

Mono Council endorse Alliance's proposed Dufferin food charter

By Peter Richardson

A delegation from the Headwaters Food and Farming Alliance, part of the Headwaters Communities in Action initiative, has succeeded in a bid to have Mono Council endorse its proposal for a Food Charter and Action Plan for Dufferin.

Several surrounding communities have already endorsed the plan, designed to create a healthy and sustainable food system by using local seasonal foods. The plan will concentrate on the health of local residents, building healthy communities through local economic development and the supporting of local food and farming businesses.

As outlined to Council Tuesday, the Food Charter is a statement of values, principles and priorities for the community as they relate to food and farming. The charter would help to guide planning and policy with an eye to program development that can encourage a strong food system. Many communities in Ontario currently have such Charters, including London, Toronto and Simcoe County. The Charter focuses on six primary objectives: Environmental Sustainability, Food Access and Equity, Health and Wellbeing, Economic Vitality, Culture and Celebration and Agricultural Sustainability. In an online survey conducted last October, 97-100% of respondents shared the same values as the charter and 100% ranked its goals as important.

The Food Charter would support local municipalities in numerous ways. Local foods can be used to promote tourism to a region, which, in turn, encourages the growth of local food businesses. A charter can be instrumental in the strengthening of land use planning related to food production and food related businesses. It can also champion local events promoting agricultural heritage and locally grown foods.

Cultural events such as Toronto's highly successful Taste of the Danforth, which showcases Greek culture and foods, is a prime example of the possible results of a food charter.

Council was quick to see the potential for this initiative and to endorse the Charter and Mono's participation in the process.

Also on Tuesday, Council again visited the issue of access to the Violet Hill Pit being proposed by Greenwood Aggregates and a bid for a bylaw allowing the pit. The Town's contention is that the application is incomplete, due to the issue of access to Highway 89 not having been settled, pursuant to Sections 22(6.1) and 34 (10.4) of the Town Planning Act, while Greenwood contends that all the Act's requirements have been met. The latest discussions hinge around the recent addition of an optional haul route that would use 3rd Line and 30 Sideroad to reach Highway 89.

The town argues that this represents a new application and requires the process of applying be repeated, with a new Traffic Impact Study and background information updates. However, Greenwood insists that this is simply an optional approach and that they are intent on achieving the original application access to Highway 89, a direct access from the pit lands which the Transportation ministry has rejected.

Following the report from Planning Director David Trotman, Sam Greenwood addressed Council on the matter and presented his case that the original application was indeed complete and Council should consider that and make a decision so things could proceed. He noted that Greenwood has been doing business in Mono for 90 years and had operated an asphalt plant in the Town for 50 years, and in all that time there had been no problems in working with the town.

Mayor Laura Ryan thanked Mr. Greenwood for his input but recommended that Council return the issue to staff for further study and to deal with the issues of compliance outlined in Mr. Trotman's letter. Council voted to follow this recommendation.

In other business, CAO Mark Early and Web Specialist Fred Simpson presented Council with a detailed presentation for the implementation of Social Media outlets Facebook and Twitter to complement the already robust presence of the Town on the Internet. The report detailed how other communities are utilizing social media to engage their citizenry and provided an outlined policy for the Town to follow suit.

This brought forward an intense discussion of social media uses and possibilities amongst council members. Several admitted to not being particularly involved or knowledgeable about the ever-increasing presence of this phenomena, while the mayor explained that with her current Internet connection, or lack thereof, she is unconnected and putting her energies towards obtaining fibre? a reference to the latest source of connectivity, fibre optics, rather than dietary sources.

After lengthy discussions about the numerous advantages and potential pitfalls, it was decided that the Town would proceed with the implementation with the intention of carefully monitoring the process and results, so as to allow for any changes, tweaks, or broader adjustments that might be required, while bringing the Town fully into the Internet age, following further revisions to the proposed policy as outlined in the presentation. The revisions and additions will be presented at the next Council meeting.