



Council report

Meeting date:	July 12, 2022
Title:	CAO updates
Prepared by:	Laura Johnston, CAO

Recommendation

That council receives report CAO updates for information.

Executive summary

There are four areas of updates in this report:

- Status charts of the areas of focus from the 2020-2022 strategic vision plan. This report covers the second quarter of 2022, and the status charts are attached as appendices.
- Progress update on the four corporate projects directed by council in April 2021.
- Status update on council resolutions.
- Close-out report for the 2020 – 2022 emergency declaration.

Background and discussion

In February 2020, West Grey council adopted the 2020-2022 Strategic Vision Plan. The plan has three pillars - work together, build a better future, and promote community - and serves as the municipality's workplan.

Budget pressures and resourcing levels have impacted the initiatives and will continue to do so.

In April 2021, council approved a revised workplan. Under the new direction, staff will continue aligning regular work to the pillars of the Vision Plan, however, four significant projects were directed as the primary focus.

The four focus projects are:

- Customer Service Strategy
- Asset Management Plan
- Climate Action Plan; and an
- Economic Development Strategy.



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In addition, council has passed several resolutions directing staff on a number of initiatives. A summary of that data is included in this report.

Also included in this report is the public reporting requirement following the termination of the emergency declaration in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Four key projects

Customer Service Strategy

There is no budget for this project and there was no specific staff lead. However, a staff team comprised of employees from the clerk's department, finance, community services and public works was formed and started working on developing the West Grey Customer Service Strategy. The goal of the strategy is to create a customer-centric corporate culture. The strategy will also identify deliverables such as response time standards, tactics to deal with difficult situations, processes to ensure consistent internal communication, implementing a Corporate Customer Service training program, and external communication practices to enhance citizen awareness.

In 2022, the project progressed significantly when staff secured the opportunity to work with an MBA student consulting team. The MBA team is providing research and strategy development (pro bono) as part of the Wilfrid Laurier University MBA degree program. This support has been invaluable in advancing this project. West Grey's Officer, Corporate and Community Initiatives is the project lead working with the WLU team. The project completion is tentatively Q3, 2022.

As well, the new phone system, secured through grant funds under the Municipal Modernization Grant, has been installed. Features of the system include automatically transcribing voice mail messages to email messages, the ability to be connected anywhere with an internet connection, the ability to check team members' availability through the contacts portal, and the future expandability of the system.

Pressures: Finding time to dedicate to this project is an ongoing challenge. While one staff has taken the lead in advancing the project, all staff time will be required for ongoing participation in developing and future training. As well, the lack of a budget puts the implementation at risk, and it is anticipated that a Budget Request Form will be included in the 2023 budget package.

Economic Development Strategic Plan

Staff continue working with economic development staff at Grey County. The business mix analysis work has now been completed and is being reviewed by Grey County staff.

One West Grey staff member has been assigned to support this project and has been working with an economic development officer at the county on data gathering and developing the communication and engagement strategy. The West Grey Economic Development Advisory Committee has received regular project updates and the committee members will play an



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important role in contributing to the draft strategy in the future.

Pressures: There is no budget allocated to this project, and without the support, assistance and expertise of county staff, this project would have to be outsourced to a consultant team. Additionally, with the upcoming return to community programming, there is potential for the staff lead to be pulled in several directions. It will be essential to monitor competing pressures against the project's progress.

Climate Action Plan

In 2019, West Grey council declared a climate crisis. In 2021, West Grey became a member of the Partners for Climate Protection (PCP), a program associated with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM).

West Grey council approved a revamped advisory committee to focus on environmental matters. The Climate Action Advisory Committee (CAAC) consists of volunteer citizens and Councillors Hamilton and Shea. The CAAC focuses on environmental issues that affect the health of our community. The Climate Action Plan is also of interest to this committee. To date, the CAAC has had input on the draft plan and the community survey, has had a workshop with the consultant team developing the climate action plan, and has successfully recommended the municipality host a virtual 'carbon footprint calculator' workshop consisting of a panel of elected officials and community leaders, with the opportunity for the general public to participate in an audience capacity. That workshop was held June 28, 2022.

West Grey council directed staff to allocate \$50,000 from the provincial Municipal Modernization Grant for a Climate Action Plan (CAP). Staff issued an RFP and through that procurement process, the work was awarded to ICLEI Canada. The Climate Action Plan project is on track, and included presentations to the CAAC, and council. ICLEI Canada is incorporating feedback into the final draft, working on target setting, has launched a community survey to engage the public and anticipates a second presentation in Q3, 2022.

