



STAFF REPORT
Municipality of Wawa
Maury O'Neill, CAO



To: Mayor and Council	Report No.: CAO 2022-06
Date: September 16, 2022	Council Meeting Date: Sept. 20, 2022

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Quarterly Activity Report
June to August 2022

Recommendation

THAT the Municipal Council receive the Economic Development Quarterly Activity Report dated September 16, 2022, for information.

Background and Summary

Economic and business development activity is being led by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) with the support of an Assistant, Jessie Labonte. The Director of Community Services and Tourism provides support on matters pertaining to Tourism Planning and Development and oversees the seasonal operations of the Tourist Information Center and Wawa Goose Market.

In June 2022, Council appointed an Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee (EDTAC) to provide advice and strategic direction to Council on policies, procedures and strategic directions that should be considered for the purposes of fostering and advancing economic, business and tourism opportunities in Wawa and Area. The Committee has met in June and August and is working on developing a work plan for 2022-23.

The following represents a brief summary of some of the activity relating to economic and tourism development that has taken place during the period of June to August 2022;

1. WAWA FIVE-YEAR TOURISM PLAN

With funding support from FedNor, the Consulting Firm of Bannikin was hired to complete a Wawa Five-Year Tourism Plan in June 2022. The Plan will assist the local tourism sector to recovery from the adverse impacts of COVID-19 and set-out a community vision with actionable items to improve and increase visitations and spending in the area.

The Study process began in June and several meetings held with the Consultants, EDTAC Committee and local stakeholders. Staff launched a tourist survey in August which is in progress and runs until the end of September and a "Research and Communication" plan developed to ensure broad community and stakeholder

participation throughout the study process. A key informants list has been developed for future one-on-one interviews and a resident and business survey will be launched in the next two weeks to gauge local interest in future tourism development activities. Two in-person public sessions are being planned to provide community participation with the first session to be held around November 10, 2022.

An invitation was sent to Michipicoten First Nation to participate in the Tourism Plan process and the project was accepted as a study topic to be presented at the upcoming Northern Ontario Tourism Conference.

Over the next few months, survey results will be compiled, community sessions held and a presentation made to Council by January 31, 2023. The Study will conclude by March 2023.

2. LABOUR ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

2.1 *CTV Northern Works – Media Campaign*

In partnership with communities in Superior East and led by SECFDC, a grant was received from the Ontario Rural Affairs Ministry (OMFRA) under the Rural Economic Development (RED) program in August to promote and market available job opportunities in the region through a series of commercials to be aired on CTV Northern Ontario and a new Northern Works website.

The cost of the two-flight campaign (Spring 2022 and Fall 2023) is about \$70,000 and Wawa's share to participate is \$3,500. There will be a series of television spots, news interviews and website promotions led by Bell Media promoting job opportunities in "The Superior Gold Region" as well as in Wawa specific.

Staff have coordinated the script, pictures and media campaign for Wawa. The campaign will focus on the upcoming job opportunities at the Wawa OSB Mill Inc. while promoting all jobs available and listed on the Regional Employment Help Centre on-line job board.

The first airing of Ads is scheduled to run the week of October 16, 2022.

2.2 *Reseau du Nord – Francophone Immigration Program*

Staff brought the opportunity to apply to a Call for Proposals for funding under the Northern Ontario Immigration Program to the attention of surrounding communities and coordinated a meeting to gauge interest in an application. Dubreuilville agreed to lead a submission due September 16, 2022, with the communities of White River and Wawa participating.

The project would see the area gain funding and supports to attract Francophone Immigrants to area employers and would leverage additional supports for immigrants in the future if approved. A decision should be made on the application by October 1, 2022.

A letter of support was received from the Wawa OSB Mill Inc. who is very interested in the hiring of immigrants to meet its expected labour force requirements.

2.3 ACCESS – Connecting Canada Program

The Connecting Canada project, funded by IRCC and led by ACCES Employment, worked with Wawa and surrounding communities to connect pre-arrival immigrants with employers in the area so they could make more informed decisions on where to start their lives in Canada. A job fair and series of on-line events were held in the month of June to promote Wawa to over 50 participants from around the globe and staff created a video showcasing the beauty of the area that assisted in bringing about ten people to inquire more about Wawa opportunities. The Wawa OSB Mill and Alamos participated in the sessions.

