



Whitby Sustainability Advisory Committee Minutes

February 7, 2024, 7:00 p.m.
Hybrid Meeting
Whitby Town Hall

Present: Sara Best, Vice-Chair
Janet Dignem
Brian Kelly
Patti Mavins
Catherine Philogene
Bryan Widner, Chair
Bob Willard
Zartasha Zainab

Regrets: Wenda Abel
Andrea Cecchetto
Anahita Jami

Also Present: Councillor Leahy, Mayor's Designate
Adam Benner, Staff Liaison, Energy Coordinator
Junaid Khan, Staff Liaison, Project Manager, Sustainability and
Climate Change
Kristin Palilionis, Staff Liaison, Climate Change Coordinator
Heather Ellis, Council and Committee Coordinator (Recording
Secretary)

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1. Call to Order
 2. Declarations of Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

3. Approval of Previous Minutes

Recommendation:

Moved by Patti Mavins

That the Whitby Sustainability Advisory Committee minutes of January 3, 2024 be approved.

Carried

4. Presentations

4.1 Bryan Widner, Whitby Sustainability Advisory Committee Chair

Re: An Overview of Blue-Green Infrastructure/Low Impact Development

Bryan Widner provided a presentation regarding Blue-Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development. Highlights of the presentation included:

- an overview of blue-green infrastructure and its uses;
- benefits of grassed swales, roadside ditches, constructed wetlands, soakaway pits, and infiltration chambers;
- the use of permeable pavement and rain gardens to improve water infiltration into the ground;
- redirecting precipitation into storage containers for various small and large scale uses;
- utilizing green roofs and living walls;
- a summary of the natural and economic benefits of blue-green infrastructure; and,
- educating residents about blue-green infrastructure and advocating for its use.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- whether Whitby has implemented blue-green infrastructure;
- the economic benefits of flood mitigation through the implementation of blue-green infrastructure;
- Committee initiatives to support blue-green infrastructure planning in Whitby; and,
- information about the Town's Stormwater Management practices.

It was the consensus of the Committee to hear Item 8, Council Update, at this time.

5. Delegations

There were no delegations.

6. General Business and Reports

6.1 Roundtable of Introductions

Bryan Widner requested that Members provide a brief introduction of themselves.

6.2 2024 Committee Budget

Kristin Palilionis stated that prizes and swag distributed at Town and sustainability events would be included in the Committee's 2024 Budget.

6.3 Presentations for 2024

Kristin Palilionis requested feedback from the Committee regarding presentations for 2024.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- a presentation on the Town's Stormwater Management practices;
- the Brock Street Redesign Project;
- Education and Intervention for Invasive Species;
- updates on initiatives from the Region of Durham; and,
- Sustainable Finance.

7. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

8. Council Update

Councillor Leahy provided an update regarding:

- the Sustainability Leadership Award received by the Town for the Zero Carbon Whitby Plan;
- receiving a grant of \$25 million from the Federal Housing Accelerator Fund;
- 2024 Budget discussion update; and,
- accepting nominations for the 2024 Mayor's Senior Volunteer Award.

It was the consensus of the Committee to hear Item 5, Delegations, at this time.

9. Other Business

9.1 Ontario Energy Board (OEB)

Brian Kelly stated that the Ontario government was considering overriding the decision made by the Ontario Energy Board to end a subsidy for constructing methane gas pipelines in new building construction, effective 2025. Mr. Kelly stated that the subsidy resulted in higher energy bills for both existing gas customers and new homebuyers. He further stated that it encouraged developers to install gas equipment, which would not support municipal goals of achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions. Mr. Kelly requested that the Committee put forward a motion requesting Town Council to support the Ontario Energy Board's decision to end the subsidy.

Recommendation:

Moved by Brian Kelly

That the Whitby Sustainability Advisory Committee recommends that the Town of Whitby Council pass the following resolution:

Whereas residents are struggling with energy bill increases and need relief; and,

Whereas natural gas is no longer the cheapest way to heat homes because electric heat pumps are now much more efficient, can provide all heating needs even in the cold climates, and result in far lower energy bills compared to gas heating; and,

Whereas natural gas is methane gas, which is a fossil fuel that causes approximately one-third of Ontario's GHG emissions, and must be phased out because it is inconsistent with all climate targets, while heat pumps result in the lowest GHG emissions and are consistent with a zero-carbon future; and,

Whereas the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) decided to end a subsidy for methane gas pipelines to be built in new construction developments, effective 2025, finding that this would lower energy bills for existing gas customers and improve affordability for new homebuyers, but this decision is at risk of being overturned by the provincial government; and,

Whereas the OEB decision will help lower energy bills and encourage heating systems that are consistent with climate targets and plans; and,

Whereas the construction of *new* methane gas pipelines, which have 60-year lifetimes, should not be subsidized because they are inconsistent with the Town's climate targets and will result in higher carbon emissions, higher energy bills, higher future decarbonization retrofit costs to phase out fossil fuel heating, and a continued financial drain as dollars leave the province to pay for fossil fuels extracted in other jurisdictions.

Now therefore be it resolved:

1. That the Town of Whitby expresses its support for the decision of the Ontario Energy Board to end the gas pipeline subsidy and ask the Ontario Government to allow the decision to stand; and,
2. That this resolution be circulated to the President of AMO, Colin Best, Premier Doug Ford, the Minister of Energy, Todd Smith, The Minister of Finance, Peter Bethlenfalvy, the Region of Durham, and all local municipalities in Durham requesting support of the proposed changes.

Carried

9.2 Federal Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF)

Junaid Khan advised that the Town of Whitby received a federal grant of \$25 million from the Federal Housing Accelerator Fund. Mr. Kahn stated that a portion of the grant would be spent on nine initiatives outlined in the Zero Carbon Whitby Plan over the next three years. He further stated that \$2 million would be spent on Initiative 8 – Low Carbon and Climate Resilience. Mr. Khan advised that Town Staff are seeking to hire a Sustainability Planner to assist with implementing the initiatives.

A question and answer period ensued regarding:

- whether the Sustainability Planner would collaborate with the Planning and Development Department; and,
- whether conditions of the grant may require construction of net zero housing.

10. Next Meeting

Wednesday, March 6, 2024 - 7:00 p.m.

11. Adjournment

Recommendation:

Moved by Bob Willard

That the meeting adjourn.

Carried

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Note: These minutes were approved by the Whitby Sustainability Advisory Committee on March 6, 2024.