



TOWNSHIP OF SOUTHWOLD

Report to Council

MEETING DATE: March 13, 2023

PREPARED BY: Jeff Carswell, CAO/Clerk

REPORT NO: CAO 2023-11

SUBJECT MATTER: Annual Strategic Plan Annual Update - 2022

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives this report as information;

Purpose:

The Township Strategic Plan was adopted in May of 2018 and requires an annual review to determine if the plan is being implemented. This report serves as the update of the progress for the year ending 2022.

Background:

On February 27th, 2018 Council held a special public meeting to obtain input from the citizens and staff of The Township of Southwold for the purpose of developing a Strategic Plan. The input gained from this meeting was used to develop a four-year Strategic Plan for the Township of Southwold. Many ideas received at the public meeting held in February 2018 were already being implemented by council and staff and therefore may not appear explicitly in the action plan contained in the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan was adopted by Council in May of 2018 and annual updates are a requirement of the plan. The below discussion outlines Goals, Strategies and Action Items identified in the Strategic Plan. Updates to the various items for 2022 are shown as ***Bold Italics***.

Comments/Analysis:

1. Growth	
Strategic Goal: To promote residential, agricultural, commercial, and industrial development by ensuring policies and services are in place to support growth in The Township of Southwold.	
Strategies:	
1.1 Encourage and invest in sewer services and waste water treatment facilities in the growth communities.	

<p>Action Plan:</p> <p>A. Complete municipal servicing studies, environmental assessments, and development or connection charges studies in anticipation of growth on an ongoing basis.</p>	<p>Engineering design commenced in 2022 and Council reviewed additional options for servicing Shedden and Fingal that are more economical. EA addendum for Talbotville and Ferndale commenced in 2022 to allow for a sanitary routing change in the new Ferndale development</p>
<p>B. Ensure the appropriate development policies are in place and review and update the Township Official Plan every five years to ensure that the Township retains an adequate supply of vacant lands for growth.</p>	<p>The new Township Official Plan was approved by Council on November 15, 2021 and has been adopted by Elgin County Council.</p>
<p>C. Prioritize the provision of sewer and wastewater servicing in the Township budget process.</p>	<p>The wastewater rate study helps to inform rates and connection charges for revenue purposes. A detailed capital sewer budget is prepared by OCWA and presented annually. Budgets included provisions to continue the prioritization of sewer and wastewater services.</p>
<p>D. Establish connection policies and connection charges in the growth areas to appropriately finance waste water treatment and collection systems via a user pay mechanism and federal and provincial government grants.</p>	<p>In 2021, the Wastewater Connection By-Law in Talbotville was amended to include fees for commercial connection, multi-residential connection, apartments, etc.</p>

<p>E. Plan wastewater treatment facilities for diverse uses including residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, and institutional uses.</p>	<p>The Talbotville WWTP MBR system is compatible with all uses. <i>In 2022, the Shedden and Fingal EA was reviewed in more detail as the WWTP MBR plant was becoming more costly. End result was working with Central Elgin to pump sewage to Port Stanley. A good example of municipal partners working beyond boundaries.</i></p>
<p>1.2 Support & prioritize access to high speed internet for all (agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, etc.) Township properties.</p>	<p><i>In 2022, approved an agreement with Ehtel to install Fibre in the Township. Ehtel plans to install fibre throughout 2023 and will look to expand their areas to more locations in the Township.</i></p>
<p>Action Plan: A. Support independent needs studies on telecommunications systems in the Township and promote surveys to ascertain data.</p>	<p>Township staff completed discussions with alternative service providers of internet in 2021 and are continuing to pursue alternatives to Fibre in the ground (i.e. satellite, communications towers, etc).</p>
<p>B. Form partnerships with agencies, corporations, municipal neighbours, SWIFT, residents, local businesses, and telecommunications companies to find solutions, including alternative options for service.</p>	<p>The Township continues to participate in SWIFT through Elgin County. SWIFT announced new infrastructure being installed in the northwest part of the County in 2021. <i>Construction started in 2022.</i></p>

