
ECONOMIC, TOURISM AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Wednesday, April 16, 2025 | 9:00 am
Saugeen Room | Civic Centre

MEMBERS PRESENT Chair Jason Rahn | Alina Rehkopf | Georgina Barlow | Jason Radstake | Jenn Olivero | Pat Butler | Steve White | Susan Sakal (left at 10 am)

REGRETS Dave Eccles

OTHERS PRESENT Sherri Walden (arrived at 9:16 am) | April Marshall | Sandeep Kaur

**DISCLOSURE OF
PECUNIARY INTEREST** Nil

DELEGATIONS No

DISCUSSIONS & DECISIONS

1. **Adoption of February 19, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes**
Moved by GEORGINA BARLOW / Seconded by SUSAN SAKAL
THAT the minutes of the February 19, 2025 Regular Meeting be approved as printed and circulated.
CARRIED
2. **Adoption of April 2, 2025 Regular Cultural Roundtable Meeting Minutes**
Moved by JENN OLIVERO / Seconded by ALINA REHKOPF
THAT the minutes of the April 2, 2025, Regular Cultural Roundtable meeting be approved as printed and circulated.
CARRIED
3. **Adoption of February 20, 2025 Regular Heritage Committee Meeting Minutes**
Moved by PAT BUTLER / Seconded by STEVE WHITE
THAT the minutes of the February 20, 2025, Regular Cultural Roundtable meeting be approved as printed and circulated.
CARRIED

4. **Business Arising from Minutes**

A. Marshall corrected that we will not be renting a bus, instead all members will carpool for the next ETCDAC meeting scheduled for June 18, 2025, at the Sydenham Campus. P. Butler provided an overview of the Cultural Roundtable meeting minutes and highlighted the various events and activities coming up for Earth Day, Home and Lifestyle Show, Music in the Square, Eat Well Market and the Cultural Symposium. J. Rahn updated members on the Heritage Committee minutes and highlighted the committee's recent visit to the new fire hall and shared that human remains, believed to be over a century old, were unearthed at a construction site in December 2024 and that they have conducted some research on what the circumstances may have been at that time. He also mentioned that the committee has been contacted by R.J. Thomas, an author and historian from Owen Sound, who is currently working on a project for the Grey Roots Museum. Lastly, A. Marshall informed the committee that the Level 3 EV charger private partnership was approved, and installation will proceed in May.

5. **Business Retention & Expansion Study**

a. Establish Targets

A Marshall noted that the Business Retention and Expansion (BR+e) is an economic development strategy aimed at supporting and strengthening existing local businesses. It involves engaging directly with business owners through surveys or interviews to identify challenges they face, such as workforce shortages, infrastructure needs, or regulatory issues. By understanding these concerns, municipalities can develop targeted action plans to help businesses grow, remain competitive, and stay in the community. BR+e also fosters stronger relationships between local governments and the business community, encouraging collaboration and long-term economic stability. It is estimated to be a six-month project. Town of Hanover did a BR+e study in 2015 and a BR+e recovery survey in 2021. 44 responses were received for the 2021 survey. The emerging themes were workforce, development, safety, housing, attraction, downtown safety, promoting entrepreneurship, business ideas, etc. A. Marshall addressed the committee in her role as project coordinator and discussed the importance of setting clear targets and including fundamental questions about the Town's initiatives. She mentioned that a mix of online surveys and in-person and virtual meetings would be organized with business owners to gather their feedback and understand their concerns. Consequently, Susan Sakal, Georgina Barlow and Steve White agreed to provide their support.

b. Review Questions

Following a brief overview of the BR+e program, committee members expressed an expectation of at least 50 responses from businesses and recommended keeping the survey questions simple and straightforward. Tailoring the survey to the number of employees was also discussed, as there are many sole proprietors in our community, so all questions may not be applicable to them.

