

via B23-49-4 be rezoned to a site-specific rural residential zone which recognizes the existing oversized accessory structure currently on the property – (approximately 334 m² / 3,600 ft² in size), and further, to rezone the lands being enlarged to the 'General Agricultural (A2) Zone'. No new development is proposed as a result of these applications. Surrounding land uses are primarily existing agricultural operations with a number of existing non-farm rural residential lots in the vicinity.

Planning staff are recommending approval of the applications as they are generally consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement and maintain the intent and purpose of the Official Plan.

Questions from Council:

None.

Comments from the Applicant:

The applicant, Mr. Rood, advised that the existing structure on the property has been reduced in size and that he is in support of planning staff's recommendation in their report.

Comments from members of the Public:

No member of the public spoke in support of or opposed to the application.

Resolution No. 8 Moved by George Way
Seconded by Valerie Duston

RESOLVED that the Council of the Township of South-West Oxford reconvene in regular session at 10:09 a.m.

DISPOSITION: Motion Carried

Resolution No. 9 Moved by Craig Gillis
Seconded by Valerie Durston

RESOLVED that the Council of the Township of South-West Oxford approve the zone change applications submitted by Willem & Cheryl Rood and Nicolaas & Jannetje Byl (file no. ZN 4-23-09 / ZN4-23-10), whereby the lands described as Part Lot 3, Concession 2 (Dereham), Township of South-West Oxford and enlarged via B23-49-4 are to be rezoned from 'Residential Existing Zone (RE)' to 'General Agricultural Zone (A2)', and the lot to be retained be rezoned from 'General Agricultural Zone (A2)' to 'Special Rural Residential Zone (RR-45)'.

DISPOSITION: Motion Carried

10:00 a.m. - Tracy Annett, General Manager - Upper Thames River Conservation Authority re: 2024 Budget Presentation

Tracy Annett, General Manager, on behalf of Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, provided Council with a presentation regarding their 2024 budget. She commented on the following which impact the 2024 budget:

- Legislative changes (approximate cost - \$1.5 million): reorganization of programs and services into three categories with specific funding restrictions;
- New mandatory deliverables due December, 2024;
- New service delivery standards due December, 2024;
- No provincial funding to offset additional work;
- Historical: Chronically inadequate and reduced Provincial Transfer Payment, insufficient reserves, not eligible for Canada Emergency Response Benefit during COVID; and
- Operating Equipment: Accessing qualified staff, compensation updates, aging infrastructure and increasing cost of capital projects, growth development pressure, increased land management pressure, development review fees frozen, reduced access to provincial grant programs and inflation.

Ms. Annett advised Council that the largest impact on the UTRCA 2024 operating budget is tied to \$1.5 million of new provincially legislated activities. No new provincial funding has been provided to offset these costs. Additional budget increases are tied to rising operational and capital costs. With aging flood control infrastructure, continued maintenance costs are also significantly higher. UTRCA is working to mitigate the impact on the municipal levy by applying program revenues to offset costs of mandated programs. Mayor Brian Petrie, Town of Ingersoll, spoke on behalf of the board of directors and commented on the changes to membership that the board has experienced over the past year. He noted that operations have changed significantly which have created some challenges. He thanked conservation authority staff for all of their additional work to understand the new system and requirements.

Members of Council were given the opportunity to ask questions of Ms. Annett. Discussion took place regarding rental properties, land lease agreements and forest management on properties owned by the conservation authority. Discussion also took place regarding the legislative changes made by the province and the need for additional funding to support them.

** Council took a 5-minute break at 10:00 a.m.*

DISPOSITION: Motion Carried

Strategic Planning

CAO 01-2024: Township Strategic Plan - Strategic Themes Initiatives

Chief Administrative Officer Mary Ellen Greb provided Council with a report to bring forward the Strategic Themes of the Township's approved Strategic Plan 2024-2027 breaking out the initiatives for each theme. She noted that the Council traditionally discusses/sets goals for the current year at the first council meeting in January. In 2023, Council worked through a new strategic planning process; approving the Township's Strategic 2024-2027 Plan at the December 19th, 2023 Regular Council meeting.