2.4 North Algoma Medical Recruitment and Retention Committee

A member of Council, currently Mitch Hatfield, participates on the North Algoma Medical Recruitment and Retention Committee. The Municipality committed to provide \$23,000 annually for two-years to the Committee (2021-2023) to attract and retain medical professionals in Wawa. The Committee meets quarterly and the staff attend recruitment affairs and markets opportunities, particularly to Locums, to meet local needs. The Municipality provides incentives such as access to the fitness centre to visiting medical professionals.

3. HOUSING AND LAND DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Housing and Accommodation Planning

Addressing the current shortage of local housing and accommodations continued to be the highest priority of staff over the past quarter and considerable time was spent on finding possible solutions with various partners. Several meetings with residential developers to encourage the building of new units. Over ten consultations were held with developers and four remain currently active in pursuing potential housing projects in the future for the community.

Staff have inventoried available residential lands owned by the Municipality, including the 80 un-serviced lots in Churchill Phase V, to respond to local development inquiries. Staff also supported the owners of vacant land to sell and/or develop lots for residential purposes. Several land development inquiries were responded to over the period as well as discussions held with major employers to ensure stakeholders were engaged in developing possible solutions to the housing shortage.

The responsibility to provide affordable, accessible and adequate housing is all levels of government and is governed by a complex set of policy and legislation that requires coordination between land use planning, infrastructure planning, economic development, public health, community services, housing service providers, and the development industry. Staff continue to attract housing developers and support local builders to find solutions to increasing housing supply.

3.2 Land Development – Industrial Park and Commercial Lots

During the quarter, four vacant lots in the Industrial Park were surveyed and sold to local persons developing new or expanding existing businesses. A variety of support was provided to the purchasers and only one (1) vacant lots remains available for purchase. To address the pending shortage of suitably zoned and serviced lots for industrial development, staff is working with a private sector partner to examine the expansion potential of more land for both commercial and industrial development.

Several inquiries were responded to over the reporting period from out-of-town businesses who were looking to find space in existing commercial buildings for business expansion purposes. All inquiries were forwarded to local business persons and some companies have located branch offices locally.

A study on projected market demand for both commercial buildings and industrial land will be recommended for consideration in the 2023 budget.

4. DOWNTOWN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Wawa Business Improvement Association (WBIA)

Staff continue to assist the Wawa Business Improvement Association and provide meeting and project support. The Wawa BIA provided funds and volunteers to ensure flowers were in municipal containers along Broadway and Mission Road this summer. With staff assistance from Community Services, the BIA is currently examining the replacement and purchase of the banners along Broadway by the end of 2022. Staff continued to host and monitor the BIA EAT, SHOP, LIVE website that promotes local restaurants, businesses and accommodations to visitors.

4.2 My Main Street Application for Funding

The CAO applied to the 2022 My Main Street Community Activator Program for funding in order to hire a full-time person to implement downtown improvement initiatives and provide entrepreneurial support. Unfortunately, the application was not approved.

4.3 Wawa Goose Summer Market

With the assistance of staff and volunteer Committee, the summer market continued over the past few months and several markets held promoting locally produced goods. The Market was promoted to tourists and 2023 operations are under review to determine a more popular approach to hosting local vendors.

5. OTHER ACTIVITY

Staff continued to provide support and assistance to investors including the Wawa OSB Mill Inc. and Algoma Ferrous Industries (AFI). Assistance was also provided to local entrepreneurs to complete business plans and make application for needed

business supports. Marketing efforts included promoting the Digital Mainstreet funding programs to local business and highway signage designs were developed to replace old and outdated signage along the highway.

6. NEXT QUARTER PLANNED ACTIVITY – September to December 2022

During the next quarter, economic development and tourism efforts will focus on working with the EDTAC Committee and new Council to set-out an agreed upon action plan for economic development and tourism goals and objectives for 2023-2024.

- a) Complete tourism plan community survey and public information sessions.
- b) Complete CTV Marketing Campaign and new website page to promote local and regional job opportunities.
- c) EDTAC Committee – complete survey of members and develop draft action plan and hold monthly meeting and provide full staff support.
- d) On-Board new Council in December 2022.
- e) Accommodation Tax report to be completed by December.

Wawa Strategic Plan

The staff activities presented in this report meet the goals and objectives set-out in the Wawa Strategic Plan (2021-2025). Under the key priority of Tourism and Economic Development, all set-out action items have been implemented or are underway. The Report also meets the vision and mission statements of the Wawa Strategic Plan which focus on meeting community needs with quality services that are financially viable.

Conclusion

Staff recommends that Council receive this report for information.

Sincerely,



Maury O'Neill, CAO/Deputy-Clerk

cc: Jessie Labonte, Assistant