gave a PowerPoint presentation (attached), which provided an outline of how the public engagement session would work so as to have a strong engagement impact, as well as the intended outcome (achievements). The public then broke into seven separate groups, with each station identifying the strategic priorities. It was asked that when at a “priority” station, input be recorded on the flip charts, reviewed, and then the top 1 – 3 actionable priority items be recorded before rotating to another “priority” station.

Please see following pages for public engagement participation.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (not listed in any particular order)

Partner and Develop our Community Fiber Technology Asset

Council believes utilizing the Valley Community Fiber Network (VCFN) can serve to provide short and long term benefits for our region's citizens and local business communities. Further utilized to its potential, the fiber network asset could serve as a foundation to attract new business while driving economic development and technology based employment in our Windsor and West Hants region.

- Identify the short and long-term opportunities to optimize the use of the existing fiber optic network to the advantage of our region, its citizens and our business communities
- Explore market options for expanded technology beyond our current use for deployment in our communities
- Explore opportunities to attract new business and economic development in our region including small / micro businesses as well as cooperative community & educational program
- Utilize our technology asset to support our community's other strategic objectives.

The following actionable priorities were identified from community members (from the general input):

- ***Have marketing initiatives/strategy (media, VOLTA (tech start-up entrepreneurship incubation centre), planning, Acadia Enterprise Centre, Chamber of Commerce, gaming, app development, and video).***

The following general input was received from members of the community in-relation to this priority (that helped derive the actionable priorities identified above):

- What is the VCFN (Valley Community Fibre Network)?
- How can a fiber optic network help towns (communities) & businesses?
- Downtown core high-speed network access as a business attraction incentive.
- Strategy that I.T. is an asset.

Sign-Up Sheet – 2 community members

Competitive Tax Structure

Municipalities use property taxation as their primary source of funding to provide services that are requested by their taxpayers. Roughly 80% of municipal revenue in the Town of Windsor is collected through property taxation. The remaining is collected through user fees, permit fees and a portion of equalization payments from the Province. Town Council is cognizant of the fact that tax rates both commercial and residential are high. Council is committed to ensuring that our tax rates are competitive and not a disincentive to growth.

- Do a review of the recent studies on property taxes in Nova Scotia
- Address the value of Bill 177 and its impact on the economy of the Town
- Review the commercial tax rate and its impact on commerce and business in Town

The following actionable priorities were identified from community members (from the general input):

- ***Immediately commence discussions on policy for Bill 177 implementation***
- ***Review/dust-off Regional Development Authority (RDA) joint industrial park study, consult with West Hants Re. moving forward (joint committee)***
- ***Eliminate boundaries and create joint commercial district;***
- ***High density housing.***
- ***Promote Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) (Town Plan).***

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- Review/dust-off Regional Development Authority (RDA) joint industrial park study, consult with West Hants Re. moving forward (joint committee)
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- Promote Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) (Town Plan).

Sign-Up Sheet – 1 community member

Greater Emphasis on Arts, Culture & Recreation

Council believes that arts and culture and the associated public spaces contribute greatly to the fabric of our local community. It provides a creative outlet, enhances employment for the sector, helps to make Windsor a more appealing point of destination and compliments other strategic directions such as a farmer's market and immigration.

- Implement recommendations from the Mayors Task Force on the Arts & Culture
- Explore a location for the arts community
- Utilizing empty storefront, and modifying it to accommodate artists, a farmer's market, an immigration center, etc.

The following actionable priorities were identified from community members (from the general input):

- ***Consistent art offerings (scheduled);***
- ***Expose/support local talent;***
- ***Have new movies (either Mermaid Theatre, outdoor, or King's-Edgehill School);***
- ***Develop more activities on the River (Kayaking, Geocaching, paddleboats, improve boat launch);***
- ***Fort Edward improvements (seating, cut bushes);***
- ***Have disc golf (Haliburton House, Free!, Year-round, \$1,000 already raised, approximate cost is \$10,000, can be completed by Spring 2017);***
- ***Have Nova Scotia music week (Town of Windsor 30,000, advertising, venues required (large & small), economic draw, requires accommodations, transportation requirements, volunteers are key) – Timeline, 1 year;***
- ***Have/develop/grow Farmers Market – increase visibility (location), waterfront/street-front, signage, work with current vendors;***
- ***Expansion of martial arts academy into Windsor (space is required with sprung floor, 1,800 square feet, lease agreement);***
- ***Advertise festivals/activities at Martock;***
- ***Mermaid Theatre (give it more attention, us it more for theatre, movies, etc);***
- ***King's Edgehill School (reduce cost of renting their facility and increase student body);***
- ***Informal gathering spaces in town (need more of them...park benches, picnic tables, etc);***
- ***Fort Edward – Contact MP Scott Brison & Parks Canada to refurbish Fort Edward;***
- ***Need more winter festivals.***

