

Here are the highlights from the regular Lanark County Council meeting held Wednesday, Oct. 23.

- **Great Veggie Grow-Off Results Presented:** As a follow-up to a presentation to the community services committee in August, former Mississippi Mills Mayor Shaun McLaughlin was on hand to announce the winner off the 2019 Great Veggie Grow-off. The program is a response to the issue of food insecurity – not having enough money to buy nutritious food – and is part of the Food Charter for the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville and Lanark County, which envisions a future in which everyone has enough healthy food to eat. The Great Veggie Grow-off is a friendly challenge among the municipalities in Lanark County and Smiths Falls to see which community can grow the most food for their local food bank. The competition has been held since 2014 in Mississippi Mills, with the whole county getting involved in 2016. People were asked to bring locally grown vegetables to one of the four food banks and add the donation to the tally for their town. The final weigh-in was Thanksgiving Saturday to align with the United Nations “World Food Day.” Last year almost 10,000 pounds of produce was grown and contributed. This year, in addition to the four local food banks, Lanark Highlands’ Plan Citizens Group, which grows and distributes food to needy families, took part. “While Lanark Highlands has bragging rights, Drummond/North Elmsley took first spot with 7,839 pounds of food donated,” Mr. McLaughlin said, indicating the food was grown on a farm in that township. The overall county tally was 15,983 pounds, beating the 2016 record of 10,109. For more information, contact Leslie Drynan, Clerk/Deputy CAO, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1502.

Presentation photo available at

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/7tsz1bz9fs7umsj/Great%20Veggie%20Grow-Off%20presentation.jpg?dl=0>

Photo caption: *From left: Warden Richard Kidd (Beckwith Reeve), Shaun McLaughlin, Drummond/North Elmsley Reeve Steve Fournier and Deputy Reeve Ray Scissons.*

- **Housing Service Level Action Plan Approved:** Council approved the service level action plan for social housing to be submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The plan was presented to the community services committee earlier this month and addresses steps to meet the provincial service level standard for housing units. It includes a recommendation to include funding for 20 additional portable housing benefit units in the 2020 budget. The county is required under the Housing Services Act to maintain a prescribed service level of 771 units. The current count is about 670 units. Housing Manager Shawna Stone indicated the county has not been able to achieve the prescribed service level since social housing was downloaded from the province in 2001. The action plan demonstrates how the county intends to work toward meeting the standard, which Ms. Stone explained can be done in three ways: rent-geared-to-income (RGI), rent supplement and portable housing benefit. The county is currently in the request for proposal phase of a 20-unit building with 15 RGI units and five affordable housing units. Occupancy is expected by early 2021 and, as such, cannot yet be counted in the service levels. Ms. Stone said interest in the municipally funded rent supplement program has stagnated as landlords realize higher rents and have the ability to select their own tenants. The portable housing benefit is also municipally funded and is tied to the resident, not the physical housing unit. Residents are not required to live in a dedicated unit and can use the benefit elsewhere if their housing needs change. This provides more flexibility on where they can live. The portable housing benefit was recommended as the best way to meet targets in the current action plan. “Residents from all municipalities in the service area will be eligible to access the portable housing benefit,” Ms. Stone said. For more information, contact Shawna Stone, Housing Manager, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 2401.

- **Lanark Lodge Updates Accepted:** Council has approved a recommendation to upgrade the fire alarm system at Lanark Lodge at a cost of \$63,080. Interim Director Jennie Bingley explained the electrical and mechanical engineering review of the long-term care home that was completed in March indicated the system was obsolete. Two potential firms were contacted for quotes, with one received from Drapeau Automatic Sprinkler Corp. Disruption to residents is expected to be minimal. Ms. Bingley noted that while the fire alarm system replacement was not included in the 2019 budget, other capital items, such as replacing the flooring in the main kitchen and ceiling tile replacement, are not proceeding, so it can be absorbed into the capital budget. “Changes to capital expenditures should be expected as we continue to adjust for the long-term expectations of the existing facility.” Ms. Bingley also provided an update on the request for proposal to hire a strategy consultant to help council develop a long-term care strategy for Lanark Lodge with options for redevelopment. Four bids were received, and the successful proponent was Deloitte. Since Sept. 16, weekly teleconferences with Deloitte are being held. A public meeting is planned for Oct. 24 in the auditorium at Lanark Lodge from 3 to 7 p.m. to provide an overview of redevelopment, long-term care in Ontario, redevelopment examples, next steps for Lanark Lodge and a question-and-answer period. A final report from Deloitte is expected to come to council for consideration in the next few months. The project to provide redevelopment options costs \$55,895 plus HST, which is coming from capital reserves. For more information, contact Jennie Bingley, Interim Director of Lanark Lodge, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 7101.

- **Council Endorses AMO Position on Joint and Several Liability Reform:** Council passed a motion endorsing the position of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario regarding the joint and several liability reform undertaken by the province. In September, the Eastern Ontario Wardens’ Caucus made a submission to the Ministry of the Attorney General as part of the following a provincial review of joint and several liability. The response outlined issues facing member municipalities in the EOWC. “Joint and several liability encourages plaintiffs to target ‘deep pocket’ municipal defendants who are generally insured. This results in a rise in insurance claims and a corresponding rise in insurance costs. “This can effectively cripple risk-exposed defendants, such as municipalities across eastern Ontario. The EOWC believes that it is unfair and unjust for municipalities to carry the financial burden and the lion’s share of a damage award when at minimum fault or responsibility,” the EOWC response states. The letter outlines a range of negative impacts, including financial costs and the types of everyday activities that have been affected by insurance costs and liability risks. Insurance premiums have increased across eastern Ontario over the last decade, leading to tax increases. “This is not sustainable and presents fiscal challenges when preparing and managing current and future budgets.” The EOWC expressed support for recommendations put forward by AMO during the consultation, adding it looks forward to continued discussions this fall. For more information, contact Leslie Drynan, Clerk/Deputy CAO, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1502.

- **Upcoming Meetings: County Council, Wednesday, Nov. 13, 5 p.m.;** Community Services, Nov. 13 (following County Council); Services, Nov. 13 (following Community Services). Special Corporate Services (Budget), Friday, Nov. 22, 9 a.m. **County Council, Wednesday, Nov. 27, 5 p.m.;** Public Works, Nov. 27 (following County Council); Economic Development, Nov. 27 (following Public Works). All meetings are in Council Chambers unless otherwise noted. For more information,

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