

## **City of St. Catharines**

### **Citizens' Advisory Committee on Community Sustainability**

#### **Notes of the February 27, 2013 Meeting**

#### **Committee Room, St. Catharines City Hall**

*Present:*

Marty Mako (Chair)  
Councillor Mathew Siscoe  
Dan Romanko  
Bernie Slepko  
Vanessa Aykroyd  
Sam Mahboob  
Erin Britnell  
Erin O'Hoski (staff)

*Regrets:*

Councillor Greg Washuta  
Phi Baranoski

*Presenters:*

Rhonda Barron, Niagara Region Poverty Reduction Network  
Greg Miller, Niagara Region Transit Outreach Coordinator

### **Approval of the Minutes of the January 30, 2013 Meeting**

The minutes of the January 30, 2013 meeting were approved.

### **Presentation on Regional Transit**

Greg Miller, Regional Transit Coordinator and Rhonda Barron, Niagara Region Poverty Reduction Network provided highlights and information on upcoming initiatives.

Greg Miller provided an overview of current operations including routes, buses and fares. Rhonda Barron explained the mandate of the Transportation Working Group of the Niagara Region Poverty Reduction Working Group. One of their next steps is to advocate for a transit subsidy for Ontario Works recipients.

The Commuter Challenge will be taking place from June 2 to 8, 2013. The initiative is intended to be a catalyst to promote transportation alternatives to the automobile. Organizations sign up and can compete against one another. Data such as distance and emissions reductions are measured.

Members suggested the initiative be presented to Council in May in conjunction with the Niagara Region Poverty Reduction Network rebranding launch.

### **City Council Budget Night, March 4**

Since the last meeting on January 30 Marty Mako, Dan Romanko, Bernie Slepko and Phil Baranoski have been exploring the potential for the Committee to make a presentation on the St. Catharines Transit Commission budget submission during City Council's deliberations on March 4. In particular, reductions to planned Sunday service improvements and reduction or elimination of routes are undesirable given the multi-modal transportation priorities within the Sustainability Strategy.

On March 4 the St. Catharines Transit Commission budget will indicate a 4.7 per cent increase from 2012 with 4.6 percent attributable to the addition of new hospital routes. Initially, in January 2013, the St. Catharines Transit Commission budget submission requested an 8 per cent increase to accommodate increasing Sunday service from one hour to half hour service (the second part of a four pronged strategy to strengthen Sunday service).

Councillor Siscoe reported an increase in ridership over the past few years. On average, ridership has increased by roughly 3 per cent per year over the past 5 years. The Commission is anticipating a slight decrease in ridership in 2012, attributable primarily to reduced contracts with the District School Board of Niagara and slight increase in fares. With respect to Sunday service, service hours increased by 50 per cent and ridership increased by 50 percent.

**On a motion by Councillor Siscoe, seconded by Dan Romanko, the Committee voted in favour of making a presentation to Council on Monday, March 4 to support proposed enhancements to Sunday service.**

Marty Mako and Bernie Slepko agreed to speak on behalf of the committee in support of enhanced Sunday service. The Centre of Expertise (COE) on multi modal transportation will work on the presentation and share with other members for review and comment.

Dan Romanko suggested comparing expenditures that accommodate vehicular traffic against expenditures required to facilitate a sustainable multi-modal transportation network. This type of analysis might demonstrate the need to shift resources in order to accommodate a more sustainable multi-modal transportation network.

Members also discussed the need for the City of St. Catharines to reevaluate its budget processes and presentation. It is currently difficult to evaluate proposed expenditures

because the document is not intuitive. The City should investigate models that would encourage increase transparency and public participation.

Rhonda Barron suggested that the Niagara Region Poverty Reduction Network may also be interested in making a presentation in supported of enhanced Sunday service though timelines are short.

## **Information Sharing**

Erin Britnell reported on the Niagara Region Housing and Homelessness Action Plan work shop on February 20 at the Seymour Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre. The event was designed to address wider anti-poverty objectives related to strong neighbourhoods as stated in the Sustainability Strategy. While turn-out was low with approximately three community members, the discussion was comprehensive. Erin Britnell will circulate notes when they are available.

Erin O'Hoski attended the 2013 Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Sustainable Communities Conference in Windsor from February 13 to 15. Key themes included asset management, citizen engagement, compact development, electric vehicle infrastructure, building design and sustainable economic development. Information on key sessions will be forwarded to relevant COEs in the coming weeks.

A "green buildings" event is being planned in Niagara in conjunction with the Canadian Green Building Council. Jesse Matthews is a LEED AP and local resident who is interested in organizing the event. Dan suggested that the Committee may have a role to play and will report further details when they are available.

## **Other Business**

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 27 from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. at St. Catharines City Hall. The theme scheduled for this meeting is asset management. Members suggested the inclusion of concepts like full cost accounting and multi-year budgeting.

The Committee selected local food security as the theme for the April 24 meeting, particularly with the launch of the community food store. Committee members agreed to designate compact development as the theme for the May 29 meeting.

Members supported the concept of a Centre of Expertise road show. Marty Mako and/or Erin O'Hoski will visit members of each COE over the next few months to assist in developing issue specific workplans to advance the priorities within the Sustainability Strategy.

March 6 is the launch of Our Local Community Food Store in downtown St. Catharines. The event will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. at Mahtay Café.

The meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.