

Report to Council

Report Title:	Bruce County Economic Task Force		
Prepared By:	Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer		
Department:	Finance		
Date:	July 14, 2020		
Report Number:	FIN2020-24	File Number:	C11FIN, D02
Attachments:	Letter from Bruce County Economic Task Force Sub-Committee Sub-committee Fees Review		

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number FIN2020-24 – Bruce County Economic Task Force, prepared by Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer for information purposes.

Report:

Background:

The Bruce County Economic Task Force was established in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to support economic stabilization, recovery and eventual growth within the County.

The task force is made up of economic development professionals, business owners, local stakeholders and municipal staff.

The task force has been busy gathering input on the impact of COVID-19 on local business and developing strategies to support those needs. Based on the data collected, a sub-committee was established to review a variety of fees. The sub-committee has shared this report with all the lower tier municipalities for consideration.

Analysis:

A number of fees have been presented by the broader business community for consideration for deferral or to waive. They include building permit fees, planning fees, development charges, business improvement area (BIA) fees and utility fees (water and sewer). This letter was sent to the lower-tiers for consideration since a coordinated approach through the County Task Force was a challenge due to unique municipal needs and financial situations.

The Municipality of Brockton does not currently have development charges, therefore this request would not be applicable to us.

The Municipality of Brockton does have a BIA, however any financial changes to the 2020 would need to come from the BIA Board and would impact the BIA levy rate and current approved budget. At this time the final tax bills are being processed and would impact the overall processing of the tax bills.

Most building and planning fees in the Municipality are related to residential and agricultural development and benefit more individual persons rather than a boarder segment of the Brockton population. In addition, the building department is a user pay service and not part of the overall tax levy, waiving these fees would have a direct financial impact on the building department and any changes must follow the process as outlined in the Municipal Act.

Water and Sewer fees are calculated to be completely user pay. As pointed out in the task force sub-committee report, underfunding the water system could lead to unintended consequences and impact the ability to sustain the system(s) into the future.

While staff have considered this request and have brought it forward for Council information, we do not recommend the deferral or waiver of any further fees at this time. However, the municipality continues to support our local business community, especially as they navigate the challenges of the pandemic recovery. As a result, the Municipality has already launched several initiatives to complement our existing business support programs that we feel are better suited to our unique community needs.

These initiatives include:

- **List of Community Resources:** Included essential businesses and business hotline. Posted online and distributed to all households in Brockton
- **Open for Business Listings:** Created online directory, published on Brockton website. Partnered with Walkerton BIA
- **GreyBruceHuronSTRONG:** Encouraged local businesses to register on site
- **Covid-19 Business Newsletters:** Distributed seven (7) to date and have tripled subscriber list. Included promotion of local businesses going “above and beyond” during COVID-19.
- **Covid-19 Business Supports:** Created separate web page on Brockton website
- **Durham Street Parkette:** Creating a public eating space with picnic tables, a hand-washing station and portable toilet in the vacant property formerly owned by the Wong family. Opening the parkette will assist the restaurants with offering take-out services and encourage patrons to stay downtown and shop.
- **Patios/Storefront Extensions:** Staff put into place guidelines to permit patios on Durham Street in Walkerton, to assist restaurants that must restrict their seating capacity due to the pandemic. Retailers may also find the extra space helpful with the social distancing requirements and handwashing and bathroom facilities.
- **Penalty and Interest:** The Municipality provided some financial relief to the residents and businesses of Brockton by waiving the penalty and interest fees on the outstanding tax balance from April – June.

Staff are all investigating ways to support the uptake in the Pivot/Adaptation Grant Program being offered by the County that have been in high demand and have seen funds exhausted to support all businesses in need. Funds in our current façade program budget can potentially be considered for this purpose. A further report will follow should this be an option. Staff will continue to work through the items in the draft economic

recovery plan approved by the Economic Development Committee (EDC), that is specific to The Municipality of Brockton and review existing funding programs to further support the business community and residents where possible.

Sustainability Checklist:

What aspect of the Brockton Sustainable Strategic Plan does the content/recommendations in this report help advance?

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| • Do the recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision? | Yes |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Cultural Vibrancy? | Yes |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Prosperity? | Yes |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to Environmental Integrity? | N/A |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to the Social Equity? | N/A |

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:

- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective? Yes

Deferral or waiver of fees suggested by the task force sub-committee could have long term impacts on essential municipal service. Reallocating or expanding existing resources will provide a better immediate return on investment and not lead to long term consequences.

Respectfully Submitted by:



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Reviewed By:



Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer