



Wellington County Economic Development Group Minutes

Tuesday, November 7, 2023

9:30am

Wellington Waterloo Community Futures

Ec Dev Representatives/Supporting Organizations

Present:

Jane Shaw (WWCF), James Vaclavek (County of Wellington), Belinda Wick-Graham (Town of Minto), Christina Mann (County of Wellington), Dominique Charbonneau (County of Wellington), Kristel Manes (Business Centre Guelph/Wellington), Anuradha Dam (County of Wellington), Heather Vasey (County of Wellington), Janet Harrop (Wellington Federation of Agriculture), Jordan Grigg (County of Wellington), George Borovilos (Township of Centre Wellington), Jamie Doherty (Saugeen Business Development Corporation), Dale Small (Township of Wellington North), Charlene Hofbauer (Waterloo Wellington Dufferin Workforce Planning Board)

Regrets:

Glenn Schwendinger (Township of Puslinch), Linda Horowitz (Innovation Guelph), Ian Roger (Guelph/ Eramosa Township), Sally Litchfield (Township of Centre Wellington), Joao Carrolo (Township of Centre Wellington), Anuraj Gill (OMAFRA), Stephen Barath (FedDev Ontario), Justine Dainard (County of Wellington), Kayla Wray (County Communications), Leen Al-Habash (LIP), Jana Burns (County of Wellington), Aly Hill (Township of Mapleton), Ryan Tompkins (MEJCAT)

1. Approval of Agenda – Moved by Belinda Wick-Graham, seconded by George Borovilos
CARRIED
2. No declaration of pecuniary interests
3. Approval of October 2023 Minutes – Moved by James Vaclavek, seconded by Dominique Charbonneau
CARRIED.

DEI Discussion:

County is planning DEI training for local employers. Does anyone need DEI training? What topics should be covered? What are you (municipalities) doing?

SEDC - Regional Advisory Committee applied and received the RED grant for workplace collaboration. Labour force diversification workshop on November 24th. Saugeen Connects workshop at end of November on succession planning. Golden Valley – something identified through Saugeen Connects for larger employers. SEDC completed a community synopsis to determine where training opportunities were found.

Mental Health First Aid is one training being offered.

Minto - Bridges Out of Poverty training for employers – date TBD. Identified pilot communities to offer training for FREE and opened doors for others to join. Connected with employers for training opportunities needed.

County workshop series is being planned to discuss unconscious bias, inclusive hiring practices, individual communications at workplace and more. Series will be offered in the spring with 2 in person sessions and one virtual session. The EDCO website provides DEI contacts and Charlene will also share the consultant used for the business focused, employer liaison lead series through WWDWFPB. Suggested to promote using different phrasing/name than DEI.

4. Upcoming Events:

- a. EDCO regional events: November 14, Windsor-Essex
- b. Royal Winter Fair – November 3-12
- c. Elora Starlight Shopping – November 16, 17, 23, 24
- d. Agriculture Finance Event – November 24
- e. Tour the Town Open House (Minto Downtowns)
- f. Museum Christmas Market – December 1 and 2
- g. EDCO Conference February 6- 8, 2024

Please submit additional events to Jane by email.

5. Roundtable

Kristel Manes (Business Centre Guelph Wellington):

- Starter Company has 18 people registered with \$88,000 available. The training will be in person and an outside facilitator will be providing training for Strategic Plans.
- As part of the “Bridges to Better Business” (which is available on YouTube) a Small Business Crawl, visiting 8 downtown Guelph businesses was held finishing with a wrap up dinner. The event was well attended by 350 people.

2024 Focus ----

- 5-year Strategic Plan

- BCGW office is in the Guelph City Hall, however, is not accessible to clients. They are currently working on locating a satellite office to offer services. A proposal has been submitted to the City Drill Hall (across from armory) in partnership with Boundless Accelerator (formerly Innovation Guelph) and the Guelph Chamber of Commerce. They are also working with the Township of Centre Wellington to find an office that will help connect with clients in Wellington County.

Belinda Wick-Graham (Town of Minto):

- There are several Ukrainian refugees in Palmerston and ESL support seems to be a barrier for many. James Street United Church is assisting with the Ukraine refugee status and will be offering an ESL course from November 25, 2023, to February 10, 2024. The training will be facilitated by SET7, who offers skills and technology training in the region. Reviewing sponsorship opportunities to provide the ESL training throughout the region would be beneficial. With new housing development in Palmerston, TG Minto will be halting the bus service currently offered from Palmerston to Waterloo. Grassroots Waterloo, a volunteer led group focused on helping displaced Ukrainian refugees, will be asked to attend and present at a future WCEDG meeting.
- RED funding was received for the Move to Minto initiative. Please view the video and website created. Currently window ideas of “Looking into the Future” are being developed.
- Tour the Town Open House introduces entrepreneurs to properties available in Clifford, Harriston and Palmerston downtowns. Date TBD
- Christmas events start the week of November 13th.
- EDCO elections are now open and close at the beginning of December.
- 67th Annual EDCO conference, February 6-8, 2024, hotel rooms filling quickly. Please let Belinda know if you would like a seat at the County table.
- Belinda and Christina will be attending the Regional EDCO event in Windsor.