<p>C. Investigate options for servicing growth communities and consider municipal investment or debenture options for residents to expedite installation of high speed internet.</p>	<p>No work was completed in 2022 on this initiative.</p>
<p>D. Support efforts by agricultural and rural property owners to facilitate “last kilometer” high speed infrastructure.</p>	<p><i>In 2022, approved an agreement with Ehtel to install Fibre in the Township. Ehtel plans to install fibre throughout 2023 and will look to expand their areas to more locations in the Township.</i></p>
<p>1.3 Encourage & Support Residential Development.</p>	<p><i>Talbotville increased in 2022 with many subdivisions working through the build out process. Hired a full time planner to assist advancing development faster.</i></p>
<p>Action Plan:</p> <p>A. Support developers and builders by reducing unnecessary administrative processes and providing clear, responsive, and efficient service.</p>	<p>In 2021 the Township successfully hired a new Deputy CBO to provide enhanced service to residential contractors. <i>2022 saw 284 permits issued, which was just slightly lower than 2021</i></p>
<p>B. Provide opportunities for residential development for diverse populations including young families and seniors.</p>	<p>Talbotville saw significant subdivision development in 2021 especially in The Ridge Phase 2, The Enclave, and Talbotville Meadows. <i>The Condo Development in the Ridge Phase 3 provides additional diversity for residential development.</i></p>

<p>C. Encourage an appropriate mix of residential development including single family dwellings, multi-residential dwellings, and affordable housing.</p>	<p>The Township approved a Site Plan and Condo Plan in 2021 for the multi-residential block in the Ridge Phase 3. <i>This development progressed over 2022 and is under construction.</i></p>
<p>D. Support the development of a retirement community or condominium complex for seniors.</p>	<p>The Township attended the grand opening of the Royal Oaks Senior Living in 2021, located within the Township.</p>
<p>1.4 Utilize the Economic Development Committee to prepare recommendations to attract key businesses to the municipality and develop strategies to retain and expand existing critical businesses.</p>	
<p>Action Plan: A. Provide the EDC the authority to make inquiries, meet with businesses and contacts to promote The Township of Southwold.</p>	<p>This authority was granted previously and is ongoing.</p>
<p>B. Utilize the Economic Development Committee to help identify development opportunities in the Township and address strategies for supporting small businesses and reducing red tape.</p>	<p>The EDC has requested that checklists be developed for potential business sites. This will need to be revisited in 2022.</p>
<p>C. Utilize the Economic Development Committee to develop a strategy to attract, retain, and expand critical sectors and key businesses such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Gas Station b. Coffee Shop c. Financial Institution/Bank/Credit Union d. Pharmacy e. Family Restaurant f. Grocery Store g. Rural Tourism & Agri-Business h. Alternative Accommodation </p>	<p>This project is ongoing. Alternative Accommodations have been discussed for inclusion in the Township Official Plan and a request for inclusion of policies in the County OP has been forwarded in 2021.</p>
<p>1.5 Attract new industrial development and encourage expansion and improvements on existing industrial</p>	

<p>businesses with input from Council and Council members of the EDC.</p>	
<p>Action Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Provide enticements for land owners of vacant industrial land to market their properties to industrial developers. 	<p>The Township approved the Site Plan and redevelopment of the former Ford Property in 2021. The redevelopment is the result of countless hours of administrative and building department support. Development continued over 2022 with plans for opening in 2023. Staff continue to work with the property owner on additional development opportunities and have been advocating to secure services.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> B. Investigate servicing options for lands earmarked for industrial development in the Township Official Plan and reserve funds to service the lands. 	<p>To support the re-development of the Ford Property, servicing upgrades were supported to water infrastructure on Sunset Road in 2021. A Secondary Plan was included in the 2022 budget to inform long-term servicing. This work was not completed but planned for the future.</p>

