



Town of Cobourg Strategic Planning Session

Summary Notes

February 12-13, 2019

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**TOWN OF COBOURG
STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION
FEBRUARY 12-13, 2019**

SUMMARY NOTES

On Tuesday February 12th and Wednesday February 13th, members of Council, the Chief Administrative Officer and senior staff participated in a strategic planning session to guide the work of the municipality during the next four years. The following individuals attended the session.

Town of Cobourg Strategic Planning Session: February 12-13, 2019 Participants	
Council	Senior Staff
John Henderson, Mayor Suzanne Séguin, Deputy Mayor Nicole Beatty, Councillor Aaron Burchat, Councillor Adam Bureau, Councillor Emily Chorley, Councillor Brian Darling, Councillor	Stephen Peacock, Chief Administrative Officer Ian Davey, Director of Corporate Services Rob Franklin, Manager of Planning Services, Building and Planning Dean Hustwick, Director of Community Services Brent Larmer, Municipal Clerk/Manager of Legislative Services Laurie Wills, Director of Public Works

The session was facilitated by Carolyn Kearns. These notes summarize the key discussion points.

INTRODUCTION

Mayor John Henderson called the meeting to order and explained that it was a Committee of the Whole meeting. Deputy Mayor Suzanne Séguin read out the reports that would be reviewed and no conflicts of interest were declared. Mayor Henderson welcomed everyone and thanked individuals for making the time available to attend the strategy session. It represents an opportunity for Council to develop a high level strategic direction or roadmap for the next four years. The results will be communicated to staff and the citizens of the Town. Once the strategic plan has been approved, staff under the direction of the CAO, will develop work plans to implement Council's priorities.

The Mayor introduced the facilitator, Carolyn Kearns and described her experience with strategic planning including with the Town of Cobourg. He said that the new Council, with its mix of new and returning members of Council provides a good blend of ideas and energy for the strategic planning discussion.

Carolyn reviewed the objectives and agenda for the session, outlined some general guidelines and invited individuals to provide their expectations for the session.

Objectives

The strategic planning session was designed to achieve both direct and indirect objectives.

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Direct Objectives	Indirect Objectives
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To review the Town's current situation and to identify key challenges2. To develop the Town's vision and mission3. To develop pillars/objectives, strategic actions and priorities	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To develop the direction of the new Council2. To meet in an informal, relaxed session away from regular pressures3. To enjoy ourselves and build relationships

The agenda was designed to achieve these objectives. The session was to result in agreement on the current environment and key issues facing the Town of Cobourg,

components of the Town's strategic plan, and the identification of actions and priorities for the next four years.

Guidelines

The group reviewed some general guidelines for the session and agreed to respect the following principles:

- Respect each other's views and opinions regardless of whether you are new or longer term member of Council
- Be honest and say what you really think because there is no right answer
- Participate because the success of the session depends on maximum input from everyone
- Be constructive and recognize that there is lots of good work to build upon
- Work to achieve consensus to the extent that the group can reach general agreement on key points
- Think high level and future focused in terms of the next four years

Expectations for the Session

Before continuing, individuals were asked to provide any additional expectations in terms of what the session needed to achieve to be successful from their perspective.

Town of Cobourg Strategic Planning Session: February 12-13, 2019 Expectations
<i>To be successful this strategic planning session must ...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outline our values• Review committees to be consistent in their application• Discuss upper tier and their ability to support social planning and social values

It was agreed to review these expectations at the end of the session to see if they had been realized.

SETTING THE CONTEXT

As a starting point, Carolyn outlined the compelling reasons for undertaking strategic planning and described the three main elements found in all good strategic planning processes.

