

Engage and Inform Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 5th, 2025

Members Present: Councillor Valerie Durston, Mayor David Mayberry, Councillor Paul Buchner, Deb Riley, Tabitha Kosmal and Catherine White (virtual via Zoom)

Staff Present: Clerk Julie Middleton, Clerk's Assistant/Records Management Coordinator Nicole Chambers

Guests: Irene Grace Bom, Steve Tait, Carol Erickson and Marie Russell

Regrets: Jen Thomson

Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:58 p.m. by Chair Valerie Durston, and a quorum was present.

Approval of the Agenda

Resolution No. 1 Moved by David Mayberry
Seconded by Tabitha Kosmal

RESOLVED that the agenda for the March 5th, 2025 Engage & Inform committee meeting be approved, as amended (Resignation of Marg Johnson).

DISPOSITION: Motion Carried

The Committee accepted the resignation of Marg Johnson and thanked her for her efforts. They wished her well in her continued volunteerism with other projects.

Approval of the Minutes

Resolution No. 2 Moved by Paul White
Seconded by Catherine White

RESOLVED that the regular minutes of the February 5th, 2025 Engage & Inform committee meeting be approved.

DISPOSITION: Motion Carried

Appointments

1:05 p.m. - Irene Grace Bom - Presentation re: Food Secure Oxford

Irene Grace Bom, resident of South-West Oxford, presented to the committee regarding food insecurity in Oxford County. She presented what she has learned, gleaned from and experienced in her vast research on the topic. It is her hope that Oxford's rich agricultural resources and demonstrated network of donors and volunteers elevates the County to a leadership position to help solve the problem of food insecurity in Canada.

Discussion:

- David Mayberry noted that Oxford County will be discussing living wage in an upcoming meeting – there is an opportunity for municipalities and local governments to take leadership on this.
- Carol Erickson noted that Food Rescue Feeding Oxford (FRFO) is working on a distribution centre, and noted that gathering and sorting food is one of the biggest obstacles that needs to be dealt with in the community. She also acknowledged that best before dates are another challenge due to liability.
- David questioned how we tackle this issue in a holistic manner.
- Steve Tait noted that the current system is disorganized and volunteer-run groups are working as silos, working towards food security. Organizations are functioning without boards of directors, insurance, etc. Experts who know about food distribution need to join the conversation.
- Steve recommended that FRFO work to organize and streamline the organizations in Woodstock, and branch out after this is successful. He noted that Rotary has a warehouse lease (building needs work), but only wants to negotiate with one group, they do not want to touch food. STITCH, Inter-Church, Cycles of Life, Kiwanis, faith groups, etc. are working to come together – at their meeting tomorrow they will discuss joining the London Food Coalition so they can develop a food distribution system in Ingersoll.
- Marie Russell suggested that locally-driven grassroots initiatives are more impactful. She suggested the Township complete mail-outs regarding what options individuals have for food in the area (food banks, schools, etc.).
- Deb Riley noted the Brownsville Sharing Cupboard project that was spearheaded by herself and Catherine White. This has been a success for their village.
- Steve highlighted the importance of continuity and legitimacy – it is difficult for individuals not part of a larger group/corporation/partnership to grow initiatives. He also noted the power of a tax receipt.
- Carol brought hand-outs with more information – she suggested if they are looking for a specific group to help, we should look at seniors and windows who are the most vulnerable. Seniors in Crisis is an organization that helps older individuals in Oxford County.
- Julie Middleton noted that from a Township perspective and how we can support initiatives – we have donated to Cycles of Life before but once FRFO has charitable donation status they are welcome to apply to receive community grant funding.

The Committee thanked Irene for her presentation and the guests for their comments and participation in the discussion. David requested that Irene's presentation be circulated by email and discussed further at an upcoming meeting.

Business Arising from the Minutes

New Communications Plan

The Committee recommended to defer this to the next meeting agenda.

Winter Walk for Warmth – Event Debrief

Discussion took place regarding this year's event. It was noted that the turnout was quite low, but the Mount Elgin Firefighters made an appearance with food donations. The Committee raised \$240 plus food – all donations were brought to Operation Sharing by David. David noted that 100 posters were distributed by the Sweaburg Lions Club. Tabitha noted that there were heavy drifts on the roads that day, which may have prevented travel.

Discussion took place regarding the Coldest Night of the Year event's success and popularity in Woodstock – Catherine noted that because our event is the same day, it is often too much for people to participate in both. The Committee will inquire about how we can join these two events moving forward.

Paul noted that originally, we wanted to promote not only the topic of homelessness, but becoming active and use of local trails as well. He suggested that the Committee host a late fall or early spring event if we would like to pursue that avenue. A fall event could focus on what people need going into winter.

SWOX Township Fare Event

The Committee reviewed the vendor submissions – we have received 19 to date.

Discussion to wait until the registrations close at the end of March, and then politely decline vendors we do not want. Tabitha noted that because we are accepting food trucks outside of South-West Oxford, does it become an issue to decline vendors not in the area.

Nicole will reach out to Craig Gillis, Karen Popma and Shaw's (Prouse Transport) regarding food trucks and availability.

Correspondence

SWOX Talks and Village Voice

The Committee reviewed the monthly newsletters and Village Voice ads for February 2025.

Using Behavioural Economics to Create Playable Cities (Catherine)

Catherine White provided information to the Committee regarding playable cities. She suggested that Committee members keep this in mind when planning for parks and recreation initiatives in the future.

Discussion Items

Earth Day Event

Staff noted that Oxford County has implemented an increase in container prices for 2025 – most products sold at the Earth Day event are in line with the 50% off charged in previous years. The Committee recommended the sales prices as provided (recycling bin + lid: \$5, composter: \$10, green cone: \$25, rain barrel: \$30). It was noted that we should add “6th Annual” to the poster, and revise the end time to 11:00 a.m. David and Deb are unable to attend. Catherine has more seed packages to provide for the pollinator garden seeds.

Standing Items

Review of SWOX 2030 Action Item List (minutes of August 12th, 2015 meeting)

1. Social Responsibility
2. Communication
3. Active Living
4. Safety & Security

Adjournment

Resolution No. 3 Moved by Deb Riley
 Seconded by David Mayberry

RESOLVED that there being no further business, the Engage and Inform Committee adjourn at 3:32 p.m. to meet again on April 2nd, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.

DISPOSITON: Motion Carried