

Township of South-West Oxford
Minutes
SWOX Housing Opportunities Committee
February 6, 2024

In Attendance: Mayor David Mayberry, Councillor Peter Ypma (Ward 2), Councillor Craig Gillis (Ward 6) and Paula Beckett (community representative)

Staff: Clerk Julie Middleton, Clerk's Assistant Nicole Chambers and CBO Howard Leaver

Regrets: None

Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:15 p.m. by Mayor David Mayberry and a quorum was present.

Motion to Accept Agenda

Resolution No. 1 Moved by Peter Ypma
Seconded by Howard Leaver

RESOLVED that the agenda for the meeting of the February 6, 2024 SWOX Housing Opportunities Committee be approved, as amended.

DISPOSITON: Motion Carried

Minutes

Resolution No. 2 Moved by Howard Leaver
Seconded by Craig Gillis

RESOLVED that the minutes of the December 5, 2023 SWOX Housing Opportunities Committee meeting be approved.

DISPOSITON: Motion Carried

Business Arising from the Minutes

Mount Elgin Subdivision – Library Space/Layton Property

David Mayberry has been unable to connect with Kirby Heckford so far this year. He noted that the development of the Layon property has stalled due to the Ministry of the

Environment, Conservation and Parks' requirement for Oxford County to complete additional testing on cells 1 and 2 of the Mount Elgin wastewater plant, before they are able to expand the system to cells 3 and 4. Additional wells have been installed to ensure wastewater is not moving offsite. Testing will take place over six months before they are able to consider any results – they anticipate the expansion process beginning in June or July of 2024.

As a part of the testing process, Oxford County analyzed the existing capacity of cells 1 and 2. It was discovered that there is enough existing capacity for all of the houses projected for phase 6 of the Mount Elgin subdivision. As an application for subdivision has already been submitted, all projected phase 6 homes have been counted in the theoretic wastewater capacity for cells 1 and 2. Any further construction (i.e., Layton property development) may exceed the capacity and will have to wait for the results of the water testing to proceed – regardless of their construction timeline. It was noted that Brian Graydon does not expect to begin phase 6 construction until approximately one year from now. In response to a question from Peter Ypma regarding whether the observational wells are working, David Mayberry noted that they were installed about a month ago.

The Committee considered whether further discussion should take place with Mr. Graydon regarding if he has any interest in building a library in a townhouse block?

Correspondence

Market Update

The Committee reviewed the December 2023 market reported and noted the following:

- Sold listings down 3% - total of 64 units sold in 2023
- Available inventory down 68%
- New listings down 21.2%
- Average price down 19.8% - year-to-date average \$689,629

Howard Leaver noted that out of the four new permits issued in January, three were for new homes and one was for a septic permit. In the Mount Elgin subdivision, there are about 20 out of 50 lots remaining to be built. Discussion took place regarding the slow-down in the construction and renovation industries. Howard highlighted his concerns with the current housing market, and said that the price of houses is not coming down because inventory is low but we cannot seem to build the inventory up due to the high cost of materials. We need to increase the inventory, and decrease the price and interest rates to see a difference but he is unsure how to make this possible. David added that at the ROMA Conference, he heard a lot of similar comments but not a lot of solutions from other municipalities, or the provincial government.

Paula Beckett noted that although home construction has stalled, friends of hers who are contractors are busy with constructing modular homes at the four-season park in Burford. She added that these homes are in the \$200,000 to \$300,000 range plus park fees and they are selling very well. Howard requested that the Committee revisit the tiny

homes discussion as we need to encourage the building of cheaper, smaller houses. He questioned how the Township and County could alter zoning by-laws to permit this, and what we can do to permit septic systems in undersized lots. Craig Gillis added that we cannot have overlapping services, and landowners may not wish to proceed with developing their land to accommodate the type of housing we are looking for.

The Committee discussed land-lease model options – how do we encourage developers to proceed with this option? One example Julie Middleton noted was Bluewater Shores in Goderich – Paula added that her cottage in Muskoka is a similar land-use model. Paula questioned if any trailer parks in the Township would be open to converting to a four-season operation? David noted that they do not have the septic capacity to operate all year, to which Julie added that their zoning does not currently permit this (but could potentially be changed).

Tiny Home Show

The Committee reviewed the “Save the Date” invitation for the 2024 Tiny Home Show, which will take place July 12-14 in Ancaster. David and Howard expressed interested in attending on the Friday together.

David noted that at the last Council Meeting, Council approved converting a temporary garden suite (approved in 2021) to a permanent additional residential unit (ARU). Howard believes that many people are constructing ARUs in their homes without contacting the Township for a permit due to a miscommunication by the province upon the initial roll-out. Julie noted she has not had a lot of calls about ARUs, but she did receive an exemption for human habitation in an RV.

