



**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, Economic Development & Tourism
C. Donaldson, Administrative Assistant

Others Present
N. Kinkel, Ministry of Rural Affairs
Councilor 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 what the Ministry of Rural Affairs provides; support to rural Ontario communities in building prosperous and vibrant communities with diversified economies through programs and services based on needs.

N. Kinkel shared a physical flyer and provided an overview of a recent introduction of Ontario's Rural Economic Development Strategy, lead by L. Thompson. After conducting a number of consultations, it was determined that among other things, there was a lack of support to rural economic development and community capacity building. After analyzing the negative impacts this had on rural communities, the Ministry made it a priority to ensure rural communities have proper support, and thus came out with the strategy consisting of three pillars.

N. Kinkel noted that there are multiple Advisors listed on the back of the handout 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 they have an upcoming annual Symposium Event on Agricultural Economic Development on April 10th where they are highlighting "Buy Canadian" and what consumers can do to support local businesses.

Cody Snyder joined at 5:17pm

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

N. Kinkel provided another handout highlighting agricultural data including 1223 agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting jobs.

2. Council Update

Councillor Metcalfe provided a Council update, highlights include:

- February 12th passed tax operating budget
- 4.46 was the tax levy this year mostly based on inflationary measures
- Recently received 3 million dollars towards 42 affordable housing units
- Total of 56 units, however the other 14 units will be income generated housing
- The zoning has been approved, construction will begin in July
- Will include a daycare center below and some type of office units as well
- 7 ward model as part of the ward boundary review was approved (Council priority)
- Will be ready for the 2026 municipal election
- Bi-election is on Thursday, April 10th
- Ag Day is June 6th (Hagersville 150th celebration)

D. Court arrived at 5:34pm

Discussion ensued.

3. AAC Workplan

L. Romanuk provided an introduction to the AAC workplan, noting that the EDT's workplan is very full especially with the onset of tariffs which is to be considered.

L. Romanuk recommended choosing 2 or 3 projects to focus on this year, ensuring awareness and engagement in Agriculture.

J. Easson picked up providing an overview of the workplan ideas and how they were grouped into projects.

Key projects discussed include:

- 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 ag events
- emergency outbreak plan
- support of migrant workers
- mental health supports for farmers
- Agri-tourism development
- abattoir and processing business development

J. Easson shared a committee member's thoughts on the projects as he was unable to attend this meeting.

J. Easson organized a vote on the above projects. During the process, the committee discussed the following:

- Buy local, for example Richardson's and Snyder's

L. Romanuk then shared that EDT has created a response plan that includes buy local and promoting the market place for ecommerce. The real Haldimand toolkit as well to promote local businesses and inclusivity.

L. Romanuk also shared that we are creating a survey that we hope the committee members can fill out. She also shared that she has already heard from some businesses directly regarding their struggles with the tariffs.

L. Romanuk discussed the supports for the vendors at the job fair including the templates.

Discussion ensued.

L. Romanuk shared her thoughts on her top picks being the Agricultural Awareness Toolkit and Council Communications and engagement. The committee added that the education piece including Mental Health Supports for Farmers and the Abattoir and processing business development is important.

L. Romanuk brought up the resources from CMHA regarding Farmers wellness.

The committee continued to share their thoughts on the projects.

L. Romanuk noted that all businesses should be coming through EDT and also explained the development concierge team that is a one-stop shop for businesses to get answers.

Councilor Metcalfe brought up AAC's participation in Ag day. L. Romanuk brought up the students being their to have tourism marketing and mentioned ag could be added as well.

The committee voted and the following were the priorities that 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. BDAPAC Spring job fair
4. Economic Development & Tourism Update

L. Romanuk provided an update regarding:

- Tourism Network Meeting - Monday March 24, 2025 if interested in attending reach out to EDT

- Business Symposium – Thursday, May 1, 2025 – Save Date (more info to come) we encourage all members to attend

- Hagersville 150 farm decorating contest

- Farm Emergency Planning brochure was circulated

5. BDAPAC Spring Job Fair

J. Easson asked that the Job Fair information be shared with any connections.

J. Easson also 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. This would help increase awareness of employment

opportunities in the Ag Sector and provides exposure for operators that may not be available to attend.

Confirm direction of this??

Discussion ensued.

6. Agricultural Organizations and Commodities Round Table

C. Snyder provided updates on behalf of HFA which included:

- Initiative of elevating agriculture
- Elevate agriculture is a means of giving back/support mechanism in a way of funding
- If we know of any events that need funding, they can apply
- 85th anniversary celebration at Riverside Convention Center in August, focusing on farm safety with demonstration groups

L. Romanuk noted not to forget EDT as a partner as we are happy to look at partnership opportunities.

R. Blyleven provided an update on behalf of CFFO noting the annual provincial meeting is on Friday, March 21 so there isn't anything to report on at this time.

D. Court, on behalf of OSCIA, provided an update that Haldimand Soil and Crop is looking to have a summary event tentatively on August 21st, with more details to come.

H. Lise, on behalf of HFA's chicken farmers of Ontario provided the following updates:

- migration seasons
- hatching eggs are 21% imported and got cut back 5% due to the avian influenza
- For public processing chickens, paperwork is still required to be completed when you process for personal consumption
- Bio security; be mindful of farm signs
- The importance of education on reading produce labels

S. Heeg on behalf of CFFO provided the following updates:

- Weekly emails from dairy farmers of Ontario for bio security
- Bio security should be taken seriously especially do to the avian influenza

E. New Business

1. Career Coach

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

A physical information paper was provided with steps on how to sign up.

L. Romanuk shared that she signed up and thought it would be a good opportunity to share what her job entails, as it is for everyone else.

2. Tariff Plan

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

- Commodity markets have completely fallen and they're already barely breaking even before the tariffs.
- All of the 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.
- Organizations such as OFA will be looking to government to make sure the Canadian government isn't imposing tariffs on certain products to ensure we 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 they go to the us and back.
- Stressed the importance of Canadian branding and consumer sonance 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 Toolkit may come back to support this.

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