Value of Strategic Planning

There are a number of reasons why municipalities including the Town of Cobourg, have developed strategic plans. They are summarized following:

- **Developing a collective vision**, recognizing the growing demands facing the Town and the need to communicate the vision and mission of the municipality and what it wants to achieve during its four year term
- **Planning for the future**, recognizing the changing environment in terms of population, the economy and services provided
- **Maximizing resources**, by having an agreed upon mission, goals and actions to implement
- **Establishing a framework for Town initiatives**, and assisting in setting priorities
- **Entering into effective partnerships**, by working with others to provide needed services
- **Communicating priorities**, both internally to members and externally to others who work with the Town

Strategic Planning Framework

The group reviewed the three main elements of a good strategic planning process as shown following:

Knowing Where You StandDetermining Where You're Going...	...Getting There
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing the planning framework • Evaluation of current operations and programs • Strengths • Weaknesses • Opportunities • Threats • Key issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision and mission • Objectives/goals/pillars • Areas/clients to service • Scope of services • Key capabilities and critical gaps • Strategic directions to pursue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions required • Operational implications • Organization and human resource systems required • Resource allocation • Timing • Monitoring and evaluating results
STRATEGIC SITUATION	STRATEGIC DIRECTION	STRATEGIC OPERATION

It was agreed that the group should spend time reviewing the current situation facing the Town and then develop a strategic vision, mission and pillars/objectives as input to establishing strategic actions and priorities.

ACHIEVING RESULTS: PROGRESS UPDATE

Stephen Peacock, the Town's Chief Administrative Officer, reviewed the report, *Town of Cobourg Strategic Plan Update 2017*, circulated in advance of the meeting and available from the Town. It represents the Town's first annual report on its Strategic Plan and includes the accomplishments in implementing the strategic objectives and actions contained in the 2015-18 Strategic Plan. The report also provides a description of the work of the four Town divisions. The report provided useful background information about the municipality for the group to consider as input into their discussions.

ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

Strategic visioning begins with an assessment of the current situation, which includes the identification of strengths and weaknesses, and of opportunities and threats. Once this work, known as an environmental scan, is completed, it can be used to develop the key strategic issues to be addressed.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths and weaknesses are those factors that are within the direct control of the municipality. The strengths reflect positive conditions and initiatives, and weaknesses are those areas where the municipality could be doing a better job. The group discussed the strengths and weaknesses, and they are listed on Page 6. They do not reflect any priority or consensus.

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Strengths <i>What we value about Cobourg ...</i>	Weaknesses <i>Our concerns and problems with Cobourg ...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our people - active engaged citizens many of whom are passionate • Strong volunteer spirit • Exceptional staff • Location - proximity to Toronto and being on the lake • Our history - we have an interesting story to tell • Small community with quality values • High number and range of offerings given our size • Natural beauty - we are good stewards of our environment • Town assets - e.g. Victoria Hall, beach, heritage, historic buildings • Significant number of activities and events that are well communicated and marketed - e.g. Waterfront Festival, Armistice 18 • Cobourg is a safe community (evidence from Police Services survey) • Good infrastructure - e.g. roads and sewers • Town gardens and plantings - own our own greenhouses; won Communities in Bloom competition • Strong manufacturing sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of outreach for vulnerable citizens - housing needs, mental health issues, etc. • Not optimizing engagement of our youth in Town activities • Not listening well enough and responding to the needs of small businesses - experiencing roadblocks and red tape • Vacant stores and rundown buildings in the downtown core - not the hub of the community • Communications with the public is not where it should be - e.g. website not as user friendly as it could be, do not publish meeting minutes, not always sending notices of road closures to affected properties • Do not have an information technology strategic plan which we identified as a strategic action in the last strategic plan • Despite what we say, not really a four season destination - winter lull • Not capitalizing on the potential economic benefits of daytrippers and destination visitors • Beach congestion and lack of parking especially on summer weekends • Lack of labour generally and appropriate skilled labour in particular • Lack of affordable housing and housing types (0.4% vacancy rate) • Public mistrust of politics and government - people not feeling listened to and that the Town is not inclusive

Strengths <i>What we value about Cobourg ...</i>	Weaknesses <i>Our concerns and problems with Cobourg ...</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perception that taxes are too high• Lack of diversity in the Town's makeup - demographics, ethnicity, gender• Lack of physical connectivity between the beach and the downtown• Treating issues in silos and not recognizing interdependencies, e.g. labour force and housing

Opportunities and Threats

Opportunities and threats are different than strengths and weaknesses. They reflect trends and external factors that are beyond the control of the municipality. However, opportunities and threats could have a positive or negative impact on the community and should be considered as part of a strategic planning discussion. The group identified the opportunities and threats facing the Town. They are listed below and again, do not necessarily reflect consensus, and are not in any priority.

