



Date: Wednesday, October 23, 2024

From: Niall Lobley, CAO & The Climate Action Working Group

Subject: Committed to Change – 2024 Update

Report CAO2024-033

This document and its attachments are public and available in an accessible format upon request.

Recommendation

That report CAO2024-033 being a report on 2024 activities under the Committed to Action Corporate Climate Action Plan be received for information.

Background

In November 2023, Council adopted Committed to Change: Georgian Bluffs Corporate Climate Action Plan. This plan detailed the existing work that has been achieved in seeking to address impacts to climate change and sought to pave the way for ongoing and increased work to reduce the climate impact of the operations of the Township.

Analysis

Over the past 12 months, staff and community have made significant strides toward delivering on the work outlined in Committed to Change. Staff wish to acknowledge and thank the efforts of GBCAT Members and particularly the members of the Climate Action Working Group (Ann Schneider, Danuta Valteau, Rodger Martin, Luc Zandvliet, John Anderson, and staff from the Township) in helping to move forward action under both Committee to Action and the Going Green in Grey plans.

Some of the highlights of this work are:

Environmental Initiatives Coordinator

Staff are delighted to welcome Riel Warrilow to the position of Environmental Initiatives Coordinator. Riel started in early October after a competitive recruitment process and is settling into the role at Georgian Bluffs. Riel is already wrapping her head around tackling priorities such as Energy Demand Management Plans, updates to the PCP



Calculator, and seeking to lead work on pollinator gardens as well as supporting programs such as implementing the Green Fleet Strategy and looking to how climate impacts can be addressed or avoided through Township operations.

Green Fleet Work

The Climate Action Working Group is a small, dedicated team of community volunteers and staff who are focussed on helping both support the Township in meeting the challenges of Committed to Action, but also toward leading community wide changes to reduce community-based climate impacts and encourage a more sustainable and less impactful way of life across Georgian Bluffs (and surrounding areas).

The group has significant relevant experience which they are happy to share with the Township. Roger Martin is a member of this group and has a long career in the truck body industry and extensive contacts across North America. Roger is passionate about the transition to green fleets and has been incredibly supportive in working with staff to develop a transitional plan for much of the Georgian Bluffs Fleet.

Staff will continue to work with Roger over coming months as the Green Fleet Strategy is included within longer term fleet asset management planning.

Fleet Use Policy

In late 2024, a new Fleet User Policy will be developed to guide the use of Township vehicles. This will provide policy direction that vehicles must be operated with concern for environmental impacts. This includes moderating driving behaviors to avoid excessive acceleration and hard braking (which increase fuel use and GHG emissions) and also includes an anti-idling policy to avoid vehicles being left running when not required (such as to power external equipment, or preheating). Staff educational, training and awareness sessions will be developed in support of the new policy in 2025.

EV Chargers

Council established budget and directed staff in 2023 to bring at least two EV Chargers to the Township. The Township sought to work with Grey County and neighbouring municipalities on a regional program, supported by Ivy Charging network to be part of a network called Rural ReCharge. This program is reliant on provincial or federal government funding.

Through 2023 and 2024, staff developed proposals for two sites and work with Rural ReCharge partners on submitting a funding application to the Provincial ChargeON program. While a decision on funding was anticipated in spring it has since been pushed into fall. Rural ReCharge is also seeking federal funding through the Zero Emission Vehicle Incentive Program (ZEVIP).



In the meantime, staff had been able to connect with RTO7 (Regional Tourism Organisation, Region 7) who had funds to support EV Charger growth in tourism related areas. In summer, 2024, staff were approached by the German Solar Corporation, a local family-owned business seeking to inspire local investment in improved EV Charger infrastructure, who, in partnership with the nationwide network provider Flo, offered to help apply for funding and place private equity into EV Chargers.

As this work could be completed with minimal administrative support from the Township and at no costs (whereas under Rural ReCharge the Township needed to invest 50% of costs at least) and could be delivered on a much quicker schedule (chargers installed in 2024; Rural ReCharge is anticipating later 2025 at this point), staff have moved forward with a partnership with Flo and German Solar.

An EV Charger (DC fast, 100kwhr) has been installed at Sarawak Family Park. It is anticipated that a second unit will be installed at the Administrative Office before the end of 2024 and a third, at Shallow Lake Arena, possibly in late 2024, or early 2025. Chargers at each site are upgradable in future, both in respect to the number of hook ups provided and in respect of speed of charge.

Further, the German Solar Corporation is seeking to work with the Township to provide solar canopies, at no cost to the Township in these locations that provide solar electricity back to the grid, offsetting the use by community members using these locations for charging.