<p>C. Partner with Elgin County, the Provincial Government, and Federal Government and other agencies to attract industrial development through a marketing plan of key sites.</p>	<p>The Township continues to work closely with Elgin County, the MP and the MPP to help market industrial lands. In 2021, the Township submitted another application to the Job Site Challenge for industrial lands. Staff have fielded numerous inquiries from potential purchasers in 2021.</p>
<p>D. Support the creation of incentives that attract new industries and support incentives for existing industrial property owners to improve and expand their businesses.</p>	<p>The Township updated its Community Improvement Program (Elgincentives) to include new incentives for industrial lands. While Elgincentives funding from Elgin County wined down in 2021, the TEIG program continues for industrial sites.</p>
<p>E. Provide excellent administrative services to assist businesses in navigating through various planning processes (plan of subdivision, re-zoning, consent, site plan approval, etc).</p>	<p>Township staff work hard to assist new business owners in planning ventures. In 2021, the Township hired a Director of Development and Infrastructure with engineering skills to improve administrative support to developers and application turn-around time. <i>In 2022 the Planner position was moved to a full-time position and brought in-house.</i></p>

<p>2. Culture, Recreation, Environment, & Community Beautification</p> <p>Strategic Goal: Promote a healthy, naturally beautiful, and community oriented municipality by encouraging and supporting involvement of volunteer organizations wishing to provide cultural and recreational activities in the Township of Southwold.</p>	
<p>Strategies: 2.1 Complete capital recreation projects and proceed with the revitalization of Township parks.</p>	
<p>Action Plan: A. Continue working with current multi-purpose committee to set long term priorities for the parks and establish multi-year parks capital project plan.</p>	<p>The multi-purpose parks committee met multiple times in 2022 virtually. Input was gathered for parks facilities. In particular naming for Talbotville Parks was completed.</p>
<p>B. Improve the communication of Township park projects through improved web and social media posts and celebratory grand openings of new capital park investments. Consider an advertising & marking plan to increase awareness and use of facilities.</p>	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic meant that many parks projects were delayed and "grand openings" were not held. A grand opening or celebratory social media post will be scheduled in 2022 for the various parks projects completed in 2021 including the Fingal Heritage Park, Shedden Trail, and new Talbotville Park.</p> <p>Recognition event held in coordination with OTF on the opening of the accessible park, playground and pavilion in Talbotville. Promotion continued to increase over 2022 as restrictions.</p>

<p>C. Continue to improve efforts to engage community members and enhance representation from all areas of the Township.</p>	<p>More work to be done on a broader community outreach program for 2022. In 2022 outreach continued to engage all residents of the Township. Various communication types have been used. The 2022 Municipal Election provided an opportunity for residents to select representatives.</p>
<p>D. Investigate the feasibility and confer with the multi-purpose committee to establish an action plan on proceeding with the following Township Parks Projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Bandshell/Outdoor Stage at the Keystone Complex b. Talbotville New Park Project c. Splash Pad d. New Shedden Open Space Park (Soccer Fields, Lawn Bowling, Football, etc.) 	<p>The Talbotville Park was substantially completed in 2021 and will be opened in spring of 2022. The Fingal Heritage Park completed many elements in 2021 and a new trail was built in 2021 at the Shedden Open Space park. <i>New park, playground, pavilion and baseball diamond opened in Talbotville in 2022. Fingal Heritage Park continued to add features and work towards to the total build out plan. Shedden Soccer ran its program at the SOS in 2022.</i></p>
<p>E. Maximize the use of community spaces and support community programs that incentivize the use of facilities. Consider partnerships that ensure municipal facilities can be rented for summer camps, day programs, and programs that encourage full rental of parks and municipal buildings.</p>	<p>COVID-19 restriction meant that facilities and parks were largely unrented and unused in 2021. <i>2022 saw the increase in rental and community groups return to renting at township facilities, with more groups expected to resume activities in 2023.</i></p>
<p>2.2 Promote community volunteerism and support community driven events.</p>	<p>2021 UPDATES</p>

