Minutes
For the Special Meeting of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of the Municipality of West Grey
held on Wednesday, September 11, 2019
at 7:00 p.m., Neustadt Community Centre

**Council**
Mayor Christine Robinson, Deputy Mayor Tom Hutchinson, Councillor Beth Hamilton, Councillor Rebecca Hergert, Councillor Doug Hutchinson, Councillor Geoffrey Shea, Councillor Stephen Townsend

**Staff**
Laura Johnston, CAO/Deputy Clerk; Mark Turner, Clerk; Kerri Mighton, Director of Finance/Treasurer; Karl Schipprack, Chief Building Official; Stephanie Stewart, Manager, Community Services; Rob Martin, Police Chief, Kim Storz, Chief Librarian/CEO, Tom Culliton, Recreation Facilities Manager; Kodey Hewlett, Recreation, Supervisor; Jonathan Zettel, Coordinator, Office of the CAO

Mayor Robinson welcomed everyone to the meeting, and explained the purpose of the meeting. Council members introduced themselves to the audience. CAO Johnston introduced staff members in attendance. Approximately 50 members of the public attended the meeting.

**Declarations of Pecuniary Interest & General Nature Thereof** - None

**Items of Business**

1. **Items of Business**

   1) Main Street Revitalization Grant
      o Facilitated session to discuss options under this downtown beautification program
         ▪ Introduction by Laura Johnston, CAO; moderated by Stephanie Stewart

Laura Johnston, CAO, provided background information relating to the Main Street Revitalization Grant, noting it is a $26 million fund to support and grow small business across the Province. West Grey’s share of this funding is $10,000 for each of the four urban communities of Ayton, Durham, Elmwood and Neustadt. The three rules for spending this grant include it has to be tied to the main street and has to in some way bolster the growth of small business; it includes wayfinding and entrance signs; and it has to be spent by the end of March 2020. Elmwood has decided to spend their funds on a digital sign, Durham wants Christmas lights, and Ayton is considering some festive lighting.
The Manager, Community Services, moderated discussions regarding this item of business. Some suggestions from the audience on how to utilize the funds included new Christmas lights, decorating the front of the Neustadt Hall, improve connection between both sides of main street by means such as planting trees and installing lights; and placing ambient lights in trees.

A ratepayer questioned if funds can be used for safety improvements, such as a crosswalk. The CAO/Deputy Clerk responded affirmatively as long as they are on the main street.

The CAO/Deputy Clerk noted some possible items for consideration such as banners, benches and bicycle racks, and mentioned that funding can be used for seed money towards an ongoing study that would continue after March 2020. The CAO/Deputy Clerk also noted the funding could be used for long-term planning if it has a marketing focus.

A ratepayer questioned if funding could be utilized to improve the vacant mill property for a possible arts hub or business incubator, and also suggested downtown businesses coordinate themed Christmas lighting as a start, possibly including a banner program.

A ratepayer also questioned if Council or the West Grey Economic Development Advisory Committee could establish an ad hoc committee to consider a long-term plan for the main street. Mayor Robinson indicated Council is open to considering any proposal, noting there are multiple ways to accomplish a long-term plan. Mayor Robinson reported that the West Grey Economic Development Advisory Committee is working on a community improvement plan to improve downtown cores so the committee would be open to suggestions. Stephanie Stewart suggested that a survey for ratepayers could be utilized to prioritize items. Some ratepayers suggested having Christmas lights installed in time for this Christmas, and adding lighting to the trees along main street.

Suggestions were made for downtown business owners to coordinate with white lights, for instance, if the purchase of Christmas lights is withheld until after this Christmas. The CAO/Deputy Clerk suggested if anyone is interested, they could submit an application for appointment to the Commercial Beautification Committee.

The audience indicated they do not want the existing Christmas lights put up. The consensus is the downtown businesses will try to coordinate lighting during Christmas, and a survey will be conducted in time for responses to be received, and decision/direction made on how to best utilize the $10,000, and identify other possible sources of funds (i.e. 2020 budget consideration).

The Manager, Community Services, stated the reason why Christmas lights weren’t put up last year at the Neustadt Lions Park, being, there were not sufficient volunteers to
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install the lights. The Manager, Community Services, indicated a survey can be coordinated at the West Grey Public Library booth during the Neustadt Fall Fair, and the Christmas Lights book can be viewed as well.

The Manager, Community Services, suggested interested individuals can attend a Commercial Beautification Committee meeting for discussions on how Main Street merchants can promote the installation of Christmas lights this season, perhaps through prizes for best lights, although it was subsequently noted that the West Grey Parks, Recreation and Culture Local Committee (Neustadt) typically judges Christmas lights.

   o Overview by Mayor Robinson

Mayor Robinson provided an overview of the West Grey Council Strategic Plan: 2019-2022, being a road map for running the Corporation of the Municipality of West Grey, and to guide decisions of Council and staff. The actual title is the “West Grey Council Vision Plan 2019-2022”. Three pillars have been identified in the Plan, being, to engage and involve, be responsible and accountable, and to celebrate and promote. There will be an annual report to ratepayers to detail accomplishments each year. The Plan is being considered for approval during the September 17, 2019 Council meeting, and if approved, will be communicated to ratepayers. Mayor Robinson also noted the Plan is necessary for filling out grant applications, as this is a component considered by ministries in their funding approval process.