6. **Stakeholders and Initiatives Updates**

a. Tourism Plan

A. Marshall informed the committee about the intent of developing a Tourism Plan, to serve as a strategic guide to promote and manage tourism. It will aid in identifying local attractions, target markets, and infrastructure needs while focusing on sustainability and economic growth. The plan can also include marketing strategies and outline actions to enhance visitor experience and community involvement. She mentioned that the Town will benefit from a tourism plan that encourages travelers to stop, explore, and enjoy local attractions, businesses, and cultural experiences along their journey.

b. Downtown Plan

A. Marshall informed the committee that Mayor Sue Paterson, CAO Sherri Walden, and she recently attended a DIA meeting to propose collaboration on a downtown plan. Discussion revolved around the 2023-2027 Town of Hanover Strategic Plan, noting the recommendation for community and business involvement to form this action plan. Downtown Hanover is highlighted as a priority, noting the DIA's mandates is to promote and improve our downtown. Next steps include developing a memorandum of understanding between the Town and DIA to advance the work and confirm the parameters of the collaboration.

c. Youth Retention Strategy

A. Marshall reviewed the findings of the recent focus group conducted to support Hanover's Youth Retention Strategy work, and as recently presented to council, which involved 36 stakeholders including 7 youth participants, various youth organizations representatives, and members from the previous Launch Pad board, instructor and staff members. The meeting followed a conversation café format with four discussion tables: values, skill development, space needs, and workforce development.

d. Saugeen Connects

A. Marshall provided an update on the Student Start Up Program (SSUP), noting that the sponsorship forms have been released. She encouraged committee members to inform her if they are aware of any businesses that wish to support or promote youth initiatives. Applications for youth participation are now open.

She also highlighted the upcoming Women of Wellington Saugeen Area (WOWSA) Wellness Day event, which will take place at the Saugeen Municipal Airport and Yoga Barn on Saturday, June 14th. Additionally, she shared that the Advancing Women Economically (AWE) initiative is moving forward with training for 14 women.

e. Hanover Chamber of Commerce

G. Barlow updated the committee that the Chamber held its Annual General Meeting in March, which was well-received. She noted that the Shop & Win promotion began on April 14th. She also reminded the committee about the

upcoming awards, with the nomination deadline set for April 17, 2025. Additionally, she mentioned that the recent luncheon held at Cravings was a success. She further shared that a Business After 5 event took place at Wealth Management event took place on April 15th, and it also went very well.

f. DIA

J. Olivero provided an update on the fall and winter markets, noting that 50 vendors have registered for the Fall Market scheduled for September 27, 2025. She noted that winter markets tend to face more challenges compared to fall markets, primarily due to weather conditions. She also shared that Mother's Day promotions are planned for next month. In addition, she spoke about the Shamrock Hunt event, which took place from March 10th to 17th.

g. Grey County Economic Development

A. Marshall spoke about the Gather Campaign, a unique economic development initiative that showcases the region's rich culinary heritage and vibrant agricultural community through storytelling and digital content. She also highlighted the leadership forum event activity that had member municipalities "building their backyard" with the aim to help everyone work together on how we can position Grey County as an attractive destination for growth and investment.

h. Clean Energy Frontier | Southwestern Ontario Isotope Coalition

A. Marshall spoke about the Community Resiliency Strategy and shared that the Clean Energy Frontier has invited her to join the steering committee, which will focus on key issues such as mental health, drug abuse, and human trafficking and how we can improve these conditions in our region. The first meeting is scheduled for next week. She also discussed the concept of the whole isotope value chain, exploring how the region could position itself as an isotope manufacturing hub and how the public could potentially access these resources.

7. Correspondence

a. Quarterly Building Report – 1st Quarter 2025

S. Kaur informed the committee that the number of building permits issued in the first quarter of this year is lower compared to the same period last year. However, despite the slight decrease in permits, the construction costs and overall permit values have risen significantly.

b. Saugeen Economy - 2nd Half 2024

A. Marshall informed the committee that while 2024 showed signs of economic growth, uncertainty from tariffs and trade tensions posed risks. Interest rates continued to decline, supporting real estate activity and potential new housing developments. Although new build permits increased compared to 2023, rising resale prices may contribute to housing inflation and economic strain.

8. **New Business**

S. Walden noted the Community Connects event hosted by the Hanover Library was a success and saw much engagement. She encouraged anyone that wasn't there to view the Wightman recording that will be presented on the community channel on Saturday night at 8:30 pm.

9. **Adjournment**

Moved by JENN OLIVERO Seconded by JASON RADSTAKE

THAT this meeting now be adjourned at 10:23 am.

Next Meeting Date: June 18, 2025 @ 9:00am

Chair, Jason Rahn

Committee Secretary, April Marshall