



SMITHS FALLS

RISE AT THE FALLS

Report # 2019-95

To: Mayor and Council
From: Malcolm Morris, Chief Administrative Officer
Date: July 11, 2019
Committee of the Whole Date: July 15, 2019
Title: Beckwith Street Redevelopment – Communications Strategy

- For Direction
- For Information
- For Adoption
- Attachment

Recommendation:

That Committee of the Whole provide direction to staff as it relates to a communications plan respecting the Beckwith Street Redevelopment Project.

Purpose:

To propose a communications plan to correct public misinformation and to encourage constructive and respectful public comment surrounding the decision to reconstruct Beckwith Street as a complete street.

Background:

It may be useful to take stock of the public consultation/engagement efforts that have occurred to date related to this project:

<u>Forum</u>	<u>Date</u>
1. Working Group (stakeholder) meeting #1	September 28, 2017
2. Working Group (stakeholder) meeting #2	November 2, 2017
3. Public Open House #1*: Confirming the vision	November 23, 2017
4. Staff Presentation to the DBA Annual General Meeting	November 28, 2017
5. Staff Presentation to the Chamber of Commerce Board meeting	December 13, 2017
6. Presentation to Committee of the Whole* (status update)	December 18, 2017

7. Public Open House #2*: Recommended plan February 7, 2018
8. Presentation to Committee of the Whole*: Recommended plan February 20, 2018
9. Council meeting - decision on option #1 (angle parking) February 26, 2018
10. "The Great Excavate" session hosted by the DBA & Chamber of Commerce for the business community – Town staff presented July 24, 2018
11. Committee of the Whole discussion January 7, 2019
12. Delegation -Jamie Stuckless, Executive Director, Share the Road and Nancy Smith Lea, Executive Director, The Centre for Active Transportation.
Topic - Beckwith Street Revitalization/Complete Streets January 14, 2019
13. Committee of the Whole discussion January 21, 2019
14. Council meeting – decision on complete streets model January 21, 2019
15. Publication/posting of a Q & A to address recurring questions February 25, 2019
16. Delegation - Vincent Hamilton. Topic – Presentation of petitions March 11, 2019
17. Delegation - Justin Duhamel. Topic – Presentation of an up to date survey of business owner’s dispositions respecting parking March 11, 2019
18. Delegation - Dennis Staples, Council decision process in connection with the Beckwith Street Redevelopment Project March 18, 2019
19. Delegation - Rob Campbell. Topic – Commercial vehicle impacts on Beckwith Street Redevelopment Project March 25, 2019
20. Delegation - Kevin Grimes, Remax Affiliates. Topic – Beckwith Street concerns as they pertain to being a property owner on Beckwith Street. April 8, 2019
21. Delegation - Dennis Staples. Topic – Downtown Revitalization and Waterfront Integration Master Plan April 15, 2019
22. Delegation - Marshall Hogan. Topic – Comments on safety concerns and accessibility considerations respecting the proposed bike lanes on Beckwith Street project design. July 8, 2019

23. Delegation - Stephen Fournier. Topic – Beckwith Street
Redevelopment Plan – practical consideration and concerns
regarding the “Complete Street Design” approved by Council
on January 21, 2019.

July 8, 2019

*All presentation materials from the public open houses were posted to the town website along with an invitation to comment.

It is important to understand the project exceeded the public consultation requirements of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment Process.

Lakeview Public Relations was retained to provide issues management advice to Council and staff. An issues management training session occurred at a special Committee of the Whole meeting in early June to better understand the dynamics of discontent and to learn about the various strategies and techniques to address outrage.

Analysis and Options:

Lakeview Public Relations has developed a recommended approach consisting of a five-step action plan.

<u>Steps</u>	<u>Actions</u>
1. Achieve clarity	Be clear about your answer to the question: What do we want to achieve? What is our desired outcome? The answer focusses all actions taken and establishes performance indicators for determining progress or lack thereof. Clearly identify the intended audience. Then, come to a decision about your approach.
2. Plan (Actions to happen in parallel)	A. Develop content. Develop website content for speakupsmithsfalls.ca that answers the questions you have been hearing. Use simple, clear language. Think about ways to communicate that don't always focus on the written word – short video clips, for example, to complement written materials. Establish a contact point for information, questions and comments. You may want to have a special email account created to ensure that emails don't bog down someone's business email or get lost in their email stream. B. Design your website page with a navigational structure that allows you to expand content as the project progresses.

The project information on the Town website landing page should lead to a project webpage rather than a pdf. This will allow for easy-to-access information and for mobile phone use.

C. Plan for public engagement.

Identify opportunities for the public to learn more and get involved. Timing of phases to be determined based on performance indicators. These include:

Phase 1: Build knowledge

- Design a webpage and prepare up-to-date content.
- Provide a briefing to local media on the project. A media briefing is not a news conference. Instead, it is a presentation of a complex project to increase media's understanding of technical issues with the intent of helping them with future stories.
- Distribute a direct mailout.
- Invite residents to sign up for small group coffee chats.
- Native content advertising. Write an article that is placed in the local paper – print and online – that is identified as sponsored content and highlights the benefits of the Beckwith Street project and complete streets design.
- Consider a public survey to gauge level of knowledge.

Phase II: Spread the word

- Open house: With the consultant, staff and Council members on hand. Establish theme-based stations each staffed by a subject-matter expert. Have tables set up where people can write comments (craft paper spread over a table top works well). Encourage attendees to register as they enter and complete a simple evaluation card before they exit to rate the effectiveness of the open house. These become part of the event report that would be posted to the website.
- Another option is a revolving conversation. This open forum is set up with four chairs either in a circle or around a table. Members of the public are invited to attend and have their say. Four people take the chairs, each speaks and leaves the chair when they have had their say. When a chair is empty anyone from the "gallery" may sit and wait for a turn to speak. There is no time limit for speakers. Nearby, staff are at flipcharts writing the comments as they hear them. This becomes part of public record.
- Councilors can reach out to their constituents via one on one meetings.

Phase III: Deepening engagement

- Street tour. Arrange with the consultant and staff to take residents on a “tour of imagination” to show residents what the new street will look like.
- Re-survey to gauge public knowledge.

3. Promote

At each stage, ensure there is a robust promotional plan that will include social media to reach as many residents as possible to both provide information and to inform about engagement opportunities.

4. Report

Report on public feedback and share on the website. Be sure to promote the website whenever new information is posted.

5. Monitor

Continually monitor progress against performance indicators to assess plan and re-adjust when required.

Budget/Financial Implications:

Costs associated with executing the plan will be dependant on the scope of outreach/engagement Council desires.

Link to Strategic Plan:

Strategic Priority #3 – Transportation Networks

Existing Policy:

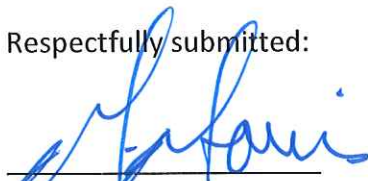
Not applicable

Attachments:

Not applicable

Notes/Action (space for Council Member’s notes):

Respectfully submitted:



Malcolm Morris, CMO
Chief Administrative Officer