This portion of the meeting was intended to gather input from members of Council and set goals to align with the Township's new strategic objectives. Members of Council shared the following comments:

Objective: A Connected, Compassionate and Engaged Community

- Measurement of how well the Township and members of Council are doing is received through comments from members of the public, rate payers. Council needs to listen to what they are telling us. Positive feedback was received following road work in Sweaburg with respect communication and willingness to listen by the Township's Works Superintendent and his crew.
- Positive feedback has also been received regarding the Township's 2024 budget – the budget was kept low in comparison to some other municipalities and the County.
- Need to have an updated communications plan to engage with individuals and understand how the community wants to receive information from the Township.
- Support and encourage strong volunteer base for all Township halls and parks. Need to listen to what the members are telling us that they want and need.
- Continue to grow and expand e-services – technology enabled community.
- Consider additional electronic signs in other areas of the Township.
- What public transportation options are available and cost effective in rural areas i.e. Uber, ride share, etc.
- Survey Township Hall and Park Boards re: how the Township can best serve them. Provide support for new members and encourage willingness to explore new ideas and events (i.e. Mount Elgin Trivia Night).
- Consider options for new municipal office combined with medical services, child care, pharmacy. Begin planning and engineering.

Objective: A Healthy and Active Community:

- Consider accessibility in all Township owned facilities – the washrooms at the Brownsville Community Centre are not accessible for everyone. Consider how we plan for everyone.
- Sidewalk improvements and upgrades throughout all communities in the Township to make them more walkable.
- Host a community information night (Mount Elgin Hall Board is currently working on this).
- Consider hosting an outdoor movie night in partnership with the community information night.
- Generate increased volunteerism within the Township for various hall boards and other service groups (i.e. community information night).
- Establishment of Township facilities staff support/attendant.
- When exploring options in relation to municipal facilities (current and future) consider how medical services may also be incorporated (i.e. nurse practitioner, counselling, dentist, partnership opportunities – Oxford County Community Health Centre, pharmacy).
- Consider space for child care within the community. Existing facilities are not suitable options for full-time child care. Encourage more private/home child care providers.
- Bike lanes added to all new road construction.
- Increase funding to Township Road reserves to improve overall road condition and infrastructure (i.e. Zenda Line and Daniel Road). It was noted that improved roads increases traffic volume and speed. Concerns that automated speed enforcement is going to be costly and ineffective. Council suggested advocating for change to the program at the provincial level.
- New recreational facilities are planned in surrounding urban communities – consider financial contribution from the Township.

Objective: A Safe and Secure Community:

- Review and update the Township of South-West Oxford Fire and Emergency Services Strategic Plan.
- Promote and encourage 72-hr emergency preparedness kits for all residents. More erratic weather is expected and weather patterns continue to change.
- Increased police presence in South-West Oxford. Speeding continues to be an issue, lack of enforcement. Consider additional preventative and traffic calming measures (i.e. road narrowing, automated speed enforcement). Share information regarding home camera program partnership with Oxford OPP.
- Support and receive more regular reports from Safe and Well Oxford Community Safety and Well-being.
- Public education and awareness (mental health, addictions, drugs, smoking/vaping, domestic violence) – how can we communicate accurate information to people?

- Review storm centre shelters within the Township (shelter from storm and warming centres).
- Rebuild gravel roads to handle heavy equipment vs. paving.

Objective: A Thriving and Sustainable Community:

- Continue to support the Rural Oxford Economic Development Corporation.
- Continue to support the Township's Environment and Energy Innovation Committee – continue to budget funds for future projects to reduce the Township's carbon footprint.
- Public education and awareness re: climate change.
- Educate the public on energy efficiency programs that are available locally.
- Look at tree planting opportunities within the Township (i.e. Beachville Fire Hall)
- Support buy local, and buy in South-West Oxford.
- Continue to focus residential growth and development on the least desirable farmland – increase residential density in serviced communities.
- Promote and educate the public on waste reduction.
- Investigate underutilized lands within the Township that may have development potential.
- Consider when to preserve aging buildings and when to end their useful life – suggest a balance between needs of the community and what makes sense – consider what is the best long-term solution.
- Recruit and retain strong, competent staff – customer service focused, prompt service, public service mindset.
- Streamline planning and development application processes with Oxford County. Consider reporting on turnaround times for development applications on an annual basis.
- Complete asset management planning process and financially plan for the future.

Objective: A Trusted Township that Delivers Value for the Communities it Serves:

- Ensure that Township's budget reflects the cost of doing business. When reporting on budget increase consider using a dollar number vs. percent – this number may be more relatable to residents. Share information with residents about the cost of doing business (i.e. road paving, vehicle purchases, etc.).
- Build trust between the ratepayer, staff, members of Council and the Township's volunteer base.

* Council took a break for 30-minutes at 12:30 p.m.

