

Synopsis of September 2009 Focus Group Discussions

Thank you to all who took time to participate in the focus groups discussions. It is with the tax payers input that we chart our townships direction into the future. The following is a synopsis of each of the areas discussed in the focus groups.

1.0 Economical

1.1 What strategies would lead to growth in rural industrial development?

- The development of the 200 acres on James Street South which presently has the industrial designation
- The township should address the barriers that exist to allow for secondary businesses on land zoned agriculture
- The township must lead the changes locally, at the county level, with our neighbours and the township was encouraged to take risks
- Promotion of our area
- Educational opportunities to encourage innovation and new possibilities

1.2 What strategies would lead to growth in rural residential development?

- To allow for the severances of surplus farm houses
- For the township to separate from Perth County
- Through awareness and promotional activities of the area
- To expand our hamlet boundaries
- To invest in the settlement areas

1.3 What strategies would support and promote existing agricultural production?

- Through the promotion of “Buy Canadian”, and to find a way that farmers can value add on farm
- The township should continue to maintain the quality of our infrastructure
- The improvement of the distribution system for local food, and the attraction of food processors
- Tax Incentives
- Identify food/agricultural trends to assist our agricultural sector.

1.4 What strategies would lead to diversification of existing agricultural production into secondary agricultural business?

- The development of partnerships with the transportation industry and to develop a distribution center
- Opening local processing facility for products i.e. an abattoirs
- Having policies/bylaws that support diversification
- Being able to develop agriculturally useless lands
- To evaluate local, provincial, and federal obstacles and resources available to the township

2.0 Environmental

2.1 What strategies would lead to the promotion and increased use of alternative and renewable energy sources?

- The township should lead the way
- The development of public and private partnerships
- The township should subsidize environmentally friendly products i.e. Composters
- Thru education moving to motivating our citizens to become active

2.2 What strategies would lead to cost effective waste reduction programs?

- The increase of taxation on non-recyclable items
- Increase recycling beyond the Blue Box program
- The creation of a viable composting program
- To provide a program for hazardous waste disposal

2.3 What strategies would foster and promote tree retentions and tree planting?

- The availability of subsidies for the planting of young trees and for old tree maintenance (an Arborist)
- The education of our public; as to the value trees provide our environment, possibly by the use of social groups; awareness of programs regarding tree requirements for proper growth
- To develop a 20 – 30 year vision/plan for forest coverage
- To review the present rules and regulations and possibly bring back the programs from the Water Conservation Program to care for trees

3.0 Cultural

3.1 What strategies would retain youth in the community?

- Making it possible to have alternate businesses of farm which would provide a source of local mentoring
- To provide gathering places by maximizing the use of existing schools, fairs, sports facilities for sports, arts and recreation
- To support education/apprenticeship programs
- To allow the severances of existing housing and to support new home development to ensure that there is a community to live in

3.2 What strategies would lead to community development to enable local food production and rural attractions?

- To challenge the local and provincial barriers around land use and the number of employees
- To develop a central distribution location i.e. a farmers market, food depot or livestock terminal
- To encourage our three local service groups to work collectively towards the creation of festival/event
- To investigate the availability of a national market that would complement what we can produce in Perth South
- To encourage entrepreneurs

4.0 Social

4.1 What strategies would promote the quality of life and benefits of a rural lifestyle to attract new residents?

- To allow the severance of surplus farm houses under flexible conditions
- The expansion of water and waste water services that would allow the growth of our hamlets
- The development of industrial lands
- Addressing the provincial governments barriers
- The cleaning up of our environment i.e. Bio-sludge dumping

Where are we today?

Master Servicing Study

In 2009 the township hired Stantec Consulting Ltd. to prepare a preliminary analysis and recommendations for moving forward with water and waste water servicing for Sebringville and St Pauls. This report is public document and available at the township office or on our web site.

Given the small size of the existing communities with regards to the number of building lots available the prime consideration is costs relative to the environmental benefits. Full servicing for Sebringville would conservatively range from \$59,700 to \$64,700 per property, for the Perth South properties only. St Pauls would cost approximately \$93,000 per lot for full servicing. The cost for full servicing of the properties is prohibitive. After receiving and reviewing this report the Economic Development Committee, staff, county planning department, Stantec consultant and property owners with lots available for development have met to review the studies findings. We continue to look for ways to develop our hamlets.

University of Guelph

The township has entered into a study with the University of Guelph's school of economic development and rural design. This study will be looking at the challenges and opportunities that face rural municipalities who are experiencing population declines.

The studies are around three themes:

- 1) Prospering with Stable or declining Population: Best Community Economic Development and Planning Practices for Rural Communities
- 2) Rural Non-Farm Development: Revisiting Rural land Use Policy (2000-2010)
- 3) Regional Development: Planning for Resiliency in the 21st Century – A Methodology and Approach for Communities Dealing with Climate Change and Peak Oil.

Surplus Farm House Severances

In 2009 the county council went through a review of their bylaws. With regards to surplus farm house severances the county voted not to change their bylaw, which means that they do not allow for severances. West Perth and Perth South were both in favour of changing this bylaw in order to retain housing and to maintain our assessment base. West Perth and Perth South have chosen to challenge the counties decision and will be taking this question to an Ontario Municipal Board Hearing in the summer of 2010.

Secondary Farm Occupation

In 2009 the county voted to change this bylaw allowing up to 2 non-family employees per secondary farm business and to increase the allowable square footage for the building required for this occupation to 4,036.6 square feet.

Extension of Services

St Marys and Perth South have been working together to extend water and waste water services on James Street South from St Marys into Perth South. This extension of services would apply only to the 200 acres of land that is presently zoned industrial.

Tree Planting

In 2009 the township implemented a tree planting program named "Tree Perth South". Residents may submit paid receipts to claim a rebate of 25% of their purchase price to a maximum of \$500.00. We are pleased to offer this program again in 2010, please check the Perth South web site for details.

Composters and Digesters

-In 2010 composters and digesters will be offered at a discounted rate. Composters will be available for \$25.00 and digesters for \$45.00, after a 50% Township rebate. To better understand the differences between these two products please go to the Blue Water Recycling web site, www.bra.org or call them at 1-800-265-9799.

E-Waste

-Did you know that you can drop off e-waste at our two landfill locations? See Perth South website under Landfills for a full list of what is accepted at the landfills.

Hazardous Waste

-Money has been allocated in the 2010 budget for a hazardous waste program. Hazardous waste programs are expensive, so we are presently looking for the most cost effective way to supply this program, details to be announced.

Official Plan

-In 2010 the council and staff will be exploring the value and possibilities of having our own official plan.