<p>Action Plan:</p> <p>A. Promote volunteering opportunities for Township Committees and local organizations and service clubs through the use of Township staff, website, social media, and communications products.</p>	<p>The Township was able to host a smaller Volunteer appreciation night in 2021, 2022 saw the return of an in-person volunteer appreciation evening.</p>
<p>B. Encourage collaboration between community groups by establishing a secure, privacy compliant, central volunteer database and volunteer mentoring program that supports cross-organization sharing.</p>	<p>To be worked on.</p>
<p>C. Sponsor efforts, including the creation of a central listing of assets and organization skillsets, to maximize the use of existing assets and sharing of existing resources between organizations.</p>	<p>To be worked on.</p>
<p>D. Ensure that fair and festival organizers receive support from the Township to aid in their promotion and that resources are committed from the municipality that prioritize the continuation of municipal traditions (i.e. Rosy Rhubarb, Shedden Fair, Optimist Club Parade, Southwold by Tractor, etc).</p>	<p>All events, fairs and festivals in 2021 were cancelled because of COVID-19. Staff are hoping that in 2022 these events can return. 2022 saw the return of the Rosy Rhubarb Festival, Shedden Fair, Optimist Club Halloween Party and Santa Claus Parade. Tractor Pull was postponed until 2023.</p>
<p>E. Partner with Schools, Elgin Manor, Community Groups to support community events.</p>	<p>COVID-19 cancelled all community events, schools were closed intermittently, and Elgin Manor was unopen to the public. 2022 continued to see restrictions associated with Schools and Elgin Manor.</p>
<p>2.3 Prioritize Township-wide beautification projects that enhance our natural resources and promote the rural character of the municipality.</p>	
<p>Action Plan:</p>	

<p>A. Emphasize year-round, four season, park and municipal property maintenance. Ensure that parks can be accessed in spring, summer, fall, and winter and encourage activities in all seasons.</p>	<p>To be addressed in 2022, especially with the hiring of a new full time parks and facilities operator. 2022 <i>Parks and Facilities Operator hired and began in April 2022.</i></p>
<p>B. Work closely with the Township Communities in Bloom Committee to support the beautification of the municipality.</p>	<p>The Township continues to support the Communities in Bloom through the Public Works Department and by supporting financial requests to the Green Lane Trust. Despite COVID-19, Communities in Bloom continued to maintain flower boxes and hosted a no-contact plant sale to support the beautification of the Township.</p>
<p>C. Investigate progressive waste management solutions and evaluate the costs and benefits of different waste management collection service types (i.e. single stream vs. two-stream recycling, compost/organic collection, etc.) and service levels (weekly, bi-weekly, additional seasonal collections, etc). Council selection of the optimal service based on this evaluation.</p>	<p>The Zero Waste Committee worked in 2021 to facilitate the sale of subsidized composters to residents. There have been many developments in 2021 about the transition to producer-responsibility recycling and staff have brought reports to Council to speak to this change. 2022 <i>Joint RFP with the City of St Thomas for updated waste collection contract. New contractor to begin July 1, 2023 with the inclusion of weekly garbage collection, bi-weekly organics collection in urban areas.</i></p>

	<p><i>In 2022 the Township partnered with Recycle Coach. Residents and businesses can access the app or widget on Township website to find information related to garbage/recycling collection.</i></p>
<p>D. Provide options to residents for special waste management such as large article collection, household hazardous waste, community swap days, or a community dumpster option.</p>	<p>In 2021 the Township continued to participate in the St. Thomas Community Recycling Centre. Information to residents regarding waste collection has been frequently posted on the Township Facebook page.</p> <p><i>2022 Southwold Zero Waste Committee held a clothing swap with plans to hold more events in 2023.</i></p>
<p>E. Encourage wildlife preservation and environmental protection through the use of the protection and promotion of Fingal Wildlife Sanctuary, the consideration of greener services and alternative energy, and the control of invasive species.</p>	<p>The 2021 budget included a continuation of the phragmites management program.</p>