2024 Focus ----

- Strategic Plan top of the list. Corporation Strategic Plan has started and lead by former CW CAO, Andie Goldie.
- Economic Development Plan, Culture Plan and Recreation Plan
- DEI, workforce, and housing

Dale Small (Township of Wellington North):

- A public meeting recently held for the new 55+ community opportunity in Arthur.
- Strategic Plan is 2023-26
- Recruited Mandy Jones for the Manager of Economic Development position. Mandy will be starting in January as Dale will be retiring in May.
- Currently recruiting for a Community Development Officer and Economic Development Officer.
- Housing development has included mixed housing – apartments, townhouses, secondary units, and main street apartments. New developments will include medical and retail supports.

- Thank you to Centre Wellington for starting the wheels with the downtown garbage p/u. Wellington North will have a pilot with solid waste for downtown pickup. A report will be presented to council in November.

2024 Focus ---

- Update to Growth Management Strategy.
- Aquatics fundraising
- Arthur Wastewater Phase 2 to start. A 2024-25 project.
- Working with GRCA to bring Damascus Lake into WN as an asset.

Janet Harrop (WFA):

- Recently learned the Agriculture Credit Corporation offers interest free loans supported by Federal and Provincial governments.
- Janet has stepped down as WFA President and is now Vice Chair. She plans to continue attending our monthly WCEDG meetings.
- The Agri Food Study is currently reviewing local levels.
- Zoning bylaw playbook is moving “slow”. Final documents should be completed soon and includes provincial planning changes, municipality by-laws and OMAFRA zoning.
- With the seasons, it is a good reminder to remember the importance of Farm Safety.
- Working with municipalities on minor variances, farm dwelling severances and reversal of greenbelt. What will this mean for housing, workers, succession planning?
- Reversal of OPA 119 – the Official Plan Amendment for additional acres in Wellington County. Where is final decision made?
- Pressure with agriculture, developers are purchasing outside of urban boundaries. An additional 1000 acres inside boundary is being developed.

Jamie Doherty (SEDC):

- CEBA and RRRF loans are coming up for repayment in January 2024. SEDC, disbursed around \$3 million of RRRF and are anticipating approximately \$1.5 million will be repaid.
- Office busy with loan intakes and looking for new ways to support businesses as CF’s running out of money and businesses can’t take on debt.
- Regional Advisory committee shares economic development ideas quarterly.
- RED grant for workforce collaboration project is due in June.
- Saugeen Connects will continue with WOWZA (Women of Wellington and Saugeen Area) and SSUP (Student Start Up) programs.

George Borovilos (CW):

- Completing head well drilling
- November 14th cannabis store front report to council
- November 27th RCI consulting will host a public meeting under the planning act for the CIP report. The *new* CIP will be grant based only, township wide, housing, brownfield remediation and agriculture.

- Battery Energy Storage (BES) report has recently been inherited. Reviewed other communities currently using BES. Some areas of concern include containers being stored on agriculture land and the high risk of fire. BES will be reviewed at planning to provide financial and background information to council.
- A Letter of Intent has been disbursed for the CW Business Park. Those not successful will be referred to other locations within the County.

2024 Focus ----

- The council adopted a 2023 – 2026 Strategic Plan. Each department will complete a business plan.
- New Economic Development Tourism Strategy.
- Former Groves Memorial Hospital site is going to RFP. Allison & Young have been retained for real estate. Considerations include a retirement village as the most adaptable.

Charlene Hofbauer (WWDWPB):

- Local Market Plan this afternoon.
- Employer One partner meeting coming up. DEI measurements, how businesses feel and trends, AI etc. The survey will be launched in December.
- Working with LIP on immigration report. Compares City of Guelph vs County of Wellington and interesting trends

2024 Focus ---

- Diversification of skilled trades and apprentices as numbers increase
- “Caring” Work

Jane Shaw (WWCF)

- Jasmine has moved on to Dufferin County
- The Age-Friendly Community (AFC) was not successful in receiving the Inclusive Community Grant, however, the Guelph Wellington Senior’s Association Board has approved \$60,000 to allocate to the project.
- Town of Erin is planning to launch a Shop Local Card program in March 2024 to support local businesses. They are currently researching platforms and costs. Belinda will share information as they have been running a similar program for over a year.
- WWCF is working with a designer to update marketing materials and website.

County of Wellington

Heather Vasey:

- Agriculture Finance Event to be held at the Grand Way on November 24th in collaboration with Boundless Accelerator (formerly IG). As of November 7th, 15 people are registered. This is a free event sponsored by the County, Invest Guelph; however, registration is required.
- Holiday boxes have launched. There are 2 boxes available this year, home products or food products. Both filled with products from 8 market vendors. Each box is \$89.00.

- Soft launching of the Taste Real Holiday Gift Guide to encourage buy local will be happening soon.
- The events page is being updated with holiday parades and happenings in each community. Please make sure to share any of your communities' events with Heather.
- The County offers three newsletters. Experience Wellington, Business in Wellington and Taste Real. Information is included online as well.

Dominique Charbonneau:

- Receiving ongoing land inquiries and will be reaching out to the group to determine lands available.
- The final report for Ontario Cycling was received. The funding report is due at the end of November. Content development, marketing, device app etc. will be created in 2024.
- An internal housing meeting will be held at the end of November with the Task Force meeting following. Please share housing solutions.
- With Jasmine no longer with WWCF, the County is taking point on the RED funding, downtown video initiative. One more location to complete. Will reach out in 2024 with downtown development or revitalization.

2024 Focus ----

- Construction Bootcamp possibly in February/March 2024. The program will be offered for 2 weeks with 10 spots available. There will be a green construction component and will include hands on experience pairing the job seeker with employer (placement).
- Working with Charlene on spring employment readiness.
- Working with CEC. Videographer services, workplace tour videos for demand sectors and those having issues with recruitment. "Days of Our Life" videos will also be created with Charlene.

James Vaclavek:

- Starting downtown visits for BR+E. Will connect with EDO's and reach out to BIA's and Chambers within communities. BR+E not to change for 2024.
- Will connect with municipalities for downtown plans.
- Ridewell is growing quickly with 915 rides in October. A contract is still in the negotiation stages with RideCo. A survey will also be distributed.

2024 Focus ----

- new plans for Ridewell and long-term planning as funding ends in 2025.
- Marketing new CIP guidelines approved by council.

Jordan Grigg:

- COIL – look book released and the Investment Readiness is available on the website.
- Experimental Acres 2023 wrapped up and a handbook was developed. Recruitment will be starting for Experimental Acres 2024 and will be open until January 2024.
- Our Food Future project final report coming out soon.
- ACI organic food waste still recruiting producers.

- Circular Economy coming to an end, City of Guelph stepping back, however, the Wellington County office will remain open. A workplan focusing on areas that benefit the County has been created, some initiatives from the City of Guelph continuing. Focus will be on supporting food access and the resources to stay connected.
- Will continue to monitor the role out of rural internet, no gaps, projects on circular economy and agricultural. Looking at bringing “hotspot” conference to Guelph in 2024.
- “In The Know” workshop series (mental health training in agriculture) will be offered at the University of Guelph.
- Justine and Jordan will be working closely with the Climate Change Manager

Christina Mann:

- Trade Tracks event meeting will be held to determine if there will be another event this year. An update will be provided to the group.
- Museum Christmas Market will be held December 1st and 2nd
- Town of Erin has posted for the EDO role.
- County has partnered with Harmony Meadows Alpaca at the Royal Winter Fair.
- Application was submitted to bring the EDCO regional event to Wellington County in 2024. Selected communities will know soon.
- George Bridge Influencer Award “draft” ready.
- Visitor map has not been updated since 2016. Is it still an asset? Helpful to community? Same parameters? Switch to Tourism Guide? Add cycling trails and other trails. Possible tear off option??? Forward suggestions to Christina.

2024 Focus ---

- Tourism Strategy: Working with CW Tourism and RTO4 to develop workshops within the County.
- County working on new website – have new developer and will be more customer focused.

Anuradha Dam:

- Creating a resource for employment agencies around the County. Collating information from Employer One, LIP and Ontario Works to provide handout. To be distributed in 2024
- Planning joint webinar with 2nd Chance, Laurelwood and Waterloo Wellington Dufferin Workforce Planning Board. The webinar will be an employer focused information session.
- Developing DEI workshop series
- Western Ontario Wardens Caucus survey released. Results showed labour challenges and skills needed in the region.
- Discussions with Upper Grand District School Board to offer language classes as more people moving into and residing in the County.

Next meeting – December 4th at 9:30am at Wellington County Museum and Archives.

- Please submit agenda items or topics you would like to cover in future meetings. The group is an excellent platform to give information as it is to get it from each other.

Adjourned

Christina Mann, Chair

Jane Shaw, Recording Secretary