Discussion took place regarding how the Township can encourage the construction of smaller homes. Howard noted that it may be useful to connect with the individual from RSM the Township previously contracted for building permit inspections before he started – he has his own tiny home business now.

The Committee discussed the confusion as to how to approach constructing an ARU in a home. If you build a new house with an ARU in mind (i.e., roughed in electrical for a fridge/stove, etc.) you must comply with Part 11 of the Building Code which requires increased safety measures. If you build a home and add an ARU in after, you fall under Part 9 of the Building Code as it would be classified as a renovation and these additional measures do not apply. Howard noted there is a technical issue with the building code and how it is written, many contractors themselves do not understand it.

David noted a previous proposal for tiny homes on a parcel in Sweaburg. At the time, this was not explored further due to the requirement for an amendment to the Official Plan, to which Council may not have supported. The Committee questioned if they would be open to revisiting this discussion. Currently, the parcel would be restricted to two ARUs outside, and one contained within the existing building. If interested, the owner could explore other options for tiny homes including a number of “slab-on-grade” units connected to one septic system. Howard noted that if any septic system processes more than 10,000 litres per day it would be out of our jurisdiction (Ministry of the

Environment). He estimated that a typical home uses 1,000 litres or less per day. David will contact the Sweaburg parcel's property owners to circle back on this tiny home/ARU discussion, as with the current housing crisis, people are more interested in opportunities for alternate housing options than they were years ago. Howard will touch base with his contact at the Ministry of the Environment as they may be familiar with what septic system options are out there for tiny home communities now that they are more common.

The Committee discussed the tiny home project organized in partnership with St. Thomas, YWCA and Doug Tarry Homes.

Discussion took place regarding if Council would express interest in purchasing a parcel to develop a tiny home community. Peter noted a property on east side of Brownsville that would square up the village. He was provided with contact information to reach out to that property owner as well as the owner of the abutting farmland to gauge if there is any interest in a tiny home project in that area.

Discussion Items

Current Challenges: Cost of Construction and Availability of Land

The Committee discussed ways to move forward as funds or land are not available to complete housing projects/goals. Discussion took place regarding affordable housing and if a tiny home community would be more achievable versus an apartment complex/building. If more than five homes are constructed/subdivided, a plan of subdivision is required. Land must be optimized based on one septic system and one water supply. Julie added that if the land is not divided, only a site plan would be required. Specific zoning could be attributed to the parcel through the zoning amendment planning process (year-round mobile home park).

Howard noted that if the septic system exceeds 10,000 per day, it is largely a jurisdiction issue. The Ministry only informs the owner of how a septic system should be built, and a yearly inspection is required.

Resolution No. 3 Moved by Peter Ypma
 Seconded by Craig Gillis

RESOLVED that the SWOX Housing Opportunities Committee recommend that the Council of the Township of South-West Oxford provide direction to staff to send a letter to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing;

AND FURTHER THAT the letter advocates to align Parts 9 and 11 of the Ontario Building Code in regards to the construction of Additional Residential Units (ARUs) in new-build homes.

DISPOSITON: Motion Carried

In response to a question from Paula regarding the effect that ARUs have on property taxes, Howard noted that if your home value increases, your property taxes will also increase. This is reported to MPAC through the permitting process. The permit to construct an ARU itself is not expensive.

Council has historically been proactive in trying to find solutions to problems – the Township is one of the first municipalities to approve a garden suite (granny flat). These housing solutions may be able to be converted to permanent dwellings as ARUS. Staff were directed to draft communication for the March and April newsletters regarding what ARU options are available, the permitting process and how staff can assist. It was noted that accessory units will require a minor variance but if the ARU is contained in a dwelling and the land is fully serviced, only a building permit is required.

Discussion took place regarding the need for residents to obtain building permits so that emergency services are aware of additional dwelling units.

Directives

- Assist the Township and provide recommendation on taking a leadership role with respect to the consideration of various housing options within the Township and the County of Oxford;
- The SWOX Housing Opportunities Committee acts as a resource, information gathering and advisory body to Township Council on housing needs within the community;
- Monitor and obtain information on the local housing market and identify trends and emerging housing needs in the community and recommend action where appropriate;
- Provide advice and make recommendations regarding affordable housing initiatives and priorities within the community;
- Explore options for facilitating outside partnerships/involvement for new housing;
- The committee will not be directly involved in providing social housing within the community (this is an upper tier responsibility). However, may consider facilitating discussion in this regard should the opportunity arise with available land or interest from developers.

Adjournment

Resolution No. 4 Moved by Peter Ypma
 Seconded by Craig Gillis

RESOLVED that the Committee adjourn at 3:09 p.m. to meet again on March 5, 2024 at 1:00 p.m.

DISPOSITON: Motion Carried