

MEMO

TO: Mayor Kogon and Members of Council

FROM: Andrew Fisher, Director of Planning & Strategic Initiatives

DATE: March 20, 2023

RE: **Strategic Priorities - March update**

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update with respect to Council's existing priorities. As previously noted, the November 29th Strategy Priority Planning Day confirmed a general consensus around the organization's Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles. A desire to change some of the priorities was identified. Attached is a draft 'Priorities on a Page' document that reflects the Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles that remain the same except for the suggested inclusion of "socially" into the Mission statement. Other potential priorities, some new and some existing, were also identified for further discussion, including:

Industrial Park Expansion	Chignecto Isthmus Flood Risk
Social Needs (includes strategies)	Community Vibrancy
Drugs and Addiction	Municipal Collaboration
Asset Management	Active Transportation

A report on the updated Strategic Priorities with plans to address the priorities and a revised reporting structure is being prepared. A meeting will be scheduled in the coming weeks to present the revised priorities for 2023 for Council's consideration.

In the meantime, the following provides a status update on the existing 2022 strategic priorities.

1. The development and construction of a **new community centre**.

Staff and the consultant met with YMCA board members March 7th to present the work completed so far in the feasibility study and to provide context as to what is being contemplated with respect to a new centre. The board has been asked to determine in more detail under what circumstances they are willing and able to be on board as a major partner.

2. A complete review of the **Town's Municipal Planning Strategy**.

First drafts of the documents were delivered to the PAC at the first of February to provide a month to familiarize members with their content. The consultant provided the PAC with an overview of the drafts in early March and the committee have been tasked with providing

comments and questions by March 24th. Updates and related documents remain available at planamherst.ca

3. A complete **review of the committees of Council**, Council's participation on external boards and committees and **all Town policies and bylaws**.

Review of specific policies and bylaws is ongoing each month based on a schedule included in a procedure for this task.

4. The potential expansion of the **Amherst and Area Industrial Park**.

Council have instructed staff to enter into negotiations to purchase lands that may serve to address this priority, or at least significantly impact how this project moves forward. These negotiations have stalled. A refocus of this priority is being considered in the 2023 strategic priority setting exercise.

5. Continuing to foster the conditions to **facilitate business development**.

Work to address this priority is detailed in the Business Development section of the Planning & Strategic Priority Monthly Report provided in this package.

6. Continuing the work that has been ongoing to **ensure community vibrancy**

The shelter is open and doing well with no major incidents. Work is starting on community engagement to advise on a strategy to make our community more inclusive and equitable.

7. **Attracting people to live in Amherst** by ensuring it is an inclusive, welcoming community in which **to live, work and play**

Our new community navigator Allison Watson started on February 27th. Allison is working with the three-volunteer recruitment, retention and appreciation committees to support their efforts.

The Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee has approved the draft strategic plan and will be forwarding to each respective council the action items attached to the plan. One of these initiatives is around Youth outreach and engagement. To this end we are looking for approval from Council to partner with Hailie Tattrie researcher from Mt SVU and Mitacs to do a comprehensive study on youth resiliency and barriers to engagement.

8. Promotion of the history and culture of Amherst through **continued festivals and events that celebrate our heritage and culture**

Coming up this month is the French Toast Fest. Ten restaurants are participating this year and activities will run from March 27- April 2. Planning is underway for an evening for appreciation of the Arts. Led by Councilor Fawthrop, over 70 people have been invited and a Facebook event has been created to spread awareness about the meeting on April 12, 2023 at

6 p.m. at the Community Credit Union Business Innovation Centre. It is hoped that a committee will form to identify, support and encourage more events in our community. The Town of Amherst is submitting a bid to host the 55+ provincial games in 2025.

9. **Addressing drugs and addiction**

Chief Pike and other provincial representatives continue to meet on the Atlantic Meth Strategy meetings, sharing information, trends and providing education on the subject of Methamphetamine and other drugs as well as the kinds of harm they inflict on our community. As a result of a focus on these issues, our partners in New Brunswick have been successful in making several arrests that have impacts on drug operations in our province as well.

Our Street Crime Unit and Major Crime Unit continue to invest their time in investigations and information concerning drugs and drug use that affect Cumberland County residents and we have been making connections to other jurisdictions, which requires coordination and cooperation from other agencies. It can be very difficult when many of the people involved do not live in the immediate jurisdiction or are transient, often moving every 2-3 weeks.

These kinds of files require an investment of time and effort by investigators, often taking months to see results. Even when arrests are made and charges laid, investigative files can continue for years before conclusion.

10. Addressing the need for **sufficient supply of suitable and affordable housing in Amherst**

As noted in the Planning & Strategic Priorities Departmental report, five housing developments are in various stages of the approval process. Staff are in discussions with developers interested in higher density apartment buildings, as well as, lower density subdivision in multiple areas of town.

Following Council's award of the RFP for a multi-unit residential proposal on the former Blaine Street lands in January, the draft agreement of purchase and sale is being reviewed by the proponent. Last month Council approved the transfer of 8/10 Prince Arthur Street for the development of an affordable and supportive housing facility

The WET shelter facility is now operating.