The following general input was received from members of the community in-relation to this priority (that helped derive the actionable priorities identified above):

- More displays around town for artists – dispersed and more visible; utilize store fronts;
- Create easily accessible, well-publicized (regular, scheduled (annual) rotating events, i.e “First Fridays” and advertise;
- Theme nights (pottery, felting, etc);
- Exposure for artists (events market);
- Exposure/signage (dog park, walking trails, food festivals);
- Festival – “Windsor's Got Talent” (musical talent, need better advertising/get the word out, various venues at once around town; street fair);
- Coordinated effort among businesses to attract/bring in talent;
- International music festival to incorporate immigration

Sign-Up Sheet – 10 community members

An Encompassing Communications Strategy

The communications strategy will have two principal themes. The first will focus on improving communications within the Town so that residents will have multiple avenues for learning about the day to day goings on, the affairs of the Town including its future plans and how best to get involved and contribute to the future success of the Town. The second will focus on improving communications with those outside the Town. This would include potential businesses and residents, tourists and immigrants.

- Improve the layout, utility and general appeal of the Website
- Align the content of the website with the strategic priorities of the Town
- Partner with other municipalities in developing an overall regional communication strategy
- Recognize the importance of social media in connecting with various population segments
- Attract targeted populations by utilizing different languages on our website and signage
- Re-establish the Mayors newsletter and other information organs
- Develop a consistent branding and signage policy

The following actionable priorities were identified from community members (from the general input):

- ***Utilize entry points (Martock) and existing enterprises (Oulton's) to promote/communicate;***
- ***Marketing campaign (possibility of outsourcing to Red Dragon). Includes revamp of Town website & events calendar;***
- ***Town ambassadors assigned as single point of contact;***
- ***Communicate through water/tax bills/flyers Re. what's going on (i.e. Hockey Heritage Centre);***
- ***More visibility for any/all forms of communication through comprehensive campaign;***
- ***Employee assigned/solely tasked for communications;***
- ***Information campaign/blitz about communication strategy;***
- ***Encourage people/businesses (post at a business) to share information about events (i.e. Facebook, storefronts, library, etc);***
- ***Extend our reach to other communities (cross promotion – Wolfville, Chester).***

The following general input was received from members of the community in-relation to this priority (that helped derive the actionable priorities identified above):

- Email newsletter;
- Multiple forms/conduits of/for communications (i.e. social media & mail-outs);
- Information campaign;
- Church bulletins;
- Encourage people to share information;
- "Blitzes" for big events (six weeks out);
- Specific communications person as sole task/job;
- Extend our reach to other communities (cross-promo – Wolfville, Chester);
- Oulton's – make use of diverse clientele to attract & develop multi-culturalism;
- Include Kings County & West Hants in the strategy;
- Identify target audience;
- Content should promote alliances with other communities;
- Day-to-day operation and content of communications, use water bills to send messages (surveys in water bills/tax bills);
- Knock on door more often than once every four years;
- Keep existing social media/communications updated/current;
- Town website not current;
- Better common denominator;
- Webpage needs more dedicated attention;
- Communications Director for day-to-day or long-term;
- Two types of info to be communicated;

- All should be consistent/comprehensive messages;
- Unaware of events that happen;
- Town has four points of entry so there should be notices/banners to announce what will be/is happening in town;
- Wolfville has banners – Town should find a way around banner(s) rules;
- Electronic signs;
- Flyers to schools, nursing homes, etc (for example, didn't know this public engagement session time changed to 6pm);
- Signs on the highway (Farmers' Market days/hours, etc);
- Face-to-face communication still needed in Windsor;
- Promote health & safety as key draws to town;
- Utilize traffic to Martock; harness those visitors;
- Build better on-line presence (possibly hire a company to look after communications);
- Marketing campaign;
- Events calendar – monthly in-post boxes;
- Avonevents.ca;
- Marquees/signs should be used more;
- Communications Coordinator;
- Outsource the marketing plan/advertising;
- Re-vamp bulletin board by Dill Park;
- Banners for event across roadway;
- Programmable sign;
- One point of contact;
- Website needs to be transformed and boosted;
- Blog real-time responses; and
- Town Hall meetings twice every year.

