



**THE CORPORATION OF  
HALDIMAND COUNTY**

**Agricultural Advisory Committee Minutes**

**Date:** March 19, 2025  
**Time:** 5:00 P.M.  
**Location:** Haldimand County Administration Building - Haldimand Room  
53 Thorburn Street South, Cayuga

Members Present N. Hedley, Chair  
R. Blyleven, Member  
D. Court, Member  
S. Heeg, Member  
H. Lise, Member  
C. Snyder, Member  
C. Wilkinson, Member

Regrets K. VanderSpek, Member

Staff Present J. Easson, Senior Economic Development Officer  
L. Romanuk, Manager, Economic Development & Tourism  
C. Donaldson, Administrative Assistant

Others Present N. Kinkel, Ministry of Rural Affairs  
Councillor Metcalfe

**A. Call to Order**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

1. Welcome & Introduction

**B. Disclosures of Conflict of Interest**

None disclosed.

**C. Approval of Previous Agricultural Advisory Committee Minutes**

1. Agricultural Advisory Committee Minutes - January 15, 2025

**Recommendation 1**

Moved By: R. Blyleven, Member  
Seconded By: C. Wilkinson, Member

THAT the minutes of the Agricultural Advisory Committee dated January 15, 2025 be approved as presented.

**APPROVED**

## **D. Items for Consideration**

### **1. Ministry of Rural Affairs Update**

N. Kinkel provided an overview of his position and the services provided by the Ministry of Rural Affairs (MRA); support to rural Ontario communities in building prosperous and vibrant communities with diversified economies through programs and services based on needs.

N. Kinkel shared an overview of a recent Ontario's Rural Economic Development Strategy, lead by Minister L. Thompson. The MRA has multiple staff advisors listed who provide coaching on programs, resources and funding. They also offer training and programming to help rural communities, municipalities, organizations and Indigenous communities identify their economic development priorities and initiatives.

N. Kinkel provided an overview of the following programs led by the Ministry:

- Agricultural Economic Development Resources
- Business Retention and Expansion program
- Community Economic Development 101
- Community Immigrant Retention in Rural Ontario program
- Downtown Revitalization program
- Economic Analysis Data Tool
- First Impressions Community Exchange program
- Performance Measure Resources
- Strategic Planning Training & Resource Guide
- Teeny Tiny Summits

He also noted that there is an upcoming Community of Practice webinar on April 10th highlighting "Buy Canadian" programs and what consumers and municipalities can do to support local businesses.

Cody Snyder joined at 5:17pm.

N. Hedley acknowledged Cody's arrival at 5:20pm.

N. Kinkel further shared some data insights specifically highlighting a total of 1223 agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting jobs in the Region.

## 2. Council Update

Councillor Metcalfe provided an update, highlights include:

- The tax operating budget was passed by Council on February 27th
- The tax levy approved is 4.46%
- Zoning was recently approved for the new affordable housing project on Ramsey Drive in Dunnville. Haldimand County and Haldimand-Norfolk Housing Corporation and Health & Social Services were successful in receiving 3 million in funding from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's (MMAH) Last Mile Funding Program;
  - o The proposed build includes 42 affordable housing units within the 56-unit building, as well as a daycare centre and office space;
  - o Construction is anticipated to begin in July 2025
- Council recently approved a new 7 ward model as part of the ward boundary review. The ward boundary review is a Council priority. The new ward boundaries are anticipated to be in place in advance of the 2026 election
- The by-election for Ward 1 and 4 will take place Thursday, April 10th
- As part of the Hagersville 150<sup>th</sup> celebration Ag Day will take place on June 6<sup>th</sup>

D. Court arrived at 5:34pm.

Discussion ensued.

## 3. AAC Workplan

L. Romanuk provided an introduction to the AAC workplan and recommended choosing 2 or 3 projects to focus on until the end of this term of Council.

J. Easson took the lead, providing an overview of the workplan ideas and how they were grouped into projects.

Key projects discussed included:

- Leverage new/existing partnerships and resources;
- Agricultural awareness tool kits;
- Workshop for the agriculture community;
- Awareness of planning and development;
- Council communications and engagement;
- BDAPAC Spring Job Fair;
- Promote local youth employment opportunities;
- Promote local agricultural events;
- Emergency outbreak plan;
- Support of migrant workers;
- Mental health supports for farmers;
- Agri-tourism development; and

- Abattoir and processing business development

In light of the recent tariff announcements the committee discussed the importance of “Buy local” and Canadian-made products.

L. Romanuk shared the following tariff strategies EDT has created as a response plan:

- Buy local marketing and promotion of the Haldimand County Marketplace for those business that have an e-commerce platform;
- Encourage local businesses to utilize the Real. Local. Haldimand toolkit;
- Circulation of the Tariff Impact survey to better understand the impact of tariffs on local businesses;
- Direct outreach to businesses to further discuss impacts; and
- Predesigned social media templates to assist businesses in the promotion of their products and services

L. Romanuk shared the advantages of the Agricultural Awareness Toolkit and Council Communications and engagement. The committee added that mental health supports for farmers and access to more abattoir and processing remains important issues.

The committee continued to share their thoughts on the projects.

A prioritization exercise on the above discussed projects was completed by committee members and following actions were determined to be the projects that the AAC will work on for the remainder of the term:

1. Agriculture Awareness Toolkit
2. Council communications and engagements
3. Workshop for the agricultural community

#### 4. Economic Development & Tourism Update

L. Romanuk provided an update from EDT; highlights included:

- Tourism Network Meeting - Monday, March 24
- Business Symposium - Thursday, May 1; encouraging all members to attend
- Hagersville 150th Farm Decorating Contest
- Farm Emergency Planning brochure

#### 5. BDAPAC Spring Job Fair

J. Easson asked that the Job Fair information be shared with the committee members' networks.

J. Easson shared the idea for AAC to have a table on behalf of Farm Operators in the community seeking to hire staff/farm help that each may only be looking to hire one person. EDT noted they will complete outreach to agricultural businesses to seek interest.

Discussion ensued.

## 6. Agricultural Organizations and Commodities Round Table

C. Snyder shared updates from HFA which included:

- Initiative of Elevating Agriculture
- Elevate Agriculture is a means of giving back/support mechanism in a way of funding; events in need funding can apply
- 85th HFA anniversary celebration will take place at Riverside Exhibition Center in August, focusing on farm safety with demonstration groups

L. Romanuk noted that Haldimand County Economic Development and Tourism could potentially partner on the Elevating Agriculture initiative.

R. Blyleven shared the CFFO annual provincial meeting is on Friday, March 21.

D. Court, shared that Haldimand Soil and Crop is looking to have an event tentatively scheduled for August 21st, with more details to come.

H. Lise, on behalf of Chicken Farmers of Ontario provided the following updates and reminders:

- As migration is currently occurring there is a general concern of Avian Flu becoming more prevalent in Ontario;
- For the public who raise chickens, paperwork is still required to be completed when they are processed for personal consumption;
- A general reminder to the public as it relates to biosecurity to be mindful of farm signs; and
- Expressed the importance on reading produce labels

S. Heeg noted Dairy farmers of Ontario share weekly emails related to bio security, and the importance of taking bio security seriously especially due to Avian Influenza.

## E. New Business

### 1. Career Coach

J. Easson shared an explanation of "Career Coach" which is a mentorship opportunity.

L. Romanuk shared that she signed up and thought it would be a good opportunity to share her career path as well as local job opportunities.

## 2. Tariff Plan

The committee provided insight into the impacts tariffs have had on the agricultural industry, highlights include:

- Commodity markets have fallen that were barely breaking even before the tariffs.
- Many fertilizers and herbicides come from the United States; come April 1st the businesses will be increasing their prices to account for the extra costs incurred.
- OFA will continue to advocate on behalf of agricultural producers to ensure the Federal Government doesn't impose tariffs on key products to ensure the agricultural sector can still be productive.
- Noted the importance of resiliency and opportunities of export markets.
- Will likely impact the cost of beef, pork and cereals as the majority of these products go to the U.S. for processing and then are shipped back to Canada.
- Stressed the importance of Canadian branding and consumer focus on making the decision to buy Canadian.

L. Romanuk said we need consistent messaging so that it's straightforward for the consumer and noted that the Real. Local. Haldimand Toolkit may be an opportunity to support this messaging.

Discussion ensued.

## F. Adjournment

### Recommendation 2

Moved By: D. Court, Member

Seconded By: C. Wilkinson, Member

THAT this meeting is now adjourned at 6:41 p.m.

**APPROVED**