Grey County has also passed their community climate action plan and the county will be attending the June CAAC meeting to explore alignment between the county plan and the West Grey corporate plan.

Pressures: The consultant team to lead the development of a Climate Action Plan has been instrumental in advancing this project. Grey County GIS staff must be commended for their assistance in mapping our municipal assets. At this time, West Grey staff workload remains a notable pressure in ensuring timelines are met.

A new position, approved for a Q4 2022 start, will assume the lead on this project. The Environmental and Capital Projects Officer will be a significant, key support for this initiative. In addition to leading the corporate climate program, this position would also proactively lead other environmental initiatives:

- energy initiatives in conjunction with the asset management plan
- update and execute the energy conservation and demand management plan
- manage and oversee specific legislative responsibilities under the Certificate of Approval for the landfill operations



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- manage the contract with our waste management provider
- lead the development and implementation of a waste diversion strategy
- lead the development and implementation of a landfill operations review, including proposing options for an un-staffed transfer station model
- oversee the blue box transition to producer responsibility
- lead and manage a community communication and education campaign on environmental initiatives
- foster and champion a corporate culture shift to environmental best practices.

At the writing of this report, the job description has been finalized, scored and placed on the pay band scale. Recruitment will begin in July with an anticipated start date in September 2022.

Asset Management Plan

In January 2018, the provincial government implemented the Asset Management Planning for Municipal Infrastructure Regulation, O. Reg. 588/17. This was implemented to help address the issue many Ontario municipalities were facing in managing infrastructure that was degrading faster than it is being repaired or replaced. The goal of this regulation is to help improve the way municipalities plan for their infrastructure. The regulation builds on the progress municipalities have made while bringing consistency and standardization to asset management plans to help spread best practices throughout the sector and enable the collection of comparable data.

The province recently announced a revised phase-in schedule to meet the requirements of the regulation. The dates are:

- July 1, 2019: Date for municipalities to have a finalized strategic asset management policy that promotes best practices and links asset management planning with budgeting, operations, maintenance, and other municipal planning activities.
- July 1, 2022: Date for municipalities to have an approved asset management plan for core assets (roads, bridges and culverts, water, wastewater, and stormwater management systems) that identifies current levels of service and the cost of maintaining those levels of service.
- July 1, 2024: Date for municipalities to have an approved asset management plan for all municipal infrastructure assets that identifies current levels of service and the cost of maintaining those levels of service.
- July 1, 2025: Date for municipalities to have an approved asset management plan for all municipal infrastructure assets that builds on the requirements set out in 2024. This includes an identification of proposed service levels, what activities will be required to meet proposed service levels, and a strategy to fund these activities.

The Municipality of West Grey has an asset management plan (AMP) that meets provincial regulations. This plan requires ongoing updates due to changes in the asset or the financial fluctuations to maintaining assets. Additionally, council is interested in expanding the AMP to include natural inventory.

In February 2022, a new employee in the finance department joined the corporation to lead the



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asset management portfolio. Without this position, the corporation would be at risk of not meeting the upcoming provincial deadlines or ensuring ongoing management of the asset management plan. On June 21, 2022, at the regular meeting of West Grey council, council approved the core asset component of the corporate asset management plan and staff submitted the plan to the province. Ongoing maintenance and updates to the plan will continue.

Reports Pending (Council Resolutions)

The municipality implemented eScribe meeting management software mid-2020. This platform has streamlined the agenda creation process, ensures reports and agendas are compliant with accessibility requirements, and facilitates a smoother process for minute-taking. The software can also produce statistical reports, including total number of staff reports generated in any given timeframe. Since implementing eScribe, 337 reports have been presented to council from staff across the corporation.

The clerk's department also maintains a database of council resolutions. Department heads are consulted on the status of the pending reports to keep the database current by identifying which items have been completed, are in process, are on hold, or have not been started.

The following is a summary of that data:

- 1464 resolutions passed from January 2020 to June 7, 2022
- 123 resolutions are on the 2022 list:
 - 52 of those are completed at the time of writing this report
 - 38 in process
 - 4 are ongoing
 - 29 have not yet started.

A few of the items not yet started will be dealt with through the 2023 budget process, others are waiting for new staff to arrive, and the balance were only recently passed resolutions.

Emergency Declaration and Termination

The impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic have yet to be completely determined. West Grey's response was similar to municipalities across the province and was aligned to guidance from the provincial government and the local Grey Bruce health unit and in coordination with neighbouring Grey County municipalities.

