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# HALDIMAND COUNTY

## Report EDT-06-2021 The Farm 911 - Emily Project

For Consideration by Council in Committee on May 11, 2021

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### OBJECTIVE:

To present the Agriculture Advisory Committee's request to have Council endorse and implement the Farm 911 - Emily Project and direct staff to initiate a marketing program which informs rural property owners about the benefits of applying for civic addresses for existing vacant agricultural and rural lands.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report EDT-06-2021 The Farm 911 - Emily Project be received;
2. AND THAT the Farm 911 - Emily Project be endorsed and staff be directed to implement a marketing program which informs rural property owners about the benefits of applying for civic addresses for existing vacant agricultural and rural lands;
3. AND THAT staff be directed to review and update all internal documentation related to assigning civic addressing to include existing vacant agricultural and rural lands as a new field/category;
4. AND THAT the expenditures and revenues as detailed in this report be approved, and incorporated into the 2022 Tax Supported Operating Budget as a Council Approved Initiative.

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**Reviewed by:** Lidy Romanuk, BA, EcD, Manager, Economic Development and Tourism

**Respectfully submitted:** Mike Evers, MCIP, RPP, BES, General Manager of Community & Development Services

**Approved:** Craig Manley, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At the January 20, 2021 Agriculture Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting, a motion was approved requesting staff bring a report forward in support of establishing the Farm 911 - Emily Project in Haldimand County. This program's main objective is to implement civic addresses to existing access points on both vacant agricultural and rural lands, to assist first responders in locating individuals who require emergency assistance in a timely manner. While current procedures do not prevent an owner of a vacant parcel from obtaining a civic address, there is nothing to distinguish the address assignment from other developed properties. Having a distinguished address assignment indicates to first responders that the incident they are looking for may not be tied to a dwelling, therefore increasing their ability to locate the incident (especially if the injured party cannot meet Emergency Services at the road). This report provides an overview of the program and also outlines the staff action required to support this initiative in Haldimand County.

### BACKGROUND:

On January 27, 2020, the Haldimand Federation of Agriculture (HFA) requested to meet with County staff from Emergency Services, the Planning and Development and Economic Development and

Tourism Divisions to discuss the feasibility of implementing the Farm 911 - Emily Project in Haldimand County. A synopsis of their presentation is included below:

The Farm 911 - Emily Project is inspired by a young girl named Emily Trudeau, who tragically passed away after being involved in an on farm accident in Hastings County, Ontario. First responders had difficulties finding her on-farm location due to a lack of 911 signage at the farm's entrance. To help prevent future tragedies a community group called Farm 911 formed to advocate for 911 signage at the entrance of vacant farm fields. This program recognizes that farm accidents can and do occur in the remote locations away from farm buildings or residences often making it difficult for first responders to easily identify the exact location of the individual in distress. The Farm 911 - Emily Project was developed with the belief that a civic address at the entrance to a vacant farm field could make a significant difference in the time it takes to locate someone during an emergency. The program's objectives are as follows:

- Create a unified system for acquiring 911 signs across all municipalities.
- Persuade municipalities to offer the signs as a service to their community.
- Encourage rural landowners to use the service.
- Establish a partnership with local agri-businesses who will support the program.
- Develop resources to teach property owners how to contact emergency services efficiently.
- Promote the program through digital, print, and social media.
- Additional information regarding the project can be found at <https://www.farm911.ca>.

This program originated in Hastings County, Northumberland County, Prince Edward County and Lennox and Addington County. The program is now active in over thirty cities, townships and municipalities including: City of Belleville, City of Pickering, Township of Pelham, Township of Wainfleet, and the Township of Zorra and many more (as per the Farm 911 - Emily Project website).

The presentation by HFA members was positively received by staff in attendance. All staff agreed implementation of this project would be feasible and suggested the program be brought forward to the Agriculture Advisory Committee for further discussion and direction.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a delay in presenting this matter to the Agriculture Advisory Committee. The matter was placed on the agenda for a meeting that took place on November 18, 2020. At this meeting the Committee hosted David Scott from the Planning and Development Division, who reviewed the current civic addressing process and answered questions relating to civic addresses and severances for agriculture properties. Subsequently, at the January 20, 2021 Agriculture Advisory Committee meeting the committee further discussed the Farm 911 - Emily Project and approved a motion requesting staff bring a report forward for Council's consideration to endorse the Farm 911 - Emily Project in Haldimand County. The report would recommend that Council consider directing staff to implement this initiative which would encourage rural property owners to purchase civic addresses to existing access points on both agricultural and vacant rural lands.