<p>F. Celebrate our local history and work to preserve heritage features of our community through the support of History Committee initiatives.</p>	<p>The Township continues to support the history committee. In 2021, the Township supported the continued rejuvenation of the Fingal Heritage Park. The Township’s War Memorial Committee presented a modified Remembrance Day event with the hosting of a virtual event.</p> <p>2022 saw the return of an in-person combined with virtual Remembrance Day event.</p> <p>The History Committee also supported and is working with Fridge Door Live Theatre Company for the Premier of Lawrence Station – The Crash of American Airlines Flagship Erie, a play written by Len Cuthbert.</p>
<p>2.4 Place special focus on cultural and recreation activities aimed at serving seniors in our community.</p>	
<p>Action Plan:</p> <p>A. In partnership with Elgin County, develop and implement a plan for our aging population.</p>	
<p>B. Combat social isolation felt by many seniors by supporting services that help provide care to seniors including volunteer organizations.</p>	<p>In 2021, the Southwold Young at Heart committee provided programming and drive-through/drop-off materials and lunches.</p> <p>2022 saw the success of 4 different events by the Young at heart Committee – St. Patrick’s Day Lunch, Guided Nature Walk, Picnic Lunch, and Christmas</p>

	<p>Lunch. Some in person events were held towards the end of 2022, with the expectation to continue in 2023.</p>
<p>C. Establish a senior’s advisory committee of council to provide input on services for seniors and suggestions for social support.</p>	<p>The Township established the Southwold Young at Heart Committee in late 2018 and adopted Terms of Reference in 2019. The Committee met virtually throughout 2021 and hosted COVID safe events/materials.</p>
<p>D. Provide recreation opportunities for seniors and invest in activities to create a central hub for seniors.</p>	<p>COVID-19 meant congregate recreation for seniors was prohibited; programming is hoping to return in 2021. In person programming returned in October and November 2022.</p>
<p>E. Make accessible public spaces a priority by designing fully accessible parks and facilities, and conferring with the County Accessibility Coordinator to ensure parks and facilities are fully committed to the goal of accessible and inclusive spaces.</p>	<p>All parks projects continue to be constructed in compliance with the AODA.</p>
<p>3. Municipal Infrastructure, Improved Transportation, and Public Safety</p> <p>Strategic Goal: Provide improved transportation and a strong commitment to asset management with a goal of maintaining the Township’s infrastructure in the promotion of public safety.</p>	
<p>Strategies: 3.1 Update and expand on the existing asset management plan including financing, as regulated by the Provincial government, and commit to maintaining the</p>	

<p>Township’s infrastructure and assets to an always improving level.</p>	
<p>Action Plan: A. Commitment from Council and staff to follow recommendations arising from the asset management plan.</p>	<p>In 2019 the Township of Southwold adopted a strategic asset management policy and completed an update to its Roads Needs Study and Asset Management database. <i>The Township completed a Comprehensive Asset Management Plan to comply with O. Reg. 588/17</i></p>
<p>B. Provide rapid response to repairing Township roads, assets, fleet, and facilities to prevent further damage to municipal properties.</p>	<p><i>This is an ongoing Township responsibility.</i></p>
<p>C. Ensure that new subdivision development and impacts of growth are well planned and managed for the future impact on municipal assets.</p>	<p>The Township requires that all new subdivisions submit CAD files and plans to be included into the Township’s Asset Register. Municipal budgeting aligns with Asset Management planning, where possible including the retention of sufficient reserve funds. <i>Contract records management staff organized and digitized a variety of plans to assist with utility locates.</i></p>
<p>3.2 Emphasize public safety on municipal roadways and provide safe active transportation options.</p>	

<p>Action Plan:</p> <p>A. Ensure speed limits in small communities are compatible with the goal of public safety with an emphasis on low speed limits near parks and public facilities where children are travelling.</p>	<p>This is an ongoing Township responsibility. Stop signs were installed on Talbotville Gore Road in 2021.</p>
<p>B. Partner with the OPP to ensure that municipal speed limits are enforced and encourage targeted enforcement via focused patrols.</p>	<p>The Township continues to lobby the OPP to improve enforcement. Southwold community policing continued to meet in 2021 and advocate to OPP for improved speed management.</p>
<p>C. Confirm that new subdivisions in growth communities include sidewalks and active transportation networks to encourage safety. Ensure all new parks are fenced.</p>	<p>All plans of subdivision submitted and under construction in 2021 were required to provide sidewalks and trail systems to new parks.</p>
<p>D. Ensure that new subdivisions are designed with traffic control measures that reduce impacts on public safety resulting from growth.</p>	<p>Talbotville plans of subdivision included community input related to traffic control. Concrete barriers were deployed in 2021 to appropriately direct construction traffic.</p>
<p>3.3 Investigate transportation options for seniors and isolated populations in rural communities.</p>	
<p>Action Plan:</p> <p>A. Support and help facilitate shared senior transportation opportunities.</p>	<p>COVID-19 prohibited the Township from proceeding with this initiative. <i>There has been some initial discussion about transit options and the impact with the Amazon development.</i></p>
<p>B. Explore alternative public transportation models used in other jurisdictions and investigate the feasibility of these systems in Southwold.</p>	
<p>C. Work with community volunteer organizations and municipal partners to help promote transportation options for seniors and isolated populations.</p>	

<p>3.4 Ensure that residents have access to health services and are well informed about ways to protect their own personal safety.</p>	
<p>Action Plan: A. Maintain medical building in Shedden for health service(s) and work to preserve and attract various health providers in the municipality.</p>	<p>The doctor’s office in Shedden remains occupied. While Dr. Robinson retired in 2021, her daughter is taking over the practice. <i>New facility lease signed to maintain health care services in Shedden.</i></p>
<p>B. Educate residents about emergency management and emergency preparedness and provide frequent public education on fire prevention.</p>	<p>2021 was again defined by the COVID-19 Emergency and the Declaration of a State of Emergency. The Township’s website and Facebook page have been dominated by COVID-19 messaging. Social media campaigns have also focused on emergency preparedness.</p>
<p>C. Continue to liaise with Elgin County to maintain ambulance services in a timely manner for residents and that growth is accounted for in coordinating service.</p>	<p>The Township supports EMS services through Elgin County and through tiered medical response.</p>
<p>4. Municipal Financial Stewardship</p> <p>Strategic Goal: To exercise good financial stewardship in the management of Township expenditures and revenues.</p>	
<p>Strategies: 4.1 To continue researching and applying for applicable Federal and Provincial funding.</p>	

<p>Action Plan:</p> <p>A. Continue memberships in various Municipal Associations and collaboration with municipal partners.</p>	<p>Township maintains memberships in AMCTO, MFOA, OBOA, DSAO, AMO, ROMA, OGRA, etc. and participates in shared Elgin working groups.</p>
<p>B. Pre-screen grant information at staff level to determine eligibility and qualifying projects prior to Council recommendation and application.</p>	<p>The Township successfully received multiple grants in 2021.</p>
<p>C. Engage, where appropriate, the services of a consultant for completion of grant applications.</p>	<p>The Township continues to use consultants where required to apply for and receive grants.</p>
<p>4.2 Review and protect the assessment base.</p>	
<p>Action Plan:</p> <p>A. Review large changes in assessment as identified by MPAC and monitor and report on changes in assessment practices and legislation.</p>	<p>The Township has worked with MTAG as well as Elgin County to help review and protect assessment changes. COVID-19 meant that MPAC's assessment update remains delayed.</p>
<p>B. Support and consider assessment management efforts beyond Township staff including the use of external consultants, County resources, and municipal organizations.</p>	
<p>4.3 Adopt, review, and frequently update policies that support strong financial stewardship including policies on the following:</p>	
<p>Action Plan:</p> <p>A. Use of Township owned lands (including commercial owned buildings and future development lands) and Township owned properties.</p>	<p><i>In 2021, the Township completed an RFP to sell the Stoss property. RFP's have been completed for the Stoss and Teetzel Properties.</i></p>
<p>B. Revenue and Tax Collection</p>	<p><i>Deferred due to staffing changes over 2022</i></p>
<p>C. Procurement/Purchasing.</p>	<p>Updated in 2019.</p>
<p>D. Use of and Contributions to Township Reserves.</p>	<p><i>Deferred due to staffing changes over 2022</i></p>

<p>E. Financial Reporting.</p>	<p><i>Deferred due to staffing changes over 2022</i></p>
<p>F. Investment Policy</p>	<p><i>Deferred due to staffing changes over 2022</i></p>
<p>5. Public Engagement, Transparent Government, and Informing the Community</p> <p>Strategic Goal: To promote public engagement, transparent government, and strong communications with all members of the community across various mediums for the strengthening of civic participation.</p>	
<p>Strategies: 5.1 Continue improving information disseminated by the municipality.</p>	
<p>Action Plan: A. Develop improved website content more frequently and re-format so that residents can more easily navigate municipal information.</p>	<p>Township staff launched a new brand and website in 2021, including complete content review and re-design. The feedback from the public has been very positive. <i>2022 Continue to use new Township website as a core source of information for residents, as well as utilize social media channels to help disseminate valuable information to the community.</i></p>
<p>B. Maintain a stand-alone bulletin board (whether physical or digital) within communities for local advertising use.</p>	<p>To be completed in future.</p>
<p>C. Continue newsletters with water and tax bills.</p>	<p><i>2022 featured newsletters in the tax bills and Southwold in Motion in the water bills.</i></p>

<p>D. Create a central information contact list whereby residents can opt into receiving various memos and communications from the municipality.</p>	<p>2021 Website update provides the ability to subscribe to get information on various topics and pages. Promotion of</p>
<p>E. Aim for improved communication with residents and engagement via sharing through various social media platforms.</p>	<p>The Community Services and Communications Clerk has significantly improved Facebook posts. The Township in 2021 created and is active on multiple social media accounts (Twitter, Instagram, etc). Use of multiple social media channels continued and was enhanced over 2022</p>
<p>5.2 Adopt practices that promote transparent government</p>	
<p>Action Plan: A. Adopt and abide by public notice policies.</p>	<p>Public notices and background information for planning applications are being posted to the Township website for applications.</p>
<p>B. Consider proactive disclosure practices.</p>	<p>In 2021, the Township acquired access to Laserfiche Cloud which will allow for a public portal to many of the Township’s public records database to be launched in 2022. This work is ongoing.</p>
<p>C. Make public records easily available online in an accessible format.</p>	<p>The new website launched in 2021 includes all documents posted in an accessible format. 2022 continue to make existing documents accessible, with</p>

	templates created for consistency in application of accessibility requirements.
5.3 Celebrate community engagement and create vibrant connections within the community.	
Action Plan: A. Consider strategies to support community neighbourhood engagement.	In 2021, COVID-19 and social distancing protocols meant neighbourhood engagement was challenging.
B. Support community outreach efforts and neighbourhood efforts that enhance our subdivisions, making them more than “bedroom communities”.	Ongoing.
C. Encourage collaboration between community groups of volunteers to move towards common goals.	Collaborative events (i.e. Winterfest, Volunteer Appreciation) were cancelled because of COVID-19 2022 – return of in person activities, such as Canada Day Celebration, summer events and festivals, Santa Claus Parade, Volunteer Appreciation. 2023 expectation to continue to encourage these community events.

Financial Implications:

None.

Strategic Plan Goals:

The above recommendation helps the Township meet the Strategic Plan Goal of:

- Promoting residential, agricultural, commercial, and industrial development by ensuring policies and services are in place to support growth in The Township of Southwold.

- Promoting a healthy, naturally beautiful, and community-oriented municipality by encouraging and supporting involvement of volunteer organizations wishing to provide cultural and recreational activities in the Township of Southwold.
- Providing improved transportation and a strong commitment to asset management with a goal of maintaining the Township's infrastructure in the promotion of public safety
- Exercising good financial stewardship in the management of Township expenditures and revenues.
- Promoting public engagement, transparent government, and strong communications with all members of the community across various mediums for the strengthening of civic participation.

**Respectfully Submitted by:
Jeff Carswell, CAO/Clerk**