



Energy & Environment Advisory Committee

MINUTES

A meeting of the Energy & Environment Advisory Committee (E&E) was held on October 3, 2024 at 4:00 p.m., Rotary Complex – Mansbridge Room, 353 McCarthy Road W., Stratford ON

Committee Members Present: Councillor Larry McCabe – Chair Presiding, Felicity Sutcliffe, Councillor Jo-Dee Burbach, Craig Merkle, Anita Jacobsen, Vanni Azzano, Zach Kritzer, Mike Sullivan

Staff Present: Vicky Trotter – Council Committee Coordinator, Sadaf Ghalib – Manager of Climate Change Programs, Casey Riehl – Recording Secretary

Also Present: Jane Marie Mitchell

Regrets: Sharon Collingwood, Ken Clarke, Geoff Krauter, Emily Skelding – Supervisor of Waste Operations

1. Call to Order

Councillor McCabe, Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Reading of the Land Acknowledgment and a moment of silent reflection.

Reading of the Respectful Workplace Policy.

2. Declaration of Pecuniary Interest

None declared.

3. Welcome to New Members

Councillor McCabe welcomed new members Zach Kritzer and Mike Sullivan to the Energy & Environment Advisory Committee.

4. Adoption of Previous Minutes

Motion by Vanni Azzano

Seconded by Craig Merkley

THAT the minutes from the Energy & Environment Advisory Committee meeting dated September 5, 2024 be adopted as printed. Carried

5. Working Group Updates:

Ecological:

Craig Merkley provided the following updates from the Ecological Working Group:

- The working group met with Quin Malott, Parks & Forestry Manager, to review the invasive species management plan and what Community Services staff are working on to implement the plan. Community Services has allocated \$15,000.00 in their 2025 draft budget for implementation of the plan. It is his understanding that the Public Works Department is also contributing \$15,000.00 in their 2025 draft budget plan. This would primarily go towards targeting the phragmites in the storm water ponds and the T.J. Dolan area. They will also continue to battle with other invasives such as the knotweed;
- The Japanese Knotweed seed heads were clipped and bagged up this fall. They will be sprayed next year;
- There was a discussion on the possibility of hiring a summer student to carry out some of the tasks for Community Services implementing the invasive species management plan. Anita Jacobsen has an example of a job description that E&E members could use to help staff create an ad for the position;
- Removing the invasive species has left some areas with a void. These areas now require infilling and will be spread with seed and transplanting done;
- There is a large Norway Maple tree in the Old Grove that is considered invasive. On October 24, 2024 students will be assisting with pulling out all the small seedlings. It drops a large number of seeds and has created a blanket of small Norway Maples around it. Removing the large tree will be done in the future and the Parks & Forestry Manager is preparing to do so. Felicity Sutcliffe noted that there are a lot of sugar maples in the surrounding area trying to grow and will ultimately fill in the area and create a sugar maple forest. Anita Jacobsen stated that the Norway Maple needs to be removed, otherwise they will need to continue pulling the

seedlings every year. The Norway Maple creates a very dense canopy and hinders anything else from thriving near it.

Motion by Craig Merkley

Seconded by Anita Jacobsen

THAT following the direction of the recently adopted Invasive Species Management Plan for the City of Stratford, and after consulting with a professional forester, the Energy & Environment Advisory Committee recommends the removal of the mature Norway Maple located in the TJ Dolan natural area. Its removal will prevent the spread of this non-native species and enable growth of native trees such as recently planted endangered American Chestnut seedlings planted close by. Carried

- The grass-cutting contractor has been cutting down some of the plantings that have been done around the city. Community Services recognizes this as an issue and will work to improve this next year;
- A possible restoration project is planned for the corridor along Devon Street with native grass plantings or reforestation;
- An invasive species workshop is planned in partnership with the City and the UTRCA and will be held at the Rotary Complex on October 9, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.;
- Vanni Azzano shared a draft of the "Living with Natural Areas" flyer for delivery to people whose property is along the perimeter or near the T.J. Dolan area. Councillor Burbach suggested under the "don't" column to state please do not plant invasive species and list some plants. Members suggested adding the Invasive Species Centre link to the flyer for people to see a full list of invasive species. Vicky Trotter will add link to the invasive species information to the City's website;
- The students will begin working on the T.J. Dolan boardwalk soon, the wood is being order in the next couple of weeks;
- Felicity Sutcliffe is continuing to weed and divide the native grasses. They may try and get some students to help grow plugs as part of their program;
- There is some potential shoreline work later this fall on the south shore cribs to help with the growth of the aquatic plants;
- Biologists from the UTRCA have conducted a fish inventory in the Avon River upstream from Stratford, approximately three concessions out. This count showed

great results for brook trout and other species, which is an indicator of good water quality.