Sign-Up Sheet – 6 community members

Diverse and Welcoming Community

Council recognizes that the future of Windsor depends upon attracting new people and establishing local enterprise. This will require a re-population of Windsor that is likely to come from outside to Town and from non-traditional sources. Council also recognizes that attracting a population that is diverse in culture, ethnicity and experience will be an important ingredient in establishing the future prosperity of Windsor.

- Becoming a diverse and welcoming community and developing the necessary local supports that will make newcomers feel welcome i.e., a support center for immigrants
- Change the highway and other signage so that immigrant communities will feel welcome. Perhaps include Mandarin and Hebrew
- Examine ways to provide funding support for immigrants moving to Windsor
- Seek the help of churches in partnering with the community to host and support immigrants who could be encouraged to live here and start a business
- Develop a mentoring program for newcomers that will assist with settlement and help to overcome obstacles associated with professional practice, establishing a business and various listening requirements.
- View our seniors as an untapped reservoir of talent, experience and energy.

The following actionable priorities were identified from community members (from the general input):

- ***Conduct studies to determine what cultures exist (live/visit) the area and leverage them to draw other newcomers to our area, and market effectively;***
- ***NS stopping place;***
- ***“Welcome Wagon” concept (utilize senior groups and library);***
- ***Windsor greeters can be found through Town website (address, transportation via a carpool network (website);***
- ***Ethnic pride events (multi-cultural community, dinners (include community spaces (i.e. Legion and restaurants), social networking events, utilize Fort Edward (Acadian heritage), individualize experience to people, social media networks, and utilize historical society);***
- ***Find a blogger, vlogger, historian;***
- ***Pride Parade (LGBTQ and support). Paint crosswalks, power poles, flags, promotion through high schools, outreach/safe spaces, friendship bench;***
- ***Outreach from community (Welcome Wagon, New-comers (club), Social (fun) contact to reach-out daily with “Hello, how are you today?;”***

The following general input was received from members of the community in-relation to this priority (that helped derive the actionable priorities identified above):

- NS stopping place;
- Traditional arts/trades academy (i.e. ironworks, carpentry);
- Education & awareness of different cultures/backgrounds (cultural fair or celebrations (include parades, etc));
- Highway signage and other signage/maps to help visitors navigate the town;
- Welcoming/easy access;
- Sell ourselves;
- Call-out/make effort to welcome other cultures/religions, etc;
- Leverage cultures that exist & look for ways to bring more diversity into town (i.e. Oultons);
- Conduct studies on what cultures come to the area, spend money on, and tailor marketing to that;
- Welcome Wagon concept (connect newcomers with residents with similar interests).

Sign-Up Sheet – 8 community members

Establishing the Best Governance Structure to Achieve Council Goals

Council recognizes that governance is an important ingredient for success. It is therefore committed to improving the governance model which includes its relationship with other governments, citizens and stakeholders. The council also recognizes that it must conduct its own affairs in a way that demonstrates best practices.

- Continue conversations with West Hants and other municipalities to determine how we can best work together
- Recognize that in order to address the issues that will bring prosperity to Windsor that Council must engage and work cooperatively with a variety of stakeholders
- Maintain an ongoing dialogue with neighbouring municipalities to determine mutual interests and to develop coordinated strategies that will be of benefit to all.
- An ongoing commitment to citizen engagement that recognizes and respects citizens as an important part of the decision making process.
- A belief that the Town council and staff must model the very behaviour that it expects of others
- A commitment to making decisions on the basis of the best available evidence to ensure that its decisions truly meet the long term needs of Windsor.

The following actionable priorities were identified from community members (from the general input):

- ***Cooperation (networking, shared services);***
- ***Cooperation that will lead to attracting business/residents;***
- ***One government (council), will reduce costs (facilities, administration, governance, infrastructure). Will provide ability to focus on marketing the area, and provide better service. Will also end duplication of service(s). Will give a common vision;***
- ***Citizens can promote their views via public meetings, citizen-to-citizen (Avon Region Citizens Coalition (ARC) volunteered if needed or another group or ARC restructured and renamed;***
- ***Reach out to your friends and neighbours (host a “party” to discuss), write a letter expressing your views and share it with who needs to see it;***
- ***Citizens task force led by citizens that would look at. Councils might endorse it (citizens to study options, Town Hall (joint with Windsor & West Hants) with an invite to everyone.***

The following general input was received from members of the community in-relation to this priority (that helped derive the actionable priorities identified above):

- Governance is a priority;

Sign-Up Sheet – Unknown as to how many were interested to sign up as there was a confusion on what the sign-up sheet was intended for. Should anyone be interested in signing up for assisting in this area, please contact the Town at 902-798-1355 and advise.

