



Community Development Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, December 9, 2021 –10:00 a.m.
Frontenac Room, 2069 Battersea Road, Glenburnie, ON
Meeting to be held in Virtual Electronic Format,
and live streamed on the County of Frontenac's YouTube
Channel
<https://youtu.be/VpLQrEWURos>

AGENDA

Page

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Adoption of the Agenda**
 - a) **That** the agenda for the December 9, 2021 meeting of the Community Development Advisory Committee be adopted.

3. **Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof**

4. **Adoption of Minutes**

3 - 6

- a) Minutes of Meeting held October 14, 2021
That the minutes of the Community Development Advisory Committee meeting held October 14, 2021 be adopted.

5. **Deputations and/or Presentations**

- a) Ms. Amanda Pantrey, Program, Events & Education Coordinator, Township of South Frontenac will speak to the Open Farms event planning and execution.

6. **Reports to the Community Development Advisory**

7 - 17

- a) **2021-118**
Community Development Advisory Committee
Open Farms 2021 Final Report

Be it Resolved That the Community Development Advisory Committee endorses the community and partner engagement activities as outlined in Report 2021-116 and requests that staff report back with an Open Farms update in early 2022

18 - 22

- b) **2021-119**
Community Development Advisory Committee
Frontenac Ambassador Program Evolution

Be It Resolved That the Community Development Advisory Committee endorse the gradual changes to the Frontenac Ambassador Program as outlined in this report

23 - 27

- c) **2021-120
Community Development Advisory Committee
Frontenac Business Survey 2022**

This report is for information purposes only.

7. Communications

8. Other Business

9. Next Meeting

- a) The next meeting of the Community Development Advisory Committee is scheduled for Thursday, February 11, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. held in combination of in person and virtual electronic format and live streamed on the County of Frontenac's YouTube Channel.

10. Adjournment



FRONTENAC

Minutes of the Community Development Advisory Committee Meeting October 14, 2021

A meeting of the Community Development Advisory Committee was held in virtual electronic format, hosted at the County Administrative Office, 2069 Battersea Road, Glenburnie on Thursday, October 14, 2021 at 10:00 AM

Present Electronically:

Betty Hunter, Chair
Councillor Alan Revill, Council Liaison
Lisa Henderson
Deputy Warden Denis Doyle
Ella Vanderburgt
Marlene Spruyt
Greg Rodgers

Regrets:

Wilma Kenny, Vice Chair

Staff Present Electronically:

Jannette Amini, Manager of Legislative Services/Clerk (Recording Secretary)
Richard Allen, Manager of Economic Development
Joe Gallivan, Director of Planning and Economic Development

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. In the absence of the Vice Chair, Ms. Henderson offered to take on the roll, should the Chair need to exit the meeting.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

Moved By: Ms. Henderson
Seconded By: Councillor Revill

That the agenda for the October 14, 2021 meeting of the Community Development Advisory Committee be adopted.

Carried

3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof

There were none.

4. Adoption of Minutes

a) Minutes of Meeting held July 14, 2021

Moved By: Deputy Warden Doyle
Seconded By: Councillor Revill

That the minutes of the Community Development Advisory Committee meeting held July 14, 2021 be adopted.

Carried

5. Deputations and/or Presentations

- a) Mr. Alex Jansen** of the Kingston Film Office and **Mr. J Joly** provided an update to the Community Development Advisory Committee regarding the film & television opportunities in the region. A copy of the presentation is attached to the record in the Clerk's Office.

Mr. Jansen advised that any they are looking for private endorsements of the SEOPAF.

Mr. Rodgers exited the meeting at 10:29 a.m.

Mr. Joly provided an overview of the HOSC which is part of a bigger Kingston/Frontenac Film Strategy that will lay the groundwork to capture 1-2% of Ontario's \$2B+ sector within the next 10 years. Participants must be local, both living and paying taxes in the area.

A copy of the presentation was requested, which Mr. Jansen will provide.

The question was asked if the local Townships have been contacted or will this be the role of the County and the Committee. It was recommended to engage the local municipalities. Mr. Jansen and Mr. Joly agreed to reach out to the Townships. Through the RTO9 study they have been going through the DRO's directly and if there is an area requested, such as Verona, they will reach out to the local area directly.

6. Reports to the Community Development Advisory

- a) 2021-085
Community Development Advisory Committee
Destination Development Plan Progress**

Mr. Allen provided an overview of the report which was for information purposes only.

Ms. Hunter would like to see winter camping included which is a growing opportunity in the north. Mr. Allen confirmed we should be capitalizing on winter activities.

Councillor Revill asked what the “Region” is defined of to which Mr. Allen stated it is defined as Frontenac County.

**b) 2021-086
Community Development Advisory Committee
Regional Community Improvement Plan**

Moved By: Ms. Spruyt
Seconded By: Ms. Henderson

Be It Resolved That the Community Development Advisory Committee endorse the concept of creating a Regional Community Improvement Plan;

And Further That it be recommended to County Council that as part of the 2022-2026 budget deliberations, funding be allocated for a study to determine the feasibility and implementation options for a Regional Community Improvement Plan.

Carried

Again the question was asked what the “Region” is defined as to which Mr. Allen confirmed again it is defined as Frontenac County. He continued by providing an overview of the report and Mr. Gallivan provided an overview from a Planning perspective.

Mr. Rodgers re-entered the meeting at 10:47 a.m.

Mr. Allen noted the Tax Incremental Grant program which is useful as it allows the County to provide a grant for the difference in assessment value. It allows the municipality to delay, rebate or provide a grant in that amount to help pay for the development. The site itself funds the program and the County benefits from the assessment increase at a later date.

Councillor Revill noted historically that CIP’s were façade based to enhance the street scape and now there are a number of items that can be incentivized. He asked if there is any legislative that controls this. Mr. Gallivan noted that the Planning Act dictates what incentives can be included in a CIP. For example only a CIP can allow the tax incentive program.

**c) 2021-087
Community Development Advisory Committee
Shop Local Initiative**

Mr. Allen noted that Ms. Vandervelde’s last day at the County was last Friday as she has moved on to a new opportunity outside of the County. He provided an overview of the report which was for information purposes only.

**d) 2021-088
Community Development Advisory Committee
Indigenous Relationship Initiative**

Ms. Amini provided an overview of the report which was for information purposes only.

Deputy Warden Doyle also added how all of the municipalities are working together on this.

Ms. Vanderburgt noted that she works closely with Indigenous tourism and businesses in the area and would be happy to collaborate with staff on this as RTO has established relationships with the Indigenous Community.

Mr. Allen felt it important that this be brought to CDAC as this is a very broad community development initiative and we require your support to build those relationships.

7. Communications

- a) From Alison Vandervelde to the members of the Community Development Advisory Committee providing the Frontenac K&P Trail Business and User Survey 2020, Question 22 regarding ATV's

8. Other Business

Next week is Small Business Week and the County will be hosting event at the hotel on Wolfe Island. For those interested, please contact Mr. Allen and he will provide the link to the even.

9. Next Meeting

- a) The next regular meeting of the Community Development Advisory Committee is scheduled for Thursday, December 9, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. with the format pending any health restrictions.

10. Adjournment

Moved By: Deputy Warden Doyle

Seconded By: Ms. Vanderburgt

That the meeting hereby adjourn at 11:09 a.m.

Carried



Report 2021-118

Committee Information Report

To: Chair and Members of the Community Development Advisory Committee

From: Richard Allen, Manager of Economic Development

Date of meeting: December 9, 2021

Re: **Community Development Advisory Committee – Open Farms 2021 Final Report**

Recommendation

This report is for information only.

Background

In partnership with Tourism Kingston, South Frontenac Township, and Regional Tourism Organization 9, Frontenac County presented its fourth annual Open Farms event over the course of September 11 – September 17, 2021. The event included both in-person and virtual event programming and was produced with funding provided by the Government of Ontario.

The core goals of Open Farms have remained relatively consistent since 2018. A few adjustments were made in 2021 to reflect the event's growth and evolution:

1. Educate consumers about small scale agriculture
2. Increase awareness of farms and restaurants that serve local food
3. Provide the opportunity for producers to connect directly with consumers
4. Provide the opportunity for producers to start new long-term relationships with customers, restaurants, and other producers
5. Grow our region's reputation as a local food destination, to:
 - a. Create interest among visitors
 - b. Attract new agricultural operations and food and beverage businesses
 - c. Drive new opportunities for culinary and agri-tourism product development

[Report 2021-043](#) outlined the implementation plan for the 2021 event including considerations for future growth of Open Farms in Frontenac.

Comment**Open Farms 2021 Outcomes**

The Open Farms event in 2021 was multi-faceted, with a mix of in-person and virtual events featuring farms, farmer's markets, food, education and farm to table initiatives. The results of these initiatives are explored below.

1. Farm Visits

Since 2018, farm visits have been the cornerstone of Open Farms. In 2021, three farms participated in this way, and while this failed to meet the original goal of five to 10 farms, Farm Visits were still an important and successful component of the overall event, especially given the challenges of hosting in-person events at this time. New in 2021, pre-registration was required for all farm visits, farms were permitted to charge an admission fee (one did), and all farms were required to implement COVID-19 Health and Safety protocols. Following are a few highlights:

- Attendance varied across farms during the event:
 1. one farm reported welcoming 1 – 25 visitors
 2. one farm reported welcoming 51 – 100 visitors
 3. one farm reported welcoming more than 150 visitors
- All three farms indicated that more than 75% of the visitors they engaged with during Open Farms were first time visitors/customers
- Despite sales ranging from “poor” to “excellent”, all three farms indicated they would be very likely to participate during Open Farms in the future.
- In addition to product sales, participating farms reported the following benefits:
 1. “It was wonderful to see so many young families at our farm. Our goal is not so much product sales, as, literally, opening up our farm to people who rarely have the opportunity to experience farms.”
 2. “Really great connections with people who are inspired to try things on their land based on my success. “
 3. “Spreading the word about new products/ventures.”
- Participating farms suggested the event could be improved in the future by:
 1. increasing marketing toward specific geo-targeted audiences
 2. clustering activities to ensure a sufficient “draw” for visitors to multiple geographic pockets
 3. ensuring all farms are represented equally in marketing activities, including opportunities for earned media as much as possible

2. Open Farms Community Hub at Centennial Park

The partnership with South Frontenac Township allowed for the introduction of the Community Hub as a major component of Open Farms 2021. The Hub was the ideal addition to the event this year, given the limited number of farms willing to host visitors. It provided both producers and visitors a meaningful alternative to participate safely in the event. Ms. Amanda Pantrey, Program, Events & Education Coordinator at the Township of South Frontenac led the coordination of the Community Hub, and this dedicated resource from the Township enabled this component to be successful.

Following are some highlights:

- Approximately 1,600 visitors attended the Community Hub over two days. Postal code collection indicates that most visitors in attendance live in Frontenac County or the City of Kingston, but there were a number of visitors from farther away, including Toronto, Ottawa, Perth, Brockville, Gananoque and Belleville.
- A Satisfaction Survey was completed by 16 visitors. A few top highlights include:
 1. 15 of 16 respondents indicated this was the first year they have participated in Open Farms.
 2. Half of respondents indicated they met four to six new producers during the event, while two respondents indicated they met seven or more.
 3. All participants rated their experience as “good”, “very good” or “excellent”.
 4. 11 of 16 respondents indicated they made purchases or placed orders during the event, and 14 said it was very likely that they will make future purchases from the businesses they met during the event.
 5. 12 respondents said they learned something that will change the way they eat and buy local food.
- The hub included 15 “market” vendors, a beer tent operated by Harrowsmith Brewing Company, and two options for prepared food provided by local businesses The Cookery and Gilmour’s Market.
- A vendor satisfaction survey collected 14 responses, the results of which are attached as Appendix B, A few top highlights include:
 1. More than 60% of vendors who completed the survey indicated this was the first year they have participated in Open Farms. All respondents indicated they are likely or very likely to participate as a vendor during Open Farms in the future.
 2. Customer engagement varied widely between vendors, with reports ranging from 1-25 customers, to more than 150 customers.
 3. Many vendors indicated they engaged with first time customers during Open Farms – four said that 51%-75% were new customers, and five said

more than 75% were first time customers. All vendors indicated they also connected with other local producers, potential business partners, or community organizations.

4. Sales reports ranged from poor (1 response), to good (8 responses), to excellent (3 responses), with revenue figures ranging from less than \$200 (4 responses), to more than \$1,500 (2 responses).
 5. All vendors rated their experience as either good or excellent and indicated they are either likely or very likely to participate in Open Farms in the future.
- In addition to a shared presence by Frontenac County and the Township of South Frontenac, there were eight community organizations that attended the hub to engage with visitors about local food and agriculture:
 1. Southern Frontenac Community Services
 2. National Farmers Union Local 316
 3. Food Policy Council
 4. Loving Spoonful
 5. Kingston Frontenac Public Library
 6. Frontenac Federation of Agriculture
 7. Frontenac Paramedics
 8. Kingston Community Credit Union
 - KFLA Public Health hosted a COVID-19 immunization clinic on Saturday and administered 52 doses.

3. A Celebration of Agricultural Heritage at the South Frontenac Museum

The South Frontenac Museum welcomed visitors on Saturday and Sunday for an exploration of our region's rich agricultural roots. The Museum reported 45 visitors over the two days, a significant increase from the few weekends they were able to operate this summer, when they greeted an average of six to eight visitors per weekend. They were very pleased with the turnout. Most visitors stayed a long time and the docents felt that it was a very worthwhile experience.

4. Drive-in Movie

The Verona Free Methodist Church hosted a screening of the movie "Babe" at their parking lot drive-in theatre. This was an extension of a successful summertime series. During Open Farms, 22 cars were counted at the drive-in movie, which "broke their summertime record of 20 cars". The church accepted donations and offered a cash canteen.

5. A Showcase of Regional Farmers Markets

New this year, Open Farms included Farmers' Markets across our region and visitors were encouraged to maximize their discovery of local food by "market hopping" – visiting multiple markets over the weekend. Markets that were promoted under the umbrella of Open Farms included:

- The Frontenac Farmers' Market – was included as part of the Community Hub at Centennial Park, and information is found above.
- The Market at Wolfe Island Commons – reported that it was very busy during Open Farms. Their fundraising barbeque sold out in 45 minutes and there was demand for more. The local farm that provided the beef for the barbeque was on site and sold additional product to barbeque patrons.
- The Memorial Centre Market – reported 1,800 people visited the market during Open Farms, which is "right in line" with attendance over the summer.
- The Kingston Public Market – no information is available on the market.

If Markets are featured as part of Open Farms in the future, it is suggested that special attention be paid to strengthening the connection between the market experience and the broader event. Increased communication with the markets and increased participation in marketing efforts leading up the event would be helpful. During the event, there should be Open Farms signage and event brochures on-site.

6. Restaurants – "Open Farms Feature Menus"

Working with Tourism Kingston, this program was geared toward FeastON Certified Restaurants in Kingston, with the goal of having 5 to 10 local restaurants offering Open Farms themed menus over the course of the weekend. The addition of the program was meant to elevate the farm-to-table theme and drive visitors to multiple destinations throughout the region.

While there was significant interest from restaurants, many were unable to participate due to widespread staff shortages across the hospitality and tourism industry in the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Ultimately, two restaurants participated in the program, and the Hotel on Wolfe Island reported being very pleased with the program, and served 60 "Open Farms" local tasting meals on Sunday, September 12.

7. Virtual Q&A Program

Designed for school children, the virtual Q&A Sessions provided young people the opportunity to talk with real farmers. This component built on the highly successful 2020 series. The following information captures the performance of the series:

- Four sessions, eight panelists
- 13 unique classrooms (some participated more than once, for a total of 18 classrooms overall)

- Approximately 297 unique students (accounting for the classrooms that participated more than once, there were approximately 444 students in total)
- Farmers answered 49 questions directly from students, with additional questions from Ms. Vanderveide, there were approximately 75 questions over the series

8. Chef-Led Cooking Demonstrations

Working with local photographer and videographer, Suzy Lamont, two chef-led cooking demonstrations featuring The Hotel on Wolfe Island and Freedom Farms were produced and released as part of Open Farms. Both productions are great examples of evergreen content that can be used for future local food promotions. This initiative also serves as a proof of concept for additional productions. The Hotel on Wolfe Island has expressed interest in creating a series of cooking demos as part of their marketing and awareness building program.

To view the videos on Facebook, follow the links below”

- [The Hotel on Wolfe Island](#)
- [Freedom Farm](#)

Here are some highlights of the video performance on Facebook:

- Total reach: 10,200 people
- Total engagement: 329
- Total Link Clicks: 32

9. Plowing Matches

In the face of challenges presented by the pandemic, neither of the local matches – the Wolfe Island Plowing Match and the Frontenac County Plowing Match – were held this year. The Frontenac County Plowmen’s Association hosted a display of equipment and information at the Community Hub at Centennial Park.

Successes

This year’s event featured an expanded scope and a hybrid approach to delivery, introducing new elements such as the community hub, while keeping modified versions of previous Open Farms events held in person or online. Four key successes were noted as part of Open Farms 2021.

1. Partnerships

Open Farms 2021 was presented by Frontenac County in partnership with South Frontenac Township, Tourism Kingston and Regional Tourism Organization 9. Staff from

each organization worked closely throughout the summer to coordinate all event components, and each member of the core organizing team contributed significant value to the project.

While Frontenac County was responsible for overall project management, the event's success was a result of a very effective collaboration between the partner organizations. It is recommended that similar collaborative opportunities be pursued for future events.

2. Exposure to New Customers

The majority of vendors and participating farms reported that many or most of the customers they interacted with during Open Farms were new to them. This means that the event succeeded in achieving several goals:

- Provide the opportunity for producers to connect directly with consumers
- Provide the opportunity for producers to start new long-term relationships with customers
- Increase awareness of farms

3. New Ideas Tested

Open Farms 2021 evolved to include several new event components and models, which provided an opportunity to understand the demand for such products and explore the related logistics.

One such example is pre-registration for farm visits which benefitted at least one participating farm, and is a model that can easily be carried forward in future years.

This year's event proved that executing a hub and spoke style event that included multiple locations and combined "drop-in" components with those that require pre-registration, along with free and paid components can be a recipe for success.

The event also included both in-person and virtual event components, which proved to be a successful formula to meet the goals of the event during the pandemic.

4. Enthusiastic Participation

The Community Hub at Centennial Park provided the opportunity to work in new ways with many local producers and businesses. In many cases, business owners were enthusiastic to participate and/or support the event, and many have reported a desire for similar opportunities in the future. While local businesses may not have the capacity to spearhead similar initiatives on their own, there is a demand for these collaborative opportunities.

There was also an enthusiastic group of volunteers who supported the event, some of whom were previously unknown to event organizers. This demonstrates that there is a willing and untapped volunteer base for future community initiatives.

Challenges

Along with successes, several challenges made planning and hosting an event of this scale difficult. Four key challenges emerged from the 2021 Open Farms implementation.

1. COVID-19

Open Farms was planned at a time when provincial regulations related to events were in flux, and the evolving nature of those regulations and the associated implications presented significant challenges. Logistical decisions were delayed and/or had to be revisited multiple times to ensure compliance. This uncertainty also kept some farms and businesses from participating and limited opportunities to consider all potential service providers.

A COVID-19 Safety Plan was developed for Open Farms and reviewed twice by KFLA Public Health for accuracy and completeness. Measures were in place to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission leading up to and through the event, across all event locations. While many visitors and vendors expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in a safe event, there was some feedback from members of the public who were displeased about the safety measures in place.

2. Late Funding Announcement

Open Farms was supported with funding from the Government of Ontario, through the Reconnect Festival and Event Program. This funding made many event components possible and was pivotal in the events' overall success, however the successful grant recipients were not announced until early August. This resulted in the delay and/or revisiting of some logistical decisions.

3. Uncertainty in Partner Responsibilities

Collaborations involving multiple organizations can be difficult to manage and while the process of collaborating with partners during Open Farms was very effective, it was not perfect. Similar challenges can be avoided in the future by setting very clear partner roles at the outset and ensuring open and timely communication throughout. There will always be challenges when multiple organizations work together, and staff should be prepared to navigate these challenges while working toward common goals.

4. Growth Beyond the Core Mandate of Open Farms

While the event components were outlined in advance through the Reconnect grant application, clear boundaries were not established to limit the scope of the event. This led to growth outside the core mandate of the event. While this has allowed event organizers to better understand the demand for such large scale community events, it resulted an additional demand for staff time in 2021. Even with staff support from South Frontenac and a contracted event management resource working 2 days per week, staff contributed 360 hours (48 working days) to this year's event. In 2019, this was 198 hours or 26.4 working days.

Economic Impact Analysis

Based on the figures reported by participating farms (see Open Farms outcomes reported above), vendors and visitors to the community hub, County staff along with Kathryn Wood of Pivotal Momentum were able to put together a high level economic impact analysis for the 2021 event. Over the course of two days, a local impact of approximately \$150,341.40 can be attributed to Open Farms.

A similar analysis of the 2019 event attributes approximately \$210,588.53 of local economic impact for Open Farms. That event featured 10 locations, 9 of which were “Farm Visits” and the other consisting of a vendor village at the Frontenac Plowing Match. The 9 farms reported on average 800 – 1200 visits at each location.

At the time of writing, it would be difficult to say if the format of the event accounted for the 30% percent difference between years, or if perhaps the induced impacts would be lower due to concerns and regulations associated with protecting public health during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Discussion: Future Options for Open Farms

Open Farms began as part of the Advancing Economic Development in Frontenac County project, in response to South Frontenac Township’s desire to support its food and beverage sector. Since then, it has evolved to a regional initiative that included operators from all four Frontenac Townships as well as the City of Kingston in 2021. This year’s event piloted a partnership-based approach that allowed for the program to expand, but still relied heavily on the County for centralized leadership and coordination.

The [2020 Economic Development Service Delivery](#) Review recommends that the County Economic Development team should start playing more of a regional coordination role and be less involved in project execution at the Township or community level.

The support and success of the Open Farms event continues to grow, along with interest from various community and business interests, however, it appears that managing that growth does require a corresponding increase of County and partner resources.

Prior to making commitments for a 2022 Open Farms event, the following considerations should be discussed among stakeholders:

1. Are the goals associated with Open Farms still suitable goals for the region, and does Open Farms still serve those goals?
2. Given the intensive use of County resources to produce a single day or week long event, should the size and scope of the event be limited or further distributed?
3. Given the success of the event, are there other agricultural economic development efforts that could benefit from the County’s attention? Examples might include providing resources and training to assist farms in the creation of

their own events, working to strengthen the presence of local farmers markets or working directly with farms and local restaurants to strengthen and increase farm-to-table opportunities.

4. Does the agricultural community still need/want to participate in Open Farms? If so, what format of event is preferred?
5. Can event execution be better distributed among partners?
6. Considering the recommendations of the Economic Development Service Review, does Open Farms still meet the County's economic development mandate?

Next Steps

In early 2022 County staff will meet with farmers and partners to discuss desire to host an event, and what formats might work best from a stakeholder point of view. The questions above will be reviewed and based on direct feedback from farms and partners, and recommendations will be brought back to the Community Development Advisory Committee for discussion prior to making a recommendation to County Council.