6. Climate Change Program Manager Update

No new updates provided.

7. Supervisor of Waste Operations Update

Deferred to next meeting.

8. Active Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) Update

Vicky Trotter reported that ATAC has ordered new bike racks to be installed in the downtown core. They are red heart-shaped and black round ones that will be installed on poles within the downtown area.

ATAC is working on signage at the entrance to T.J. Dolan, as well as blazing for the Avon Trail to help link trails.

Mike Sullivan inquired about the reconstruction project on Erie Street and no bike lanes being included. Councillor Burbach reported that the footprint allows space for bike lanes, however the City is awaiting approval from the Province to proceed. Council has previously allocated the funds for bike lanes.

Mike Sullivan inquired about the development in the east end of the City at Road 111 and Highway 7/8 and questioned if the Active Transportation Advisory Committee be recommending pedestrian and bike paths be included as part of the development. Councillor Burbach stated that ATAC will discuss this issue with staff at an upcoming meeting to see if the committee could make a recommendation. Road 111 is not part of the City; it falls within Perth East Township. There is a website available that you can submit feedback on the project. Mr. Sullivan stated that in the Province's master transportation plan, it states that active transportation be considered for every project.

9. Business Arising from Previous Minutes

9.1 Update on Remaining 2024 Projects and Budget

Vicky Trotter reported that the remaining E&E budget funds will be used for purchasing the wood for the boardwalk in T.J. Dolan. Once the invoice is received for the wood, any remaining funds will go towards the boot cleaning

stations. There is also an amount left for native grass plantings and Anita Jacobsen will arrange for native grass plugs and plants to be purchased.

10. New Business

10.1 John Street Weir

In order to make a major change in operation, the City has to engage stakeholders and regulating agencies through a process such as an environmental assessment. It will be important to determine the limits to the naturalization of the channel through the flood control channel due to many constraints adjacent to the channel. The UTRCA and the City will be reviewing upcoming projects included in the UTRCA preliminary draft budget. At this time, they will discuss opportunities for studies. Provincial funding for 2025 is already allocated, therefore it would be 2026 before studies would begin.

For E&E, the original idea of the weir being removed permanently was for the channel to be naturalized. Vanni Azzano noted that the weir would not need to totally be removed, just remove the stop logs. Councillor Burbach noted that if the weir remains, a multi-use path could be created over the water.

Vicky Trotter will follow up with this project in June 2025 prior to draft budgets.

Motion by Vanni Azzano

Seconded by Craig Merkley

THAT the Energy & Environment Advisory Committee recommends that the environmental assessment process include WECI (Water Erosion Control Infrastructure) application funding in the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority's 2026 budget for the John Street Weir removal, based on the City of Stratfords previous support of the project. Carried

10.2 Investigation of a Municipal Take-out Drink Container Fee

Mike Sullivan would like to request the City of Stratford investigate the possibility of charging a take-out drink container levy or "tax" to encourage people to use non-garbage containers. Mr. Sullivan stated that British Columbia is currently doing this but is not sure if there is anywhere in Ontario that is doing a program like this. The BC program is not province-wide and has been implemented in some communities. The levy started at a \$1.00 charge but has been reduced to \$0.25. Mr. Sullivan stated that the City of Stratford has the

power to levy taxes individually on businesses, not unlike the accommodation tax. It would be a tax when anyone purchased a drink that is not in a re-usable container. It could be a revenue stream for the City and hopefully discourage the use of non-reusable containers, a vast amount of which end up in the Stratford landfill.

Vanni Azzano requested if Mike Sullivan could forward E&E members the information he has on how the program in BC works.

Vicky Trotter provided some information she gathered on communities who implemented a program such as this. Vancouver started a program in 2022, but then repealed it in 2023. The City of Victoria is introducing by-laws on how to reduce single-use items. The City of Toronto stated they have not put a fee on single-use cups; however every retail business operator is required to allow patrons to use their personal re-useable cups.

Councillor Burbach inquired if the committee wanted to re-form the Waste Reduction Working Group to investigate a take-out drink container fee for Stratford. The working group could plan for a possible staged-process proposal.

Sadaf Ghalib stated that some businesses already charge a fee for single-use cups and that most people are unaware of it. Some businesses give you a small discount if you bring your re-usable cup.

Councillor McCabe suggested incentivizing proper behavior would be a good first step to get a buy-in from people. Charging a fee right from the beginning may cause issues. The issue of managing waste within restaurant facilities is significant, especially in the downtown core and every business handles it differently.

Anita Jacobson suggested a public announcement to let people know that some establishments charge less if you bring your own drink container and also that it keeps all the cups and containers out of the landfill.

