

# **Municipality Of Chatham-Kent**

## **Community Development**

### **Planning Services**

#### **Information Report**

**To:** Members of the Natural Heritage Committee of the Whole

**From:** Ryan Jacques, MCIP, RPP  
Director, Planning Services

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Manager, Growth & Sustainability, Planning Services

**Date:** October 25, 2021

**Subject:** Introduction to the Natural Heritage Committee of the Whole

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This report is for the information of the Natural Heritage Committee of the Whole.

#### **Background**

A state of affairs exists in Chatham-Kent that suggests there is a need to reform the local approach to natural heritage planning.

A local approach to natural heritage planning should be carried out so that future municipal decisions support the long term direction of achieving community sustainability around the four overarching areas of strategic focus as set out in CK Plan 2035 which include, living in a healthy and safe community, maintaining a prosperous economy, promoting environmental sustainability, and respecting people and culture.

It is in the public interest to preserve and enhance the traditions that make the communities within Chatham-Kent distinctive, and also in protecting the natural environment through sound planning principles. Land-use and strategic planning builds actionable plans in preparation for the future. Including a strong commitment to civic engagement, its purpose is to focus the community in a common direction to achieve community sustainability.

Chatham-Kent has an existing planning framework of policies, regulations, and implementation strategies that has evolved over time. Still, there remains general disagreement over the appropriateness and effectiveness of this planning framework. This general disagreement suggests that consideration of a different community approach is a worthwhile endeavour.

Through the deliberations of the Natural Heritage Committee of the Whole, consideration shall be given to strategically align Chatham-Kent's natural heritage

planning framework. This framework may include the community vision, goals and objectives, policies, regulation, and implementation strategies.

### **Comments**

The Chatham-Kent Official Plan sets out that the protection and enhancement of the natural environment is essential for the achievement of long-term sustainability. Therefore, the long-term health of Chatham-Kent's environment is dependent upon the protection and enhancement of natural heritage features, ecological functions and natural resources. Natural heritage planning is an integrating concept for land-use planning that uses an ecosystem based approach to planning and policies. Natural heritage objectives include the preservation and restoration of natural areas, native species, landscapes and ecological processes to promote a healthy ecosystem.

To these ends, it is important to acknowledge the general path Chatham-Kent has taken with regard to natural heritage planning. Some of these planning processes will be, or can be, elaborated on in future reports. This list is not inclusive of the many projects, partnerships, and initiatives undertaken in the community, but rather a high level overview.

- Community Strategic Plan (2000-2003).
- Forest Management Strategy (2003).
- Official Plan (2003-2005).
- Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing review, modification, and approval of Official Plan (2006-2008).
- Greening Strategy (2007).
- Comprehensive Zoning By-law (2009).
- Official Plan update through OPA 28 (2012-2013).
- Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing review, modification, and approval of Official Plan update (2013-2014).
- Consideration of conservation regulations and conservation policies (2013).
- Natural Heritage Implementation Strategy (2014-2021).
- CK Plan 2035.
- Comprehensive Zoning By-law update (2018).
- Development Standards (2019).
- Climate Change Action Plan (2019-2022).

To support the Natural Heritage Committee of the Whole, a series of meetings are scheduled to investigate alternatives to strategically align Chatham-Kent's natural heritage planning framework. This framework may include the community vision, goals and objectives, policies, regulation, and implementation strategies. Upcoming agendas will include the following topic areas. Additional topics can be added at the direction of the Committee.

- Presentations by the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority to generally review:
  - 2014 Natural Heritage Implementation Strategy.
  - Past and ongoing community-based efforts to enhance the natural environment through stewardship programs and partnerships.
  - Watershed-based natural heritage planning.
  - Natural heritage change cover mapping analysis.
- A review of the current land-use planning framework and its outcomes in Chatham-Kent, including:
  - Ontario Planning Act and Provincial Regulations.
  - Provincial Policy Statement.
  - Chatham-Kent Official Plan policies.
  - Chatham-Kent Zoning By-law regulations.
- Detailed review of 2021 Community Engagement process.
  - Overview of the survey format and questions.
  - Results and statistics.
  - Comments and analysis.
- Introduction of an approach to strategically align Chatham-Kent's natural heritage planning framework, with consideration to:
  - Learning from experiences of the historical approach to natural heritage planning.
  - Validating assumptions before making decisions.
  - Creating a cohesive framework to promote consistent and predictable decision-making.
  - Coordinating community action.
- Municipally-owned woodlands and trees, and urban trees.
  - Management of urban trees, including street trees.
  - Trees in Asset Management planning.
  - Benefits of trees.

As well, an approach to a First Nations engagement must be considered. First Nations engagement should acknowledge diverse histories, priorities, and cultural values. In general, engagement should have a specific goal to respect priorities of self-determination, traditions and culture, treaty rights, reconciliation, and improving socio-economic outcomes. Understanding unique and important First Nations knowledge systems which have value to society and can provide enrichment to non-Indigenous peoples in a variety of ways. Administration will endeavour to effectively engage First Nations. Effective engagement can occur when:

- It is approached as an opportunity to build trust and mutual respect.
- It is based on a mutually-agreed upon approach.
- It is flexible and responsive to new information.
- It is viewed as a long-term relationship-building exercise.
- It is accountable and transparent.

**Consultation**

There was no consultation required for the preparation of this report.

**Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications resulting from this Report.

Prepared by:

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