On March 23, 2020, West Grey declared a state of emergency. That declaration was terminated on March 25, 2022. During this time, the Emergency Control Group was activated and met 73 times to provide situational and operational updates, to receive information and guidance from public health, and to ensure responses to changes in protocols or operations were in accordance with provincial and local health unit directives.

The provincial lockdowns, remote working mandates, and pandemic response directives have had significant impacts on how the corporation has and will continue to function.

Specifically:



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Operational changes

Throughout the pandemic all municipal facilities complied with provincial and public health orders. The most notable operational changes were to the community services department as recreation centers were required to either limit capacity, modify programming, or close completely. When it came to re-opening recreation, the municipality gradually re-introduced programming and rentals in accordance with public health guidance and common practice with neighbouring municipalities.

Further, throughout the duration of the pandemic, modifications could be seen at the municipal administration building including the closing of in person “counter services” during provincial lock-down periods and the shift to online, phone, curbside and drop-box services. Staff safety, ensuring distancing protocols and implementing business continuity were achieved by creating two teams for the administration building coverage. One team worked remote; one team was on-site. Currently, the municipal office has resumed normal operations and has maintained increased daily cleaning, plexi-glass barriers, and a voluntary masking practice. However, remote working is still an option and has been utilized on occasion and with supervisory approval.

Online services

At the start of the pandemic the municipality needed to shift to enhanced online services. The largest shift was the transfer of both council and advisory committee meetings from in-person to online virtual meetings. At the beginning of the pandemic, it was hectic while staff investigated and installed meeting software, however, following implementation, council and committee meetings have been able to continue their regularly scheduled schedules. Following re-opening and lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, the municipality will continue virtual / hybrid meetings to maintain safety protocols, to leverage the flexibility and cost-saving benefits of virtual meetings, and to facilitate the increased public engagement that has occurred since offering the ability for public members (viewers) to attend remotely. Another permanent adjustment stemming from the pandemic is that all day-time council meetings will be held in person, with a virtual log-in option, and all evening council meetings will remain remote. With very little budget or time, staff has been instrumental in sourcing affordable and reliable technology upgrades to enable this model to succeed.

The municipality was able to further extend online services throughout the duration of the pandemic with library services offering online programming and book request/drive-through pick-up, and the municipal staff expanding online services such as bag tag purchases. Partway through the pandemic, as part of regularly scheduled software updates, municipal staff upgraded to Microsoft 365 from the standard office suite. This change allowed staff the ability to access Microsoft teams which is now widely used by all staff for the ability to host online internal and external meetings. Virtual meetings (both Zoom and Teams) are still widely used to host meetings for the municipality due to the flexibility, convenience, cost-effectiveness, and the efficiency of no longer travelling for meetings.

Enhanced cleaning



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Throughout the duration of the pandemic staff safety and cleaning procedures were top of mind and continue today. All municipal buildings were equipped with hand sanitizing stations, medical grade disinfectants, and electrostatic fogging machines. All buildings followed individual cleaning schedules, with increase cleaning between rentals and bookings. All buildings continue to frequently clean high touch points and provide hand sanitizer stations to staff and users. Disposable masks continue to be available for staff use.

Financial impacts

Lost revenues	\$318,443
Tax penalty waving	\$73,111
Additional costs for materials & supplies	\$84,745
Additional costs enforcement	\$75,000
Total	\$551,299

Grants

2020 Safe Restart Funding	\$359,700
2021 Safe Restart Funding	\$72,000
2021 Covid-19 Recovery Funding	\$108,271
Total	\$539,971

Legal and legislated requirements

Municipal Act, 2001, as amended.

Financial and resource implications

Strategic Vision Plan:

Funds are designated to departments through the annual budget process to meet the goals of the Strategic Vision Plan. Initiatives not captured or resourced will come to council for consideration.

Four key projects:

A municipal modernization grant allotment was used to retain the consultant team for the climate action plan.

There is no budget for the economic development strategic plan, or the customer service plan, however, the municipal modernization grant was used to upgrade the telephone system.

An additional staff position was created to lead and manage the asset management plan as well as a new staff position to lead and manage the climate action initiatives.

Staffing implications

Various, depending on the initiative.



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Consultation

West Grey senior management team and staff.

Alignment to strategic vision plan

Pillar: work together

Goal: clear communication

Attachments

Pillar 1: Work together status chart

Pillar 2: Build a better future status chart

Pillar 3: Promote community status chart

Next steps

Priorities remain meeting legislated deadlines and the four key projects approved in April 2021.

The reports that remain pending, will be completed as time permits.

Respectfully submitted: Laura Johnston, CAO