



Council report

Meeting date:	February 1, 2022
Title:	Strategic Vision Plan update
Prepared by:	Laura Johnston, CAO

Recommendation

That council receives report Strategic Vision Plan update report for information.

Executive summary

Attached are the status charts of the areas of focus from the 2020-2022 strategic vision plan. This report covers October – December 2021. This report also outlines progress on the four corporate projects directed by council in April 2021.

Background and discussion

In February 2020, West Grey council adopted the 2020-2022 Strategic Vision Plan. The plan has three pillars: 1) Work Together; 2) Build a Better Future; and 3) Promote Community and provides a road map to guide the municipality forward to 2022.

Budget cuts and event cancellations due to the COVID-19 pandemic have impacted and will continue to affect these projects.

In April 2021, a revised workplan was presented to council and approved. Under the revised plan, staff will continue aligning regular work to the pillars of the Vision Plan, however, four significant projects were directed as primary focus, and new or special projects would be paused. The four focus projects are:

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

In practice, however, the corporation has had to remain flexible to manage projects and new council directives not captured in the Vision Plan pillars and in addition to these four projects.

This report provides a detailed update for each of the four projects. The attachments to the report outline work completed on the pillars of the Vision Plan.



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Customer Service Strategy

There is no budget for this project and no specific staff lead, so a staff team comprised of employees from the clerk's department, finance, community services and public works was formed. This team was 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.

To date:

- staff has established rotating schedules for counter and phone coverage.
- staff will be issuing a Request for Proposals for a new phone system that was identified for funding from the Municipal Modernization grant
- accessible document training session for staff completed and ongoing
- staff is working with an MBA student consulting team to advance this project. The MBA team is providing research and strategy development (pro bono) as part of the Wilfrid Laurier University MBA degree program. This support will be invaluable in advancing this project. West Grey's Officer, Corporate and Community Initiatives is the project lead working with the WLU team.

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 the strategy and training. As well, the lack of a budget puts the implementation at risk. It was hoped the strategy would be developed by Q4, 2021, however, workload, pandemic stresses and staffing pressures affected timelines. On the positive, however, having the support of the MBA team is expected to alleviate considerable research time for staff and produce a top-notch strategy, custom-tailored for West Grey. Revised completion date is Q3, 2022.

Economic Development Strategic Plan

With considerable support from the economic development staff at Grey County, there was some notable progress on the economic development strategic plan, including developing a project plan with input from the Economic Development Advisory Committee. The business mix analysis work, which was delayed due to COVID restrictions, 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, while the CAO has prioritized this project in the workload planning, it will be important 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). A condition of the PCP membership is to appoint a corporate champion and a champion from the municipality's council. Council appointed Councillor Hamilton and CAO Johnston. Since that time, Councillor Hamilton and CAO Johnston have participated in workshops dealing with creating the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions inventory and setting climate targets.

Additionally, West Grey council approved a revamped advisory committee to focus on environmental issues. The Climate Action Advisory Committee (CAAC) consisted of volunteer citizens and Councillors Hamilton and Shea. The CAAC focuses on environmental issues that affect the health of our community and the Climate Action Plan is of interest to this committee. The committee will resume meetings in 2022, having attracted new members and meeting minimum membership requirements.

As part of the 2021 budget process, West Grey council directed staff to allocate \$50,000 from the provincial Municipal Modernization Grant for a Climate Action Plan (CAP). In August, a Request for Proposal was issued to retain a consultant to create the West Grey Climate Action Plan. That RFP was awarded to ICLEI Canada and staff has been working closely with ICLEI in the data gathering stage. The Climate Action Plan project is on track, with an anticipated initial presentation to council in Q2, 2022, to provide an update on the work to date and to establish corporate targets.

Pressures: The consultant team to lead the development of a Climate Action Plan has been instrumental in advancing this project, although the workload demands for staff in providing the data must be acknowledged. Additionally, Grey County GIS staff must be commended for their assistance in mapping our municipal assets. At this time, workload remains a notable pressure, however, future pressures will include appropriate budgeting to be able to make the investments in greener initiatives, as well as ensuring appropriate corporate staff support for effective implementation.

In the 2022 draft budget, council approved a new position: Environmental and Capital Projects Coordinator. This will be a significant, key support for this initiative. In addition to leading the corporate emissions 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
- 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.

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, as listed on the provincial website 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.



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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 the 2021 budget, council approved a \$60,000 increase to the wages and salaries budget. This has been allocated for a finance analyst position to lead the asset management portfolio. This recruitment has concluded, and the new employee will be joining the corporation in February 2022. With this additional staffing, meeting the provincial deadlines is achievable, as is ensuring ongoing management of the asset management plan.

Legal and legislated requirements

Municipal Act, 2001, as amended.

Financial and resource implications

Funds are designated to departments through the annual budget process to meet the goals of the Strategic Vision Plan. Initiatives not captured or resourced for 2022 will come to council for consideration.

Staffing implications

Various, depending on the initiative.

Consultation

West Grey senior management team and staff.

Alignment to strategic vision plan

Pillar: work together

Goal: clear communication

Attachments

Pillar 1: Update matrix: Work together

Pillar 2: Update matrix: Build a better future

Pillar 3: Update matrix: Promote community

Next steps

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

Respectfully submitted: Laura Johnston, CAO