Councillor Burbach suggested that the Terra-Cycle boxes could be an option for the secondary schools to use as a pilot project, to encourage students from a waste management perspective. Zach Kritzer stated that he thought the schools would be a good fit to try something like the Terra-Cycle boxes. Councillor Burbach will forward the Terra-Cycle information to Zach Kritzer. Sadaf Ghalib added that Terra-Cycle does offer a box that will take mixed recyclables, so

there would not be an issue if someone put in something recyclable that the box was not meant for.

Mr. Sullivan stated that on garbage day, residents of the City of Moncton can put out wet or dry garbage. The dry garbage is entirely sorted through by city staff and anything that can be recycled is diverted from the landfill.

Mr. Sullivan stated that even if the idea of charging a levy on drink containers sparks a reaction from the big chains, it may force them to think about how much is going into the landfill and have a discussion on how we undo it. Perhaps a media release from E&E that this is a consideration would get people thinking about it.

Motion by Mike Sullivan

Seconded by Zach Kritzer

THAT the Energy & Environment Advisory Committee request Stratford City Council direct staff to investigate the legislative regulations of a take-out container levy program for the City of Stratford. Carried

10.3 Canada Post Mailout to Advertise Climate Conversation Series

Mike Sullivan stated he believes the City of Stratford does not do a very good job communicating with residents through direct mail. Mr. Sullivan stated that while the last Climate Conversation event was well attended, it was the same people that always attend the environmental events.

Felicity Sutcliffe disagreed and noted as a greeter she met many new people that attended the event and to participate in the discussions. A flyer was created that was posted around Stratford, as well as shared on many social media outlets.

Councillor McCabe stated that he included the information to all patrons with their bills and on his social media accounts.

Mr. Sullivan believes receiving a piece of mail at their homes makes people take notice of it.

Vicky Trotter stated that the last mail out that the Clerk's Office participated in was five years ago and cost approximately \$2,400.00 to do a neighbourhood

mail out. As the Climate Conversations are not a partnership with the City or E&E, the committee would not be permitted to fund a mail out.

Mr. Sullivan stated that it could fall under a community project in the 2025 budget. The main idea is how can they better engage people to attend events. Mr. Sullivan received a quote of \$3,500.00 for a mail out to all of Stratford, which is approximately 16,800 households.

Councillor Burbach is no longer present at the meeting at 5:33 p.m.

10.4 Eliminating the Use of Fossil Fuels in New Developments

Mike Sullivan inquired why the City of Stratford is still permitting the use of fossil fuels in new developments and whether or not there is a way to prevent fossil fuels in developments.

Sadaf Ghalib stated that the Ontario Building Code dictates what developers are required to follow. The City by itself has limited authority to make any changes that go above and beyond the O.B.C. The City cannot enforce eliminating fossil fuels in new developments. They are looking for guidance from the Province, which takes a very long time.

Mr. Sullivan stated that he does not suggest that they can do it in any way following the current rules. Every developer wants massive gives from the City, and questioned why the City negotiate does not with the developers who want easements to zoning and Official Plan rules. He stated he is not aware that the City has ever insisted on something like this. If developers are forced to use heat pumps to heat and cool the buildings, they will do so.

Vicky Trotter will contact the Director of Building and Planning to inquire if staff is available to attend an upcoming E&E meeting to discuss some of these issues and answer questions and concerns members have.

Councillor McCabe suggested that the E&E Committee could make a recommendation to the Federal and Provincial Ministers who are responsible for regulating this. The recommendation could suggest that the government does not subsidize fossil fuels in new developments.

10.5 Climate Conversations Update

Felicity Sutcliffe thanked everyone who attended the recent Climate Conversation event held on September 26, 2024 regarding the City's

Community Climate Action Plan. Organizers are encouraged by the first event and Ms. Sutcliffe has provided E&E members with notes from the session. Please e-mail any feedback you may have regarding the event to Ms. Sutcliffe.

Councillor McCabe did suggest that when flyers are going out for the events, perhaps future dates of events could be included on the flyer that might draw more people in if they also know the upcoming dates and the topics.

11. Upcoming Events

- Climate Conversation Series:
 - Transportation in Stratford – October 24, 2024
 - Buildings, Land Use and Adaptation – November 28, 2024(All events to be held in the Auditorium at Stratford City Hall at 7:00 p.m.)
- Household Hazardous Waste Day - October 26, 2024

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Energy & Environment Advisory Committee will be held on Thursday, November 7, 2024, at 4:00 p.m., Rotary Complex – Mansbridge Room, 353 McCarthy Road, W., Stratford ON

13. Adjournment

Motion by Vanni Azzano

Seconded by Felicity Sutcliffe

THAT the October 3, 2024, Energy & Environment Advisory Committee meeting adjourn. Carried

Meeting Start Time: 4:00 P.M.

Meeting End Time: 5:47 P.M.