



MUNICIPALITY OF NORTH MIDDLESEX

MINUTES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Monday, April 30, 2018 @ 7:00 p.m.

The Business Help Centre of Middlesex County – 5182 Egremont Drive, Poplar Hill

1. CALL TO ORDER

Deputy Mayor Ropp (Chair) called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present were:

Council Representatives: Brian Ropp, Deputy Mayor (Chair)
Adrian Cornelissen, Councilor

Committee Members: Merv Carter
Ron Harwood
Heather Otton
John Bender
Piet Blaaubouer
Shelagh Morrison
Luke Barette
D'Arcy Elliot
Shelagh Morrison

Committee Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Justin Dias, Director Economic Development & Community Services
Megan Shannon, Economic Development & Community Services Assistant

CORENNELISSEN/HARWOOD That the Economic Development Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes for February 20th, 2018 be accepted as presented.

CARRIED

3. **DELEGATION:** Lee Smithson, General Manager, the Business Help Centre of Middlesex County
Presentation of the Business Help Centre (CFDC) of Middlesex County

4. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None

THE BUSINESS HELP CENTRE (CFDC) OF MIDDLESEX COUNTY PRESENTATION:

General Manager, Lee Smithson gave a presentation on the Business Help Centre (CFDC) of Middlesex County. Mr. Smithson discussed what Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDC's) do and gave a snapshot of the Middlesex CFDC. He also discussed the distribution of loans current portfolio, the business consulting and information services, community economic development and strategic community planning services, and commercial loans programs offered, and why clients work with the CFDC. Mr. Smithson answered various inquiries from the committee, including the company's relation to the agri-business industry and what they can offer to business owners in North Middlesex. Mr. Smithson departed the meeting at approx. 7:55 pm.

5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Director of Economic Development and Community Services provided an update on a variety of initiatives since the previous meeting.

- I. Digital Main Street Program – This program was announced by the province on April 9th. The goal of the program is to help small business improve digital capabilities and enter the digital economy. The funding for the program will help assist with web platform, digital training (online and in-person), service squad, and digital transformation training and grants. More information to come as the program is formally launched.
- II. Swift Survey – This was initiated by the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC) and Middlesex County IT is leading this locally. Middlesex County has already committed to over \$784k in capital funding to the SouthWestern Integrated Fibre Technology Inc. (SWIFT) initiative. This is a non-for-profit, collective broadband initiative that is funding the construction of an affordable,

open-access, ultra-high-speed fibre-optic regional broadband network for everyone in Southwestern Ontario, Caledon, and the Niagara Region. Local residents and businesses can participate by completing a SWIFT survey. It is a 15-minute survey that will help SWIFT to determine where the priority areas will be for the first phase of the build out. North Middlesex has made the survey link available on the website and social media.

- III. Local Transit – The Huron Shores Transit Steering Committee submitted the application at the end of February in which \$1.5 million was requested for a Long-Distance Inter Community Transportation project. There are six municipalities and 13 partner organizations participating across the region. A proposed timeline that consisted of selecting a transit consultant to conducting an ongoing measurement and continuance plan was mapped out from the beginning of April 2018 to the end of May 2023.
- IV. Façade Improvement Grant Program – An update was given on this program and that the policy was approved through the North Middlesex Policy Committee on April 19th. A report will be going to Council on May 23rd, which will include the approved policy and procedures, an accessible application form, an evaluation matrix, and a 2018 evaluation committee composition recommendation. Applications will be available to the public from June 1th to July 13th. The approved applicants will be notified following a review by the façade review committee.
- V. Business Feature Program – An update was given on the previous businesses that were interviewed for the North Middlesex Business Feature, including Rediscovered Riches and Caddyshack by the Tracks. This new initiative has been exceptionally well received by the community. These have been some our most engaging content to date on social media in terms of likes, comments and shares. The social media campaign showcases our local businesses in the community on all of our social media handles and the interviews we had with them. There will be more businesses featured in the weeks to come, including True North Glass Gallery + Studio and the Great Canadian Hideaway.
- VI. London and St. Thomas Association of Realtors (LSTAR) 2018 AGM & Trade Show – Attended the LSTAR 2018 AGM and Trade Show for the second year on April 24th. Staff not only promoted the lifestyle of the community, but also raised awareness about our municipality’s reduced development charges. This was a great opportunity to put North Middlesex on the map and for staff to speak with realtors, brokers, lenders, developers, and service providers.
- VII. Win this Space Competition – This will be further discussed at the next EDAC Committee meeting. A competition of this nature may allow us to fill vacant commercial spots in our municipality as well as help engage with some of the home-based businesses or entrepreneurs who may be looking to start or grow a

business in North Middlesex. Mr. Dias has already participated in a webinar to learn more about the competition and will be bringing some more information to the next meeting.

- VIII. SOMA Familiarization Tour – Hosted a SOMA board meeting on April 11th at the North Middlesex Municipal Office. The SOMA Familiarization Tour will be on May 23rd. It will consist of a tour of all seven communities involved, including St. Thomas, Stratford, Perth County, Ingersoll, Tilsonburg, Woodstock, and North Middlesex. This is a great opportunity to showcase the community and its development potential.
- IX. Middlesex County Agri-Business Tour – County staff is planning the latest Agri-Business Tour in late June. The date is TBD. The partners of this tour include, OFA, Libro Credit Union, Workforce Planning, Strathroy Chamber of Commerce, Strathroy, and North Middlesex. Local politicians and business leaders will be in attendance. This is the first time the tour has come to North Middlesex and it's a great opportunity for attendees to be aware of the businesses in the community and for us to form partnerships. Some of the businesses that the tour is looking to visit in the community are Hensall DC, Parkhill Meats, and Fort Rose Maple Company & Pancake House.

6. MUNICIPAL PROMOTIONAL VIDEO: (BUSINESS OWNERS /OPERATORS NEEDED)

This is still a work in progress, and the arrival of good weather means that outdoor activities will accelerate and be featured as some of the content in the video. Staff are looking for a couple of business locations and owners/operators to be featured in the video. The committee expressed interest in this.

7. MAIN STREET REVITALIZATION FUNDING

North Middlesex will be allocated \$41,424 of base funding from this provincial initiative that is being administered by AMO and it must be spent by March 31st, 2020. It must be used to implement an existing Community Improvement Plan, Official Plan Policy, Economic Development Strategy, Official Plan, Downtown Revitalization Plan or another plan in support of municipal main streets. There was some general discussion of where this money could be spent based on initiatives identified from the Economic Development Strategy and FICE exchange. The committee provided some comments on various initiatives including signage – wayfinding/directional, and gateway; streetscaping and landscape improvements – lighting, and pedestrian walkways/trails; and marketing plan implementation – business attraction and promotion activities,

special events. There was considerable interest as to whether a Win this Space competition would be considered eligible.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

There were some concerns raised about access to medical care in the community and the impact that could have on potential new residents.

There was also discussion about a question from Chatsworth's FICE team in regards to the cost of street lighting along the main streets as they would like to consider this for their municipality but had thought the cost was prohibitive. Mr. Dias to forward Chatsworth the relevant information.

9. ADJOURNMENT

OTTON/MORRISON: Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:14 p.m.
CARRIED

Deputy Mayor, Brian Ropp
Chair

Megan Shannon, Secretary