## **ANALYSIS:**

Staff from Building and Municipal Enforcement Services, Planning and Development, Emergency Services and Economic Development and Tourism have reviewed the program in connection with current civic addressing procedures and can confirm that it is possible to implement this initiative in Haldimand County fairly easily. While there is nothing in current procedures to prevent an owner of a vacant parcel from obtaining a civic address, there is nothing to distinguish the address assignment from other developed properties. To implement the Farm 911 - Emily Project would take only a few minor adjustments to the internal addressing procedures and application form, including:

1. Minor changes to the civic addressing forms, such as inclusion of a checkbox to indicate if the property is vacant (see Attachment 1).
2. Design (colour scheme in particular) of a unique sign that would be clearly identifiable to first responders (i.e. its unique colour would signify it is a vacant property and the individual could be located anywhere).
3. A process that ensures if a vacant rural lot that is participating in the Farm 911 - Emily Project changes to a developed lot (e.g. obtains a building permit for a dwelling), that the owner will be required to exchange their unique signage for the standard white letter on green background civic address plate. This would be to reduce confusion for Emergency Service personnel and make clear that the property is no longer vacant (more information about this process is included below).
4. Currently, if a vacant property has a civic address assigned, the signage is the standard green and white colours. Moving forward, if the initiative is adopted by Council, property owners would be encouraged to exchange the existing sign free of charge for a yellow and black sign to ensure consistency with the roll-out of the Farm 911 - Emily Project (more information about this process is included below).

Aside from the above changes, it will simply be a matter of marketing the program and encouraging landowners to apply for their sign. Based on a cursory review by staff, it is estimated that there are 776 agricultural parcels in Haldimand County that do not have a civic address, which could potentially participate in this program.

In preparation of this report, staff completed a high level scan of the Farm 911 - Emily Project in other municipalities to determine uptake and success of the program. The majority of municipalities charge a fee for the signage with the range being \$100 to \$400. Of note, neighbouring Pelham charges \$100 and Wainfleet charges \$140; the Haldimand County fee is \$109 for sign and post. Most municipalities cannot report on the success of their programs given they are still in their infancy. Of those that have been in place for a number of years, the range is 1 to 20 signs per year.

Due to a lack of data regarding program uptake staff cannot definitively determine the number of applicants anticipated to apply within a given year. As such, staff are recommending that the program be implemented consistent with the existing civic addressing process and maintain the same fee. Staff further recommend that the program be closely monitored for a one year period and comments received from the agriculture community and rural landowners on impact and effectiveness be tracked. Any program adjustments and recommendations including future adjustments to the program cost will be brought forward to Council for further consideration after more data collection has taken place.

Staff therefore, recommend that Council endorse the Farm 911 - Emily Project and direct staff to implement a marketing program which will encourage rural property owners to apply for civic addresses to existing access points on both agricultural and vacant rural lands. This recommendation is based on the support provided by agriculture stakeholders within Haldimand County and Haldimand County's Agricultural Advisory Committee. Staff are also supportive and agree on the importance of the implementation of this initiative in Haldimand County.

## **Project Implementation**

Currently a property with a dwelling, must have a Civic Address. Civic addresses are currently either issued through a plan of subdivision (urban or hamlet) or via a Civic Address Request application (rural/agricultural lands). A Civic Address request form is completed by the land owner with a sketch of the location of the driveway/access point and submitted to Planning and Development for number assignment. Currently, the cost for the Civic Address application and sign is \$109.61.

If a landowner has a vacant piece of land, or a parcel with only agricultural structures, a civic address is optional; however, if a land owner makes a request for a secondary address or a civic number for a

farm entrance these can be issued. Currently, this service is completed on an as-requested basis and is not mandatory. Uptake of this has been very sparse over the years. The Emily Project aims to increase awareness of this opportunity and encourage participation in the program. To assist in this process, staff will update the civic addressing forms to make this option more apparent, and develop a marketing campaign to assist in raising awareness for this program (of which additional details are included below). This project will continue to operate on a voluntary basis for existing farm entrances. Those who wish to participate will submit the updated application form and fees associated with this process. The application will be reviewed by Planning staff and if they have no concerns or questions with the application, will issue a civic address. Once a number has been issued, Planning staff will provide notification to all necessary divisions and agencies that a new municipal address has been assigned and a sign will be prepared.

Staff are recommending the Farm 911 - Emily Project be implemented as follows:

- Staff recommend that when property owners inquire about their vacant farm parcels, they be informed about the Farm 911 - Emily Project and the opportunity to apply for additional municipal addresses;
- Upon the form being received from a rural property owner, staff will review the application. If all criteria are met, a 911 sign will be assigned that follows the numbering system already established;
- Staff will continue to issue a new civic address in all severances regardless if a building is attached;
- All costs associated with assignment and installation of a civic address sign will remain consistent with the costs already established for the creation of a new municipal address and will be a cost born by the property owner;
- Currently, all 911 signs in Haldimand County are green with white numbering. Staff recommend that any new signs requested under the Farm 911 - Emily Project be designated yellow and black numbering. This recommendation is being brought forward as yellow and black signs will provide additional identification to first responders that the incident they are looking for will not be tied to a dwelling or structure;
- If construction does eventually occur on a vacant rural lot that is participating in the Farm 911 - Emily Project, the property owner will be required to exchange their signage for an additional cost to obtain a green and white sign to eliminate confusion for first responders;
- Building and Municipal Enforcement Services staff will identify if a new coloured civic addressing sign needs to be issued through the building permit process (if the land type is to change from vacant to having a structure or dwelling). This will be identified through CityView software. At this point they will refer them to the Planning and Development Division to make an exchange for the appropriate coloured sign; and
- For a vacant property which already has a civic address assigned and a plate posted (where the plate is the standard green and white signage), property owners will be encouraged to exchange the existing sign for a yellow and black sign to be consistent with the roll-out of the Farm 911 - Emily Project. To incentivise farmers with existing green and white signage to update their signage, Haldimand County will waive the civic address sign fee on exchanges.

Staff also recommend the Economic Development and Tourism Division assist the Agriculture Advisory Committee with the roll-out of this initiative. Key activities for this roll-out include:

- Assisting with creating marketing collateral and advertising this program via, social media, the local newspaper and our website (website details included below). It is anticipated that the Haldimand Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO) will actively participate by reaching out to their members to provide notification of this new

initiative through similar channels or sharing the content Haldimand County's Economic Development and Tourism Division produces;

- Background information about the Farm 911 - Emily project, its benefits and a link to the application form (see Attachment 1) will be hosted on BusinessHaldimand.ca or the Planning and Development pages;
- A program brochure be developed in partnership with the Agriculture Advisory Committee for rural property owners outlining the benefits of participating in the Farm 911 - Emily Project, the process and the costs associated with the application. These will be distributed in partnership with the Agriculture Advisory Committee, Haldimand Federation of Agriculture and Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario channels; and
- Staff will create marketing campaigns/marketing collateral to be shared via print and digitally to advertise the program within Haldimand County's agricultural community.

Municipal staff across several divisions including Legal & Support Services, Planning and Development and Emergency Services, were also consulted on the implementation of the Farm 911 - Emily Project. The following comments were provided by staff during the review process:

Planning and Development Division – Planning and Development staff are in support of this initiative.

Emergency Services – Emergency Services supports this project, as it will assist Paramedics and Firefighters in locating injured or sick patients in our rural areas. Often a call is received for a person in distress or a rescue in a farmer's field within the municipality and no 911 number is present, making it very difficult to locate the patient, especially if they are alone and unable to meet responders at the road and direct them into the patient. This program can potentially save lives and is a recognized project through the province.

Currently, Haldimand County's Emergency Services Division does receive calls from people in distress on rural properties with no 911 number assigned. To date these calls have been infrequent and Emergency Services has been assisted by a by-stander that is available to direct first responders to the incident site. Although not currently a significant issue; ongoing trends of larger farms and parcels not connected to the home farm creates an increased potential for these emergency situations to occur. The Farm 911 - Emily Project provides the opportunity for the municipality to proactively address this issue being identified throughout Ontario. The goal of this initiative is to address this gap before any incidents or tragedies transpire.

Legal & Support Services (LSS) – This topic has been discussed in municipal risk management forums and is something that LSS would support, as it aids in reducing or mitigating risk exposures and has a positive impact on the County's risk portfolio and the community in general. Where there is a risk to life, time is of the essence, and such a program has the potential to increase the likelihood of getting to a person in time.

Building & Municipal Enforcement Services – Supports this program and can use CityView software to support aspects of program administration.

## **FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

There will be little financial implication to Haldimand County for the implementation of the Farm 911 - Emily Project. Property owners are currently required to pay a fee for a new civic address sign. Any additional signs as required for this program will follow the new civic address process and will be charged at the same fee. For 2021, a new civic address sign costs \$109.61 per sign (as per User Fee Schedule Q). Staff supports from both Planning and Development and Economic Development and Tourism Divisions will be required in order to assist with the roll-out, promotion and administration of

this initiative. These supports can be accommodated within existing staff complement and work commitments.

Additionally, for a vacant property which already has a civic address assigned and a plate posted (where the plate is the standard green and white signage), property owners will be encouraged to exchange the existing sign for a yellow and black sign to be consistent with the roll-out of the Farm 911 - Emily Project. To encourage farmers to swap their existing green and white signage to the new signage, staff recommend that Haldimand County waive the civic address sign fee on exchanges.

The cost of the additional signs as well as revenues from additional sign sales will form a variance within the 2021 Tax Supported Operating Budget. The potential ongoing expenses and revenues (expected to be minimal) will be reviewed for inclusion in the 2022 Tax Supported Operating Budget as a Council Approved Initiative.

## **STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:**

The Haldimand Federation of Agriculture brought this project forward to the Agriculture Advisory Committee for support and further action. Both groups are in support of this initiative.

## **REPORT IMPACTS:**

Agreement: No

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: No

Policy: No

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Civic Addressing Request Form.