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Opportunities <i>What are the trends suggesting as future opportunities for Cobourg?</i>	Threats <i>What are the trends suggesting in terms of potential negative impacts on Cobourg?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of the importance of sustainability - economic, environmental, social - e.g. Province now requiring municipalities to adopt climate change plans and canopy plans • Public transit seen as important for environmental sustainability and to provide alternatives for commuting - e.g. GO, VIA • Growing awareness and support for the provision of affordable housing • Food security now a recognized ongoing need in communities • Growing recognition of the need and responsibility for serving under - represented populations - e.g. mental health, homeless • Partnerships seen as an increasingly valuable way of doing business • Residents and businesses increasingly looking at location and transportation when making decisions about where to live and work • Technology facilitates access to information and improves ability to communicate • Population and employment growth in the Greater Toronto Area makes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing legislation that can be restrictive and expensive to implement • Municipalities are expected to do more with less - e.g. downloading, cancelling programs and anticipated changes to health, education and energy • Growing social isolation - e.g. seniors, young mothers, people relying on social media • Cyber-security poses a real threat to community safety • Potential for increasing emergencies - e.g. flooding, terrorism • Climate change is impacting the environment and services • Environmental degradation with impacts on water (quantity and quality), natural resources • Increasing automation is eliminating jobs • Aging population means fewer people in the workforce and potentially higher demands for social services • National and international political policies impact the economy - e.g. embargo on aluminum • Increasing public apathy and distrust of politicians - e.g. lower voter turnout

<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>What are the trends suggesting as future opportunities for Cobourg?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>What are the trends suggesting in terms of potential negative impacts on Cobourg?</i></p>
<p>neighbouring municipalities attractive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities with strong arts, culture and “creative class” becoming increasingly attractive • Sports and tourism are strong growth sectors • Agribusiness is a growing sector of the economy • Individuals and families increasingly value active healthy lifestyles • Growth in retiring seniors sector many of whom are interested in staying active and volunteering in their communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising costs of doing business and living

Key Strategic Issues

An assessment of the current situation also includes the identification of key strategic issues. The municipality deals with a number of issues ranging from operational concerns through to high level concerns involving advocating for change by other levels of government. Strategic issues are defined as those areas of greatest importance to the future success of the Town and ones where the municipality has a high capacity to influence the changes required.

Based on this description, members of Council identified a number of major issues to be addressed during the next four years. They are shown following and are not listed in any priority.

Town of Cobourg Strategic Planning Session: February 12-13, 2019 Key Strategic Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Availability of affordable housing• Embracing integrated sustainability practices in our programs and services (e.g. parking, transportation)• Completing our asset management plan• Ensuring open, transparent, clear and timely communications (aided by technology)• Responsibly managing/stewarding our waterfront (including tourism)• Retaining and attracting qualified staff• Being more citizen centred• Finding improving ways to engage our diverse community• Defining the Town's role in arts and culture in the community• Improving efficiencies and effectiveness of municipal operations• Being economically resilient in our changing economy• Leveraging our assets and economic opportunities

It was agreed that Council and the Town's Senior Staff need to develop actions to address these key strategic issues.

VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

A strategic plan is comprised of a number of elements as shown below:

Strategic Plan Elements:



The group reviewed the definitions for a vision statement, a mission statement and supporting objectives. A vision provides a description of the desired future and the dream for the municipality. It is a clear, powerful, short, inspirational statement that answers the question, *“What is important for the people of Cobourg in the future”*?

A mission statement supports the vision statement. It describes the unique purpose or role of the municipality in supporting the vision. A mission statement is outcome oriented and answers the question, *“What is the mandate of the Town of Cobourg in achieving the vision”*?

Based on these definitions and descriptions, members of Council reviewed the vision and mission statements for the Town of Cobourg from the previous Strategic Plan and made changes to reflect the current environment. The draft vision and mission for 2019 - 2022 are shown following.

Town of Cobourg Strategic Planning Session: February 12-13, 2019 Draft Vision and Mission
<p>Vision</p> <p>Cobourg...a vibrant inclusive community where everyone has access to meaningful opportunities and experiences</p>
<p>Mission</p> <p><i>The Town of Cobourg is committed to open and accountable governance and the provