

Monthly Departmental Report

Planning & Strategic Initiatives

March 2023

The attached report shows development activity over the month of February 2023, as well as a year-over-year comparison for that month.

A Public Participation Opportunity was held March 1st to consider applications for two development agreements and a zoning map amendment, including:

1. Development Agreement for 9 North Adelaide Street to permit the conversion of an existing six-unit apartment building into an eight-unit building;
2. Development Agreement for 52 Hickman Street to permit a garden suite on the second floor of a garage.
3. A rezoning of 36/38 Beacon Street from General Residential to Open Space.

The PAC met March 6th to consider the above applications and made positive recommendations to Council for all three items. The PAC also received a presentation on the draft MPS and LUB by the Upland Planning. The committee was tasked with providing comment on the documents to be forwarded to the consultant for consideration and/or discussion.

With regard to the proposed apartment building at 155 East Victoria Street, following the PAC's negative recommendation in February, and at the applicant's request, Council deferred a decision on first reading and sent the application back to the PAC to review a revised proposal. The applicant is currently working on proposal revisions.

On Wednesday, March 22nd at 12 noon, a Public Hearing will be held regarding two applications for a:

1. development agreement at 3,4,5,7 Robie Street to permit the change of a non-conforming use; and a,
2. development agreement at 264 Church Street to permit a 98-bed care facility.

The Community Centre Feasibility Study is currently developing functional space programs based on the information and consultation completed so far. A meeting took place with YMCA board members on March 7th to inform them of the purpose and development of the study and to ask them to determine their level of interest in partnering on a facility.

The Town of Amherst, Cumberland Business Connector, and CBDC are sponsoring a 'Dream Business Entrepreneurship Program' hosted by Mashup Labs. The programming provides entrepreneurs with tools and training to grow their businesses. The first group of 15 people from around Cumberland County will begin the program on March 23rd. The TOA is sponsoring two of the participants.

On May 11th the Town is partnering with the Cumberland Business Connector and NSCC to organize a public information session for Amherst residents to learn about ways to convert space in their homes to rent to students and young professionals seeking temporary housing. This event is the first of its kind offered by NSCC and its municipal partners, with the hope that it can be replicated in other communities across the province.

The Amherst Downtown Business Association met on March 9th to discuss two streams of activities for 2023. Downtown improvement projects such as Mural Upgrades and the LaPlanche Street corridor revitalization. Community Events such as Summer Night Markets, a Summer Music Concert and participation in the Town-led Ester Fest were discussed. The Association has a deep passion for the Town of Amherst and discussions on lofty issues such as housing and population growth in Downtown Amherst were had.

The Cumberland Business Connector Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge ended on Wednesday, March 8th. A Pitch Night was held for 5 finalists from Amherst and across Cumberland County who presented their projects to a panel of 3 judges. Tessa Spicer, of Blenders and Beyond ice cream, smoothies and milk shakes from Malagash won the grand prize of \$1500. She plans to grow the business with additional product offerings and advertising.

NS Works is organizing the 2023 Job Fair at the Amherst Stadium on May 17th. The TOA is a sponsor of this event and will be participating in the tradeshow. The Job Fair was a huge success in 2022 with many employers hiring new employees during and after the show.

The Cumberland Chamber of Commerce is hosting a Meet the Mayor breakfast with our own Mayor Kogon on March 21st, for the local business community. This event will be at the CCUBIC Boardroom from 8:30am to 10:00am. The Chamber will hold its AGM on April 27th at the Dr. Carson & Marion Murray Community Centre in Springhill. The keynote speakers will be a panel that will discuss keeping youth employed in Cumberland County.

The Cumberland Chamber of Commerce has released the 'Join Us in Cumberland' campaign inviting skilled workers from all over the world to relocate to Cumberland County. Their new website JoinUsInCumberland.ca is active and a marketing campaign is underway. As part of their commitment to support small businesses, the Chamber is partnering with the YMCA of Cumberland and the Community Kitchen on April 12th at the YMCA Amherst location to host a workshop on creating a balance between business and life.

The 2022/2023 Gritty to Pretty program has been extended from March 31 to October 31, 2023 to allow time for participants to complete their projects.

Work continues with the NS Dept of Environment and Climate Change (NSDECC), Nature Challenge Funding, with two potential properties in the North Tyndal Wellfield Protection Zone being appraised. Both property owners have expressed willingness to negotiate and efforts are being taken to close these acquisitions by end of the March 31st fiscal year. The Federal government has extended the Nature Challenge funding and staff anticipate that a contribution agreement extension in the coming weeks will extend the program to 2026 with approximately \$350,000 in funding per year.

Town of Amherst Major businesses of Maritime Pride Eggs and WonderBrands have committed once again to generously support the French Toast Festival. This festival will be able to provide meals for over 500 students in our area.

Task Updates:

Task: LED Proposal for new 'Smart LED Streetlights'

Update: FCM program administrator advised that the project is not eligible for FCM funding. Staff are reviewing alternative options for Council review.

Status: Ongoing

Task: Blaine Street and Ottawa Avenue Acquisitions

Update: A draft Agreement of Purchase & Sale for the Blaine property is complete and being reviewed by the purchaser.

Status: Ongoing

Task: Hotel Levy Report

Update: A follow-up memo was provided to Council in February. Further action is pending the County having the appropriate staff.

Status: Paused

Task: Recognition of Local Businesses

Update: A memo is included on the March COW agenda.

Status: Completed.