Staff note that in the first month of operations, 72 charging sessions were completed by 53 users and more than two tonnes of CO₂e were offset by electricity use rather than traditional gasoline engines. Over time, these new chargers will be promoted as part of the Rural ReCharge network as it evolves and German Solar are seeking partnerships in other communities, including with private sites and municipalities toward supporting a growing local network of charging facilities.

Community Improvement Plan

The Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is one way in which the municipality can help inspire and support increased community activity in addressing climate related pressures and seek to inspire environmental improvements across community. In developing the CIP, staff have sought to embed programs that specifically address climate and environmental pressures. It is expected that the CIP when adopted, will support community-based activity to, amongst other things:

- Brownfield remediation – to support appropriate redevelopment of brownfield sites which can include agriculture, commercial or industrial lands.
- Energy Efficiency Conversion Grants to support small scale renewable systems and improve energy efficiency of buildings.



- Environmental Improvement Consulting Grant – to support property owners in engaging a consultant to help provide advice in respect to environmental improvements.
- Landscape grants that can help with permeable paving, invasive species.

Tree Planting

Trees were planted at the administrative offices in late 2023 and tree planting has continued in 2024 with new trees being added to replace some lost through the affects of EAB at Sarawak Family Park. Staff are looking at further opportunities for tree planting across the Township over coming months towards contributing toward the canopy goals outlined in Going Green in Grey.

Pollinator Friendly Gardening

Work has started as per the direction of Council earlier this month, to address supporting pollinator friendly gardens. It is hoped that the Township will be able to implement a demonstration site at the Administrative Offices over the course of 2025 and that community support through educational events and activities will help residents to appreciate alternative ways to manage gardens for increased biodiversity.

Waste and Garbage Management

Significant work has been completed in 2024 on the new RFP for Waste Management Services which is anticipated to be out for bids later in 2024. This document provides the framework for garbage collection services from 2026 onwards. Garbage collection is a significant financial and environmental impact from municipal operations. While indirect, as these services are provided by a contractor, the Township is working hard to build into this RFP requirements around environmental work and climate impact reduction so that the Township is able to make decisions on future services based on service level, costs, as well as environmental and climate impacts.

Whole Building Energy Monitoring

The systems to monitor and understand in detail, energy use at the Administrative Building and Shallow Lake Arena were installed during late summer 2024. Staff are looking forward to being able to access and understand how energy is being used and put into place measures toward reducing this over coming years.

Greener Homes Tour & Home and Cottage Expo

In early May, the municipality was part of the green zone at the Owen Sound Home and Cottage Expo and was sharing the work being completed as part of the Committed to Action plan, how residents could build and renovate in the Township in a 'greener' way



and to promote the Foodcycler. Over the course of two days alongside the many other exhibitors at the event. Staff spoke with residents, homeowners and cottage owners from across the Township about the ways in which the municipality can support climate-based decisions and improvements. On June 16th, the Climate Action Working Group and Township hosted the Greener Homes Tour, an innovative event whereby community could visit homes across the Township and speak with property owners about changes they had implemented in respect to environmental improvements or climate action. From on and off grid solar, to EVs, heat pumps, and sustainable food gardening practices, more than 200 residents attended a dozen homes across the Township. Many of the homeowners had contractors on site to help answer technical questions and the day was a great success.

Foodcycler

The Township has sold 143 food cyclers in 2024, in addition to the 100 that were sold in 2023. In 2024, these were sold in two lots, with the first 100 being sold out in a few weeks. A second order was received in late summer and is almost 50% sold. The Foodcycler program has been a significant success and a report later in 2024 or early 2025 will summarize the impact of this program on waste reductions. Staff at Georgian Bluffs have adopted a Foodcycler to help divert waste at the administrative building alongside implementing a K-Pod recycling program for all its facilities.

Invasive Species

The Township is undertaking plans for enhanced work on noxious weeds and invasive species in 2025. Council has prioritised this work and through initial budgets has supported increases to the budgets for work to address invasive species and noxious weeds. Alongside the programs in the CIP to provide support and incentive to landowners to address noxious weeds and invasive species, the Township is looking to appoint an Weed Inspector and is seeking to inventory and better understand, where invasive species and noxious weeds are and plan action to manage these.

Green Development Standards¹

Grey County continues to work on and develop a proposed Green Development Standard alongside the Counties of Dufferin and Wellington to provide a consistent

¹ <https://www.grey.ca/government/special-projects/green-development-standards>



framework for community and developers to help ensure that new housing is built to be sustainable and affordable over the whole life cost of home ownership. These standards are being developed to encourage developers to consider ways in which housing can be developed that is less impactful on the environment and that helps deliver efficiencies for homeowners over the long term. Township staff, and staff across Grey County, continue to be closely engaged in this project.