Vibrant Downtown and Waterfront Including Fort Edward Lands

Council believes that a revitalized downtown is a key ingredient towards establishing the economic success of Windsor. The Fort Edward Lands provide a truly unique and perhaps unparalleled opportunity to bring focus to Windsor by an international community. Additionally the positioning of Windsor as the gateway Town to the valley and its proximity to the largest population in Atlantic Canada is an advantage that should not be overlooked.

- Bill 177 will be used to make amendments to the MPS so we can address brownfields and downtown commercial properties needing major renovations
- Planning (MPS) document to be reviewed for downtown centre and waterfront changes
- Citizen engagement campaign to take ownership for the town's cleanliness, and having all citizens engaged in helping the Town
- Making property owners accountable for deserted and abandoned properties through appropriate taxation models (1% surtax)
- Rolling out the Mayors Task Force on Revitalization of Downtown and the Waterfront
- Operationalize recommendations coming out of the studies on the downtown and waterfront and Mayors Task Force on the Arts & Culture
- Developing a farmers market worthy of a little town in partnership with West Hants and local farmers
- Develop plans for Jewish League monument / history

The following actionable priorities were identified from community members (from the general input):

- ***Community garden(s) (maybe Starbride Park with raised beds);***
- ***Permanent year-round indoor/outdoor Farmers' market on the waterfront;***
- ***Leverage Mermaid Theatre for additional use (i.e. movies);***
- ***More family-friendly activities on the waterfront;***
- ***Promote awareness of heritage standards for commercial & residential (streamline facades);***
- ***Study on missing desirable businesses in downtown core and encourage start-ups;***
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The following general input was received from members of the community in-relation to this priority (that helped derive the actionable priorities identified above):

- Dog Park;
- Adopt-a-Street for clean-up;
- More bike racks;
- Educate and support cycling culture (community bikes);
- Create awareness of waterfront options (things to do/where to park, etc);
- Promote awareness of heritage homes/buildings. Help with restoration (standards/guidelines for heritage properties);
- Community garden(s) – determine location(s);
- Study on missing/desirable businesses in downtown core;
- Leverage Mermaid Theatre for movies/shows;
- Stay on top of garbage clean-up. Create a culture of cleanliness;
- "Give away" commercial properties to entrepreneurs willing to start a business;
- Farmers' Market – kick-starts other things on the waterfront;
- World Litter Run – Community run 2x per year (runners collect litter, take pictures and post on social media);
- Deal with absentee landlords in the downtown core;
- Open up the Canoe Club to more community/private (paid) activities;
- More activities at the waterfront for young families (food trucks, competition at skate park, child-focused orienteering, etc);

- Picnic tables, play structure, etc. on waterfront;
- Maps of walking/multi-use trails with distances, etc. (include historical landmarks, and more with the Active Transportation group);
- Better promotion of Summerfest, and move it to the waterfront from Gerrish Street;
- Something to grab Martock users (Mud Hero, On-Tree, Foam Run, Cottage Country);
- Grants or loans to help people on fixed income to repair/upgrade exteriors of homes (painting, etc);
- Community garden on waterfront (Scott's grant applications are due in February);
- Textile plant (get it/hold it; don't lose it);
- Sunset Clause;
- Knock down condemned buildings and create greenspace for now;
- Movies in the park/Art in the Park (Fort Edward);
- Recognize the lake is a major draw to the town. Pay attention/ensure it remains useable and full (maintained lake level);
- Improve appearance of sidewalks/street (no more patchwork);
- Theme for the downtown (i.e. signage). For example, the Victoria Hotel (planters/Loyalists/Black Loyalists, Mi'kmaq, etc);
- Outdoor rec/sports use on waterfront (i.e. two hockey nets on basketball courts, outdoor hockey rink, etc);
- Monitor state of shops and buildings downtown before they get bad;
- Old pool site – Jewish Legion, etc;
- Friendly for pedestrians and cyclists (flags at crosswalks, bike lanes, more benches);
- Improve entrances to community;
- Establish theme (uniqueness);
- Accessible waterfront;
- Visibility from highway, town looks messy (trees overgrown – causeway), maintenance Fort Edward – permission to do so private;
- Remove downtown mall for a sightline to highway;
- Permanent Farmers' Market;
- Encourage student summer jobs (i.e. ice-cream shop);
- Paddle boats (rentals), kayaks, bicycle, segways (all rentals);
- 4-seasons of recreation.

Sign-Up Sheet – 16 community members

The public engagement session ended at approximately 8:45pm.