



MINUTES
AUGUSTA TOWNSHIP
AGRICULTURE & RURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEETING
December 2nd, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.

In Attendance: Adrian Wynands, Conor Cleary, Jonas Cole, Councillor Samantha Schapelhouman Mayor Doug Malanka, Myron Belej
Regrets: Rob Jones

1. Call to Order

Mayor Doug Malanka called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

2. Approval of Agenda

Approved, with the addition of a bullet point under 6.2 Setbacks, to discuss setbacks for Grain Crops for Ethanol Production.

3. Disclosure of Interest

None.

4. Approval of the Previous Minutes

Approved.

5. Business Arising from the Minutes

5.1 Agricultural Economic Development Opportunities: Community Improvement Plan (CIP) Potential

- Community Improvement Plans are planning and economic development tools used to encourage re/development and re/investment in a community.
- Earlier this year, Augusta established a CIP to disburse Provincial Main Street Revitalization Initiative funds through a grant program to main street businesses in the Township.
- Some Ontario communities, including the Township of Springwater, the Township of Norwich, and the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc have incorporated grant programs into their CIPs to encourage investments in agriculture-related businesses.
- For instance, the Township of Springwater CIP includes a goal of “promoting agricultural diversification, tourism and local recreation;” and an objective of encouraging “the development and enhancement of value-added agricultural uses, agri-tourism and on-farm diversified facilities...”
- Committee discussion reflected that some farmers welcome tourism, while others would prefer not to have visitors on their property.

- Farmers that welcome visitors may encounter higher costs for insurance. Animal health and wellbeing may also become a concern.
- A good place for Augusta Township to start with its CIP could be creating new grant opportunities for local farmers to update their signage, repair fences, paint barns, and refurbish any structures in need of attention. Many of these improvements could have the effect of enhancing the local character and appeal of the community.
- With growing interest in cash cropping, the Township may also want to consider expanding its loan programs for local farmers to install tile drainage. Lands with tile drainage improve the growing conditions, produce a higher yield, are more valuable to farmers, and help ensure the sustainability / longevity of farming on those properties.

6. Other Business

6.1 Site Plan Control: Types of Properties

- Section 9.4.3 of Augusta's Official Plan addresses Site Plan Control.
- The purpose of Site Plan Control is to ensure functional and aesthetically pleasing, safe development and redevelopment throughout the Township; reduce or eliminate land use incompatibility between new and existing development; and ensure that approved developments are built and maintained as set out in the site plan agreement.
- Although the Official Plan considers the entire geographical area of Augusta Township as a Site Plan Control Area, Site Plan Control only applies to commercial, industrial, and institutional land use zones, as well as residential structures consisting of three (3) or more dwelling units; any development located within 100 metres of the high water mark of the St. Lawrence, Kemptville Creek or South Nation Rivers; and heritage properties designated under the Ontario Heritage Act.
- Should a new abattoir, cannabis operation, or other agriculturally related use which poses an odour concern be established in an agricultural zone, the Township would require Official Plan and Site Plan Control By-law amendments in order to apply site plan control, even on a site-specific basis, to properties with agricultural or rural zoning.

6.2 Minimum Distance of Separation (MDS) Guidelines / Setbacks

- Livestock Barns
- The Planner provided an overview of OMAFRA's Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) Document, and some of the responsibilities identified for municipalities.
- Livestock barns are defined in the MDS Document as "One or more permanent buildings located on a lot which are intended for housing livestock, and are structurally sound and reasonably capable of housing livestock.
- This Committee has seen MDS calculations factored in for recent severance applications to create new residential lots in rural zones.

- Abattoirs / Slaughterhouses
- Many abattoirs in Augusta and in other parts of Ontario have closed.
- The Provincial Government has recently announced funding support to enable existing abattoirs to expand through the Meat Processors Capacity Improvement Initiative.
- Not having any remaining in Augusta, many of our local farmers utilize the facility in Athens. The local abattoirs of Wessel, Fournier, Harvey, Hamilton, and Seare are no longer in operation.
- To access the available grant funding, our best approach would be to support and encourage expansion and enhancement of the nearest abattoir in Athens.
- The United Counties of Prescott and Russell established an abattoir as a County initiative, and we should recommend the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville do likewise in/near our County, because local farmers have encountered significant delays of 6+ months to have their animals processed in the region.
- Committee members noted that a food hub had been set up in Smiths Falls, and that it may not yet be fully utilized.
- The Committee discussed the idea of mobile butchers, and the need for additional Provincial inspectors to meet the increasing demand of the sustainable, local food movement.

- Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI)

- ANSI lands are defined in the Provincial Policy Statement as “areas of land and water containing natural landscapes or features that have been identified as having life science or earth science values related to protection, scientific study or education.”
- Significant ANSIs have been identified by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry as being representative of the most significant and best examples of natural heritage or geological features found in Ontario.
- As identified in Augusta’s Official Plan, setbacks associated with ANSI lands are 50 metres for Earth Science ANSIs and 120 metres for Life Science ANSIs.
- Environmental impact statements may be required within these setbacks to ensure that there will be no negative impacts on the natural features or ecological functions of the ANSI lands.

- Agricultural Activities Near Mineral Aggregate Resource Areas

- Since sand, gravel and crushed rock are non-renewable resources used in the construction of everything from roads and buildings to water/sewer infrastructure and landscaping, mineral aggregate deposits have been deemed essential to ensure an adequate supply for future generations.
- Mineral Aggregate Resource Areas have setbacks established in Augusta’s Official Plan: 300 metres for pits and 500 metres for quarries. Multiple setbacks extend into Augusta’s settlement areas.
- Within this setback range, “agricultural uses excluding any accessory building or structure” are among the limited permitted uses.
- Committee members discussed various agricultural crops being planted and harvested in/near mineral aggregate areas.

- Cannabis
 - The Committee discussed how different types of cannabis plants have different odour profiles, the smell of cannabis is noticeable when driving into certain Eastern Ontario communities, and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has recommended that cannabis crops be treated like any other crop.
 - Different municipalities have established different setbacks for cannabis operations, both from other uses (e.g., residential development), and from other cannabis operations.
 - OMAFRA has not yet released MDS guidelines for cannabis operations, although the Province has staff that are working on this.
 - The general consensus was that the Township should exercise some caution with respect to regulations / requirements, but not be overly restrictive so as to prohibit it entirely, particularly given Augusta's key role historically in producing industrial hemp for rope production.
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- Grain Crops for Ethanol Production
 - Committee members discussed how increased Provincial restrictions for crop farmers selling to ethanol plants are being considered.
 - Farmers that have invested significantly to install tile drainage on their properties have been able to plant and harvest crops to within 3 metres of water, including a lake or even a stream, and this approach has been accepted by the conservation authorities.
 - However, increasing the required buffer strip to 30 metres on each side is being considered.
 - Also impacted by the increased restrictions are farm properties that have cleared trees (1.2 acres from 2020 onward).
 - The Township needs to obtain more information from the Grain Farmers of Ontario.

6.3 Great Augusta Community Survey: Agricultural / Rural Highlights in Responses

- Discussion deferred to next meeting.

6.4 Arts and Agriculture in Augusta: Creativity / Artwork in our Rural Areas

- Discussion deferred to next meeting.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

8. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday, January 6th, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.