Going Green in Grey²

Going Green in Grey is the Community and Corporate Climate Action Plan adopted by Grey County. As a member municipality, Georgian Bluffs is a critical part of the delivery of this plan and continues to work closely with Grey County and other lower tier municipalities on furthering the work under this plan. An update report was recently shared with Grey County Council and is included with this report on works achieved to date in delivering on Going Green in Grey.

Youth Climate Conference

Township staff supported and participated in the 2023 Youth Climate Conference³ and the Township is supporting the 2024 event scheduled for November 7th, 2024. This event organised by the Sustainability Project⁴ and supported by the Learning for a Sustainable Future⁵ charity, Bluewater District School Board, Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board and local Climate Action teams, including GBCAT, invites more than 125 grade 6-8 students and 25 teachers from more than 25 schools across Grey and Bruce to participate in a day of learning, exploration and sharing of how youth across the region can and are contributing toward climate and environmental action.

GBCATs Repair Café

Alongside the work done by the Township, GBCAT (Georgian Bluffs Climate Action Team) including members from the Climate Action Working Group in partnership with the Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library has been making a significant impact through the running of the Repair Café which provides residents from across Grey County the opportunity to bring in damaged items or things that no longer work to

² <https://www.grey.ca/government/climate-action>

³ <https://www.thesustainabilityproject.ca/projects/regenerate-grey-bruce/inspire/ycac>

⁴ <https://www.thesustainabilityproject.ca/>

⁵ <https://lsf-1st.ca/>



see if they can be repaired. Through the efforts of in excess of 60 volunteers (sewers, carpenters, jewellers, darners, the clock doc, a leather worker, electronics repairers, bike repairers, generalists etc) many things have avoided the landfill. Since beginning in March of 2024 this monthly event has resulted in the free repair of more than 244 items. The efforts of all the volunteers of GBCAT, participants of the Repair Café are recognized and thanked for their leadership in helping to reduce waste!

Earth Day

GBCATs team and membership have been active supporters and part of the organisation of the Earth Day celebrations in Owen Sound over the past three years. Members have run events during the day, participated in the parade and led workshops in each of the past three years events. The Earth Day activities seek to raise awareness of global environmental changes and how residents and communities can come together to combat these.

Entering its 4th year, Earth Day Grey Bruce 2025 is planned for Saturday April 26th. The chosen theme is 'Building Green Communities' with a youth orientation on a green economy, education, and job opportunities around Georgian Bay and beyond. In addition to collaborating with M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre, the OSNGU Public Library, the Tom Thomson Gallery, and St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, EDGB organizers are seeking further opportunities for community engagement.

Earth Day is entirely funded through grants, and sponsorships from local businesses and individuals. The planning committee members are all community volunteers.

GBCATs Learning Support

In 2022, members of GBCAT were invited to present on climate change to the grade ten classes at OSDSS. Grade 10 (Science) is the first-time climate change is formally introduced to students in the Ontario curriculum.

Four members from GBCAT and one from the Owen Sound Climate Action Team (CATOS) covered basic climate science, talked about climate anxiety and climate action. Students engaged with our Climate Action Wheel and with our Warming Stripes Rug.

2024, will mark the third year the teaching team has returned to OSDSS.

Partnerships

The municipality is not dealing with Climate Change alone. Actions taken in 2024 have been in partnership with the Climate Action Working Team whose ongoing support, expertise and passion is recognised and much appreciated. The work of groups such as



Neighbourhoods North in the Township continue to support the priorities of Committed to Change and support actions being taken to address climate impacts. Staff continue to work in partnership with Grey County municipalities and Grey County through the Community of Practice for waste and for climate change.

Financial Impact

None; all activities completed were within the established budgets for the work undertaken.

Strategic Priorities

NA

Conclusion

Committed to Action was adopted by Council in November 2023. During the discussions on adoption, Council asked that staff bring back updates on progress against the plan. This is the first such update. The Township has worked collaboratively with the Georgian Bluffs Climate Working Group and GBCAT members and over the past year, significant success has been experienced directly against actions within the plan. In addition, continuing and expanding work across community has been important, reflecting on the role of the municipality as a leader for community, setting an example for others to follow. From youth engagement activities to green fleet strategies the Township has been involved in, led and supported significant work across Georgian Bluffs in helping shape a greener future.

Respectfully Submitted: Niall Loble, CAO