

TOWNSHIP OF BILLINGS
MINUTES
Climate Action Committee (CAC)

February 23, 2022

Virtual Meeting – Zoom@7pm

PRESENT: Councillor Bryan Barker (Chair), Bob Clifford, Paul Darlaston, John Hoekstra (via telephone), Chris Theijsmeijer

REGRETS: None.

Staff: Todd Gordon (MPM, Recorder)

Members of the Public: none

Media: None

1) OPEN

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 pm.

Moved by Paul Darlaston; Seconded by Chris Theijsmeijer. Carried.

2) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda for the February 23rd, 2022, meeting was approved.

Moved by B. Clifford; Seconded by Chris Theijsmeijer. Carried.

3) DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

None.

4) ADOPTION OF MINUTES

The minutes for the January 26th, 2022, meeting were approved.

Moved by P. Darlaston; Seconded by Chris Theijsmeijer. Carried.

5) DELEGATIONS

None.

6) OLD BUSINESS

i. Communication – Website and Blog

Paul Darlaston opened discussion on his refined version of “A Status Update for the Billings Community” for the municipal website, as had been presented subsequent to the agenda pkg (the discussion document is appended to these minutes). There was consensus that this should form the basis of a web post on the Climate Action page, with cross links to the blog when the blog is functional.

Further discussion of the blog concept including consideration of style, format, tabs, etc. The Chair asked the committee to consider relevant topics for tabs within the blog.

ii. Climate Change Implementation Coordinator – Update

The chair updated the committee on the status of the CCIC position, namely that the role remains unfilled. The CAO will be discussing next steps with Council

iii. Municipal Office Renovation - Energy Analysis

The Chair asked the MPM to provide a synopsis of the current situation with respect to municipal office energy data and analysis. Bob Clifford pointed out that energy use data and analysis was available on multiple municipal buildings, and energy usage information will be useful for potential grants going forward.

Recommendation:

That Council direct staff to review the municipal building energy data and reporting for 2015 – 2021, and report back to the CAC on data availability and recommendations for further energy analysis and reporting.

Motion by Paul Darlaston; Seconded by Bob Clifford. Carried.

iv. Spring Public Event

Discussion of potential themes, topics and speakers. The committee agreed to recommend the event to Council (below) and to schedule a special meeting for planning and organizing the event. The Chair instructed the MPM to poll the membership for a suitable special meeting date.

Recommendation:

That Council support a one-day Earth Day event, hosted by the CAC and with a climate action related theme, on Saturday, April 23rd, 2022.

Motion by Paul Darlaston; Seconded by John Hoekstra. Carried.

7) NEW BUSINESS

i. CAC Budget

Brief discussion of the budget worksheet provided in the agenda package. Consensus that given the reality that the spring event – yet to be planned and organized – will influence the budget, and the advanced time of the meeting, budget would be further discussed at the special meeting in early March.

ii. Moving forward with other CEEP actions

Deferred until the next regular meeting.

8) CORRESPONDENCE

None

9) INFORMATION

None

10) CLOSED SESSION

None

11) RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

1. That Council direct staff to review the municipal building energy data and reporting for 2015 – 2021, and report back to the CAC on data availability and recommendations for further energy analysis and reporting.
2. That Council support a one-day Earth Day event, hosted by the CAC and with a climate action related theme, on Saturday, April 23rd, 2022.

12) NEXT MEETING

Week of March 7th to 10th (Committee to be polled by the MPM) - Virtual (Zoom)

13) ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm, on a motion by Paul Darlaston. Seconded by John Hoekstra. Carried.

Billings Climate Action – Status and Progress Report to the Community (Draft for Discussion – received post-agenda deadline, and thus appended to the minutes)

DATE – February 2022

This is a brief overview for the Billings Community of:-

- how Billings Township has been addressing Climate Change to date,
- where we are at and
- what plans have been approved for actions in the upcoming period.

The Government of Ontario requires all municipalities to prepare a Strategic Plan and follow it as it guides their decision making. This ensures that they aren't focusing on one or two hot button items at any point in time, to the exclusion (or at least diminution) of the rest.

The plan has a 5-year horizon to ensure that it is addressing all the initiatives and services that they are charged with delivering, recognizing that in any one year they may not work on all the initiatives. It is reviewed / refreshed every 5 years.

There are only so many tax dollars and resources to go around and a Council is expected both by the Government of Ontario and the municipality's own taxpayers to manage within its budget. Municipalities by law cannot run deficits in any year.

Billings current 5-year Strategic Plan, approved in 2018, has almost run its course. Four Climate Action initiatives were part of the 20 key action plans identified in that Strategic Plan.

14. Engage in the joint municipality / Re-Think Green 'preparation for municipal energy planning' initiative.
15. Use the results (knowledge, tools, services) from the municipal energy planning initiative to facilitate the creation of a municipal energy plan.

