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**Date:** January 27, 2021  
**To:** Mayor and Council  
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**RE:** Open Streets 2021  
**Report No:** 1-2021

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## **AIM**

For Council to provide initial direction on the 2021 "Open Streets" summer event in downtown Kingsville.

## **BACKGROUND**

In June 2020, in response to COVID-19 and the economic impacts on local businesses, the Kingsville BIA presented to Council a proposal for an event on Main Street called "Open Streets."

The purpose of Open Streets was to make a way to support businesses in the downtown core while allowing people to spread apart to reduce the spread of COVID.

Council approved the 2020 Open Streets concept. Open Streets was to be a BIA event, with the Town informally agreeing to provide some support. The BIA had formed a committee to plan and implement the event.

2020 Open streets allowed businesses to expand their space to serve customers, kept people's distance to reduce the spread of COVID, and created foot traffic downtown. During Open Streets, people were able to drink alcohol on licenced patios. This was because the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario amended their regulation temporarily to allow licenced establishments to extend their physical premises in the form of an outdoor patio without the need to make an application to the Commission, provided specific criteria were met and subject to municipal approval.

The BIA is to be commended for initiating Open Streets and supporting a special event when all other activities were cancelled.

Unforeseen challenges occurred with Open Streets resulting in unplanned expenses to ensure the event was a success. The 2020 Open Streets event cost \$19,500; \$14,000 in staff overtime and \$5,500 in signage. These costs do not account for a tremendous amount of non-union staff hours who supported the planning, organization and monitoring of the event.

## **DISCUSSION**

Upon completing the 2020 Open Streets initiative, a review was done that included a community survey, a de-brief with the BIA and administration, who provided support.

The following items were learned:

- The BIA recommends that the Town takes over the lead of Open Streets from now on.
- In 2020 there was a lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities that needs addressing if moving forward. What is the role of staff? What is the role of a committee?
- Of the 141 people who responded to the community survey, approximately 80% were supportive or very supportive of the event.
- Challenges expressed through the survey included:
  - Cost to taxpayers through having multiple staff monitoring road closures,
  - Disruption to non-participating businesses,
  - Concerns that COVID could be spread, and
  - Traffic on side streets.
- The Town unexpectedly needed to assign staff to ensure the Open Street event could follow safety protocols.
- Having Open Streets the whole weekend was not needed, and it should be scaled back to a lower frequency, perhaps just on Saturday evenings.

There are multiple groups and people who would like to be part of the 2021 Open Streets initiative (Folk fest, possibly Highland Games, Art groups, etc.).

The Economic Development and Tourism Committee of Council recommended that funding was allotted in the 2021 budget. On January 13, 2021, Council approved \$25,000 from the Economic Development and Tourism budget to host 2021 Open Streets.

During the Council's budget discussion, it was asked who will lead the 2021 event and requested a report be brought back to Council.

On February 2, 2021, a group of volunteers, including the Mayor and Councillor Gaffan, met to brainstorm about Open Streets. It was suggested that Open Streets is held every Saturday evening from June 19, 2021, until September 11, 2020. Furthermore, it is proposed the street is closed at 5 pm, to reduce the impact to the business, and reopen at 11 pm. Administration has not decided if it can support this recommendation yet and will need to do further work and analysis before making recommendations of dates and times.

No final decisions have been made on when or how long Open Streets will be hosted. Multiple considerations would need to be reviewed, such as businesses' willingness to participate, staffing resources, Provincial COVID regulations, and legislation from the

Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario. Currently, we have no information regarding whether the rules for liquor licensing will be relaxed in the same manner as was done last year. There may be requirements or restrictions in the relevant legislation that place limits on this event.

Insurance for the event is covered under the Town's insurance. Any resulting claims will be subject to the Town's deductible of \$50,000 and have a negative impact on the Town's future premium increases. It is yet to be determined if participating businesses will be required to have insurance of their own.

The Town has legal obligations to close the street following traffic standards, which must be met. Administration is better positioned to assess and address the risks associated with hosting this event and have access to resources to address those risks in real-time.

It is recommended that Council create a 2021 Open Streets Advisory Committee, including the volunteers who met with the Mayor and Councillor Gaffan. This Committee and its members will not receive payment or an honorarium.

### **COMMENTS FROM THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM**

SMT is very supportive of Open Streets, seeing it as a means of promoting economic development and an opportunity to gather the community together again in person (albeit in a safe and COVID-friendly way).

Last year in 2020, there was confusion among staff about who was responsible for Open Streets, staff's role, and assigning work. This resulted in some situations that could cause liability for the Town, negative reaction from staff toward the event, and a failure to get other important work completed by staff when they were reassigned to do work assigned by the BIA.

Assuming Council will agree to take over this event for 2021, SMT requests that Council decide whether the responsibility for this event will be given to Administration or a Committee.

The options are:

1. Administration assigned responsibility for the event. In this instance, administration recommends that Council create an "Open Streets Advisory Committee" to consult with staff and Council about the event. The Committee will have no authority to direct staff, make financial commitments, or make final decisions about the event. Final decisions will be made by administration, reporting to Council.

or

2. "Open Streets Committee" be created by Council and assigned responsibility for the event. In this option, the Open Streets Committee will have the authority to make financial commitments and make final decisions about the event. The Open Streets Committee will not have authority to direct Town staff and, where staff support is needed, the Committee will bring a project plan to Council for review and approval. This project plan should include whether staff support is requested for attending

Committee meetings, although it is hoped that the Committee can function without staff support.

The options create an environment in which there is clarity of staff's role and avoid some of the problems in 2020.

Either Option 1 and Option 2 should result in similar costs to the Municipality. Both options allow for the use of volunteers as much as possible to reduce costs.

SMT strongly recommends Option 1 above and would support Option 2 if chosen by Council. SMT members are pleased to address their departmental concerns during the Council meeting.

## **LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

Promote the betterment, self-image and attitude of the community.

Support growth of the business community.

Effectively manage corporate resources and maximize performance in day-to-day operations.

## **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Council has approved \$25,000 for the 2021 Open Street event. It is recommended that a portion of these funds supplement staffing needs most cost-effectively. If approved, the Manager will bring forward a budget for the event to Council after consultation with staff and the Open Streets Advisory Committee. Direct and indirect costs will be included in the budget, accounting for staff and volunteer time as part of the budget.

## **CONSULTATIONS**

The following staff were consulted in the writing of this report,

- Director of Financial & IT Services,
- Director of Legislative Services, Town Solicitor, Clerk,
- Director of Infrastructure and Engineering,
- Director of Infrastructure and Engineering,
- Fire Chief CEMC
- Manager of Municipal Facilities and Properties,
- Manager of Public Works & Environmental Services, and the,
- Tourism Coordinator.

In addition, the Kingsville BIA was consulted.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council approves the agreement, in principle, to host the "2021 Open Streets" summer event in downtown Kingsville. Council further agrees and directs that:

- a. Open Streets will be a Town event;

- b. Open Streets will be led and managed through administration, as described in Option 1 above under the Senior Management Team comment section;
- c. That administration will prepare a further report for Council to propose a budget, dates, and other matters requiring Council review and approval; and
- d. That an Open Streets Advisory Committee of Council be created to obtain resident and business input and foster volunteer participation.

*John Norton*

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John Norton  
CAO