3) Public Comments

Bob Dyck stated Neustadt will not become a major big box retail centre, and questioned why Council isn’t focusing on establishing professional businesses (i.e. dentists, lawyers).

Bob Dyck mentioned he sees other communities the size of Neustadt with new home construction, however, he doesn’t see this happening in Neustadt. Mr. Dyck questioned if more can be done to encourage new home construction such as providing tax breaks or other financial incentives, and permitting smaller homes. Mayor Robinson responded that West Grey is going to explore the topic of affordable housing/tiny homes during the November 12 Committee of the Whole (Planning) meeting, and emphasized Council is open for development. The Committee also noted West Grey is attempting to streamline application processes, and has re-established its own building department.

Paul Gutzke, owner of a subdivision property in Neustadt, indicated the infrastructure is here, paid by the ratepayers, and questioned when West Grey is going to change its planners. Mayor replied that Council is very satisfied with its staff.
Paul Schmidt, property owner on Con. 12 Road Normanby, asked when the Con. 12 road is going to be done. Mayor Robinson replied that Council realizes that part of Con. 12 needs work, and there was some discussion in the past if Grey County was going to assume this road, however, at this point, it is a West Grey road. There is some trimming along the road planned for this year. The Con. 12 Normanby road work will be a 2020 budget consideration, with Council establishing its capital project priorities for 2020. It was noted that a new Director of Infrastructure and Public Works staff member will be hired as a result of the pending retirement of the incumbent Director.

Audrey Filsinger questioned when the road on the Neustadt hill is to be paved, and when will a bulletin board listing Neustadt businesses be completed. Mayor Robinson stated Council has asset management plans and capital roads plans to consider in future budget discussions, and will consider options for a bulletin board.

Richard Huber stated the Meux Creek ran behind his house, and abutting property as well, and in the 1980s, drains were installed by Neustadt/Grey County, and stated the drain needs to be fixed. Mayor Robinson responded that West Grey will have to do a follow-up on this issue.

Gary Grainger opined that Council should establish its top 10 objectives, indicate how it will achieve these objectives, estimate the probabilities of achieving these goals, and provide a report to the public on how the objectives were achieved. Mayor Robinson noted West Grey will be providing reports on the proposed Vision Plan.

Robert MacKenzie, requested Council consider improving traffic safety in Neustadt through the possible use of electronic speed signs and other means to reduce speed. Mayor Robinson emphasized Council wants to ensure the safety of ratepayers. The Police Chief stated enforcement is a priority in all urban areas, and there are changes to Provincial legislation that will allow for automated enforcement for heavy traffic areas such as Neustadt, Durham, and Ayton.

Steve Lantz noted Council is negotiating for a new police building and possibly amalgamating police services with Chatsworth, and questioned why, when the police budget is approximately $2 million that police services are being offered to Chatsworth for only $800,000. Mayor Robinson clarified that it is not an amalgamation, as the police service will be providing policing to Chatsworth, and indicated Chatsworth approached West Grey initially. Mayor Robinson noted one reason for the difference in cost to Chatsworth is West Grey has a significantly larger population than Chatsworth. The Police Chief noted West Grey owns the building, cruisers, etc., and Chatsworth doesn’t want all community and school services that the police force provides to West Grey, for instance, Chatsworth only wants one officer in their municipality at a time,
Bob Dyck questioned if Council has ever thought of encouraging long-term care housing in Neustadt for instance, for seniors. Mr. Dyck added that the Chapman House Hospice is moving ahead with a second hospice facility and questioned if West Grey championed for the location of the second Chapman House Hospice to be located in West Grey. Mayor Robinson responded that this Council was not provided an opportunity to do so. The Committee noted that most of the discussion at the time was centred around a potential location south of Hanover, but they wanted free land.

Paul Gutzke asked how large of a site does the second Chapman House Hospice require The Committee responded they were looking for 4-5 acres, and close proximity to a hospital.

Elaine Chalmers questioned what is Council doing about the old Voelkl house which is in disrepair. Mayor Robinson stated West Grey does not own this property as it is in private hands, but it is on Council's radar.

Kevin Grubb expressed concerns with the lack of snow removal in Neustadt, noting the snowplows do not come through town until 8am. Mayor Robinson replied that she will discuss this matter with the Grey County Transportation Department. The Committee noted Grey County bench marks winter maintenance, and the County has indicated their winter maintenance service level exceeds the minimum maintenance standard.

The Manager, Community Services, encouraged ratepayers to continue to share their thoughts and concerns with Council.

Mayor Robinson thanked everyone for coming out to tonight’s meeting, and thanked everyone for all the work and volunteer hours they dedicate to the community.

**Adjournment**
Deputy Mayor Hutchinson-Councillor Shea, Resolved that, we do now adjourn at 8:59 p.m., to meet again on September 24, 2019, 9:00 a.m., or at the call of the Mayor. Carried.

(Signed) Christine Robinson, Mayor
(Signed) Mark Turner, Clerk