Financial Implications

The 2021 Open Farms event was supported with funding from the Government of Ontario, through the Reconnect Festival and Event Program.

The County of Frontenac's operating budget for Open Farms 2021 was \$8,000 and Tourism Kingston contributed an additional \$8,000 towards the event. This \$16,000 was leveraged for a successful application to the Reconnect Festival and Event Program for a total event budget of \$32,000.

The economic impact of the 2021 event is estimated to be approximately \$150,341.40.

Strategic Priorities

At its meeting on June 19, 2019, County Council approved [Frontenac County Strategic Plan 2019-2022](#). This project is aligned with the intent of the priorities listed below.

Priority 1.2: Refine and invest in efforts to accelerate economic development — to grow businesses, attract more visits and expand the tax base.

Priority 2.1: To meet the needs of future capital projects, explore new sources of funding support (current and future programs), cost-sharing options and other potential economies.

Priority 3: Champion and coordinate collaborative efforts

Organizations, Departments and Individuals Consulted and/or Affected

Community Development Advisory Committee
Frontenac County Council and Staff
South Frontenac Township
Tourism Kingston
City of Kingston
Frontenac Federation of Agriculture
National Farmers' Union
Frontenac Farmers' Market
The Market at Wolfe Island Commons
Sharbot Lake Farmers' Market
Frontenac County Plowmen's Association
KFLA Public Health
Frontenac County residents
Kingston residents
Local farms and businesses
Regional Tourism Organization 9
Ontario Ministry of Food and Rural Affairs



Report 2021-119

Committee Information Report

To: Chair and Members of the Community Development Advisory Committee

From: Richard Allen, Manager of Economic Development

Date of meeting: December 9, 2021

Re: **Community Development Advisory Committee – Frontenac Ambassador Program Evolution**

Recommendation

Be It Resolved That the Community Development Advisory Committee endorse the changes to the Frontenac Ambassador Program as outlined in this report.

Background

Brand recognition was identified as a priority project as part of the Rural Economic Development Program “Advancing Economic Development in the Frontenacs through Collaboration”. The Frontenac Brand Ambassador Program was originally launched in September 2016 as a means to grow recognition for the regional Frontenac brand. In the ensuing three years, the program has grown to 190+ Ambassadors and has evolved to act as a business network for the Frontenac region, and has served as a sounding board for Frontenac County Economic Development Staff.

In September 2017, Ambassadors were surveyed for feedback on the program. Of the approximately 100 members at that time, 46 completed the survey. The complete redacted results accompanied [Report 2017-125 Frontenac Ambassador Program One Year Review](#) at the October 2017 CDAC meeting.

In September 2018, 45 Ambassadors responded to a similar survey. The complete redacted results accompanied [Report 2018-121 Frontenac Ambassador Program, Second Year Review](#) at the October 2018 CDAC meeting.

In the fall of 2019, an expanded survey was developed to assess the value of the Ambassador program and to gain feedback from the broader business community about the overall state of doing business in Frontenac. The survey was open in late December

until the end of January and received 190 responses. The complete survey results – were provided to the Community Development Advisory Committee in report.

In December of 2020, County Council received the [Economic Development Service Delivery Review](#) which recommends that the County shift its resources from direct business support to efforts for investment attraction, particularly as existing partners such as Frontenac Business Services also provide leadership for direct business support.

On October 25, 2021 County Council received the Planning & Economic Development Business Plan for 2022-2026. This plan represents a shift and evolution to business support activities for the Economic Development Team, primarily through an evolution of the Frontenac Ambassador program.

This report details some of the proposed changes associated with business support and the Frontenac Ambassador program.

Comment

As the County works to align with the recommendations of the Service Delivery Review, a shift in operations is required with regard to business support. The Frontenac Ambassador network has been an important resource for building relationships between businesses across the region, and strengthening the connection between the County and the local business community.

As the network infrastructure remains in place, the County is still in a position to serve as a key first point of contact for new and existing businesses, and provide support by connecting business owners to relevant resources. However, the County's primary interactions will be at network-wide or sector group level, and County staff should not play a role in providing direct business support at an individual level.

Growing the Ambassador Network

Overall, Ambassadors indicate the program is valuable, has facilitated new connections for businesses, and has positively impacted businesses in some way. The Ambassador Network will be maintained, and new businesses will be able to join through a short intake process and participation in the regular email communications provided by the County.

In 2021 the growth of the network slowed, as new businesses joined, others closed, moved or changed their focus. As such, the network size remained close to 190 for most of the year, and can be expected to remain at a similar size for 2022.

Concierge / Connector Approach

The Frontenac Ambassador Network and the regular communications facilitated by the County within that network are still considered valuable to the local business community. As such, the county will maintain regular communications with business community to broadcast relevant information about government programs and policies. Businesses will be invited to reach out to the County economic development team with their relevant

proposals, problems or other needs and staff will direct them to the most appropriate support.

Sector Based Roundtables

The primary vehicle for business engagement will be facilitated through a sector roundtable approach, focused on priority sectors. The majority of economic improvement in Frontenac County will come from the growth of existing businesses. The sector based roundtable program should first help these existing businesses grow and attract new businesses enter the local market. The roundtable participants may then identify complimentary businesses or growth opportunities for the Frontenac Economic Development Team and its partners to pursue. This approach to business collaboration is an effective economic development strategy to spark innovation and improve business growth.

To start, it is proposed that the first round tables would be aligned with the charter for economic development and the existing ambassador complement.

The Charter for Economic Development focuses on three pillars:

- Trips & Trails
- Food & Beverage
- Recreation Lifestyle

The ambassador network consists of approximately 190 active businesses. Sectors identified in the 2020 Business Survey indicated the following distribution:

- 13% Arts, Entertainment, and/or Recreation
- 12% Accommodation
- 10% Professional and/or Technical Services (i.e., design, insurance, accounting, marketing, consulting)
- 8% Retail
- 8% Food Production and/or Processing
- 8% Agriculture, Forestry and/or Fishing
- 7% Construction and/or Trades
- 5 Health and Wellness
- 4% Food Services (i.e. Restaurant, Catering, etc)
- 3% Home and/or Commercial Services (i.e., landscaping, security, property management)

- 3% Personal Services (i.e., spa, hair salon, etc)
- 0.5% Real Estate, Rental, and/or Leasing

Given the distribution above and the priorities established as part of the Charter of Economic Development, staff are recommending to begin with the organization of the following 3 round tables:

1. Tourism (including Accommodations and Food and Beverage Services)
2. Agriculture
3. Arts & Entertainment

Ambassador Program Priorities

As part of the development of the Frontenac Ambassador Network in 2018, five priorities were defined to guide support activities and business collaborations led by the County. The proposed approach to these priorities for 2022 is outlined below.

1. **Shop Local:** The County will continue to promote local businesses as part of tourism marketing efforts. The County will also support and participate in shop local campaigns, but will not lead or design new campaigns.
2. **Support Businesses:** As described above, the County will assume a concierge role, assessing business requests and connecting the business to appropriate supports at Frontenac Business Services, Townships or elsewhere.
3. **Tourism Promotion:** The County will continue to lead Tourism promotion for the region through www.visitfrontenac.ca, visitor guides and fulfilling the recommendations of the [Destination Development Plan](#).
4. **New Business Attraction:** The County will play an increased role in business attraction efforts in 2022.
5. **Improve Communication:** The County will continue to assist with business communications efforts through regular communications sent to the broader Ambassador network.

In summary, County staff will remain present and available to businesses in Frontenac County, including ambassadors, however the focus of efforts will be to leverage the business community in order to provide support and advice to each other through sector roundtables and to attract new business interests to the region through the success stories of local business.

Strategic Priority Implications

Priority 1.2: Refine and invest in efforts to accelerate economic development — to grow businesses, attract more visits and expand the tax base.

Priority 3.2: Play a leadership role on communications to promote shared messaging for all regional initiatives such as economic development, tourism and lifestyle opportunities, and broadband and cell services.

Financial Implications

Initiatives described in this report are funded as part of the annual budget allocation for the Frontenac Ambassador program.

Organizations, Departments and Individuals Consulted and/or Affected

Members of Community Development Advisory Committee
County Council & staff
Township of Frontenac Islands
Township of South Frontenac
Township of Central Frontenac
Township of North Frontenac
Frontenac Community Futures Development Corporation
Residents of the County of Frontenac
Local Businesses



Report 2021-120

Committee Information Report

To: Chair and Members of the Community Development Advisory Committee

From: Richard Allen, Manager of Economic Development

Date of meeting: December 9, 2021

Re: **Community Development Advisory Committee – Frontenac Business Survey 2022**

Recommendation

This report is for information only. It is intended to solicit comments from the Committee regarding the annual business survey.

Background

In the fall of 2019, an existing survey distributed to Frontenac Ambassadors was expanded to gain feedback from the broader business community about the overall state of doing business in Frontenac. This first annual survey was open for the month of January in 2020 and received 190 responses. A summary was provided to the Community Development Advisory Committee in [Report 2020-075](#). However, by this time businesses were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 global pandemic, and the reported information was no longer relevant.

The survey was conducted again in January of 2021, soliciting 143 responses. In addition to asking the questions outlined in the 2019 survey, new questions were added specific to the COVID-19 Pandemic. A summary of findings was provided to the Community Development Advisory Committee in [Report 2021-054](#).

Comment

This year the County will utilise the Engage Frontenac website to capture survey responses from the business community. In addition questions asked in previous surveys, this survey once again asks about the effect of COVID-19 on business operations and asks expanded questions concerning tourism.

Draft questions have been attached to this report as Appendix A. County staff would welcome feedback and suggestions from the committee with regard to the survey.

The survey will launch on January 3, 2022 and remain open for responses until February 1. A social media campaign and set of incentives will be used to help attract responses from the business community.

Strategic Priority Implications

Priority 3.2: Play a leadership role on communications to promote shared messaging for all regional initiatives such as economic development, tourism and lifestyle opportunities, and broadband and cell services.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Organizations, Departments and Individuals Consulted and/or Affected

Frontenac Business Services
Regional Tourism Organisation 9: Southeastern Ontario
Regional Tourism Organisation 11: Ontario's Highlands
Township of Frontenac Islands
Township of South Frontenac
Township of Central Frontenac
Township of North Frontenac
The Frontenac Business Community

2021 Business Survey Questions

Section A: Business Information

1. Business Name
2. Business Website
3. Township
4. Sector
 - a. Accommodations
 - b. Food Services (Restaurant, Catering, etc)
 - c. Food Production and/or Processing
 - d. Agriculture, Forestry or Fishing
 - e. Arts & Entertainment
 - f. Construction and/or Trades
 - g. Manufacturing
 - h. Mining, Quarrying and/or Aggregates
 - i. Professional Business Services (Design, Accounting, Insurance, Consulting, Marketing)
 - j. Real Estate
 - k. Personal Services
 - l. Automotive Sales and/or Service
 - m. Property Management Services
 - n. Health & Wellness
 - o. Other
5. How long has your business been in operation?
6. How many people are involved in running your business?
7. What type of space does your business occupy
8. Which of the following statements best describes your primary reason for being in business?
9. Where are the majority of your customers located? (select all that apply)
10. Did you increase overall physical space occupied by your business in 2021?
11. Did you make physical improvements to your business property in 2021?
12. Compared to 2020, did your staff team change in 2021?
13. Did you purchase any equipment in 2021?
14. Did you change any products or services in 2021?
15. Which local support agencies have you worked with?
 - a. Frontenac Business Services // Frontenac CFDC
 - b. Frontenac County Economic Development
 - c. St. Lawrence College Employment Services
 - d. Kingston Economic Development
 - e. Launch Lab
 - f. OMAFRA
 - g. MEDJCT
 - h. Other
16. How do you feel about the business climate in Frontenac County right now?
17. Are you part of the Frontenac Business Ambassador Network?
 - a. IF NO: Would you like to be part of the Frontenac Business Ambassador Network?

Section 2: Pandemic Orientated Questions

18. Overall, how was business in 2021?
 - a. Very Bad
 - b. Not Great
 - c. Okay, I suppose
 - d. Good
 - e. Amazing!
19. Has the US/Canada border closure impacted your business?
20. How is business now compared to before the pandemic?
21. How were sales in 2021 compared to previous years?
22. How has COVID-19 negatively affected your business?
23. How has COVID-19 positively affected your business?
24. What was your experience with the following relief programs?
 - a. Ontario Small Business Support Grant
 - b. OTRP – Ontario Tourism Recovery Program
 - c. CERB – Canada Emergency Response Benefit
 - d. CEWS – Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy
 - e. Ontario-Canada Commercial Rent Assistance
 - f. CEBA – Canada Emergency Business Account
 - g. RRRF – Regional Relief and Recovery Loans
 - h. Digital Main Street Transformation Grant
25. Is it likely that your business will need to close permanently as a result of COVID-19?

Section 3: Tourism

26. Is your business involved in Tourism?

IF YES, Continue to Q27

IF NO, Skip to Section 4

27. Which Tourism Agencies have you worked with?
28. What was your experience with the following tourism programs
29. Does your business provide accommodations?
 - a. IF YES: What is the primary form of lodging offered?
 - i. Hotel/Motel rooms
 - ii. Bed & Breakfast
 - iii. Short-Term Rental (AirBnB, VRBO)
 - iv. Cabin Rentals
 - v. RV Camping
 - vi. Tent Camping
 - vii. Other
 - b. IF YES: How busy were you in 2021?

Section 4: Looking Ahead

30. What are the top 3 benefits to growing your business in Frontenac County?
31. What are the top 3 challenges to growing your business in Frontenac County?
32. As a region, are there opportunities we should be aware of, or trends we should take advantage of in the next five years?
33. As a region, are there threats we should be aware of, or prepare for in the next five years?
34. How do you feel about the future of doing business in Frontenac?
35. If you have any other comments about doing business in Frontenac, please share.