16. Use the results of the energy planning initiative, and appropriate funding, to measure and implement GHG emissions reduction.
17. Assess the feasibility of community composting

These were addressed in 2019-2021 through a Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) program which funded bringing in a Climate Action Coordinator (shared 50:50 with Central Manitoulin) for 2 years. They were refined and refocused in plans covered off in the Climate Energy & Emissions Plan (CEEP) published in May 2021.

Next Steps

So, what is next as we swing from the Planning phase to Action Plans on our collective work to reduce Green House Gas emissions within Billings by 50% - before the end of 2030?

First, as we move forward turning our plans into actions, we need to take note of what is happening globally to stay aligned with actions in the big picture.

Global Warming and Climate Action are two phrases that we are hearing a lot these days. Global Warming is the threat to Earth. Climate Action covers what we can do at various levels to reduce Global Warming.

Climate Action is taking place internationally through our Federal government. For example, representatives of 197 nations met in Glasgow, Scotland last November in a huge meeting called COP26 to agree ground rules and what each nation will commit to do to reduce their Green House Gases (GHGs) – more on COP26 later. Provincial governments are also actively involved (some more actively than others).

Collectively, those commitments were disappointing. Added up, it was calculated that, even with what the 197 nations committed to do, Global Warming would still increase by 2.6 degrees by 2050. That doesn't sound much, but the forecasts of sea level rise, increased temperatures in places that are hot even now and would be impossible to live in with projected temperature increases.

The government participants in COP26 were asked to go away and spend 2022 tightening up their commitments to ensure that projections would be under 2.0C degrees by 2050 with refreshed commitments by the end of 2022, so being offered the opportunity to go lower towards that 1.5C ideal target.

Canada has a new Environment and Climate Change minister, Steven Guilbeault. He must, by March 31, 2022 release new plans for improving Canada's committed target and implementing the various plans to make that happen.

Municipal governments like Billings Township (and Central Manitoulin) have put our plans together (ref. Billings' CEEP Plan). Each and everyone of us has a role to play. Because each of us generates some Green House Gas (Carbon Dioxide) when we drive our automobiles, when we heat our homes, we each can contribute by our own actions reducing the energy we consume. There are ways we individually can reduce our energy consumption by improving the insulation in our homes and / or switching from energy produced from fossil fuel (gasoline, propane) to green energy (solar, wind, thermal).

There are other ways that each of us, from our municipal governments to individual property owners can do to contribute to reducing the GHGs generated within our boundaries. For example, planting trees on your land. Trees absorb CO₂ already in the atmosphere. Billings is looking at increasing tree planting on Council land. Council is looking at organizing, either independently or with other organizations like Manitoulin Streams tree planting initiatives as early as this spring.

Ensuring that any part of the land on your property that absorbs CO2 (if you have wetland on your property, around that wetland there likely will be peat bogs. Peat bogs are tremendous Carbon sinks (places which absorb CO2 naturally). All you have to do is to make sure they don't dry up and release that CO2 back into the air.

A quick recap on what Billings Township (in partnership with Central Manitoulin) has done thus far

Billings Township Council began taking specific action on Green House Gas and Global Warming (in partnership with Central Manitoulin) over 2 years ago.

This initiative was in response to an invitation from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) for municipalities to participate in a project to assess how much Green House Gas (GHG) is being generated within their communities, both by the operation of the municipality (Corporate) and by community and their households (Community). Members. There was an excellent response and many other communities are taking part.

A plan (the Community Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP)) was developed and has been approved both by Council and by the funder (FCM). Many within the community contributed to its development.

The CEEP plan included Action Items which the Township must work on between 2021 and 2030 – and a preliminary timetable and a target. Some Action Items are the responsibility of Corporate (Council & Township staff) to deliver. Some can only happen with active participation from you - the people of Billings (Community).

As part of that effort, 4 inventory databases were identified to be used to measure progress.

They are: -

- CORPORATE** – Municipal Buildings Assets Inventory & Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions
- CORPORATE** - Municipal Land Assets – GHG Emissions / Capture
- COMMUNITY** – Buildings Assets Inventory – Energy Efficiency to be assessed
- COMMUNITY** – Land Assets – your lot and what you do with it.

For involvement by individual members of the community, the first step is to measure Energy Efficiency in your home and other buildings and how much Green House Gas (GHG) your property is currently generating by having it Energy Assessed. One member of our community has already begun this process and has provided a brief overview of what that entails. If you have this done formally, there are valuable grants available to cover some of your costs.

Billings Council is committed to a Communications Plan to regularly inform members of Billings community of progress on our Climate Action. Summary information will be published here on the Township's web site – Billingstwp.ca

The Climate Action Committee (CAC) meets “virtually” monthly to review and make decisions on progress and make recommendations to Council. Interested community members can contact Township Offices and ask to be included as public observers of these meetings.

A Billings Township Climate Action Blog is being set up where blog posts will be focused upon events and more informal dialogue with the community. More details later when the blog is ready to publish its first post, but one of the early posts is likely to discuss what is entailed in having your home Energy Loss Assessed along with estimates of how much of that can be reduced by implementing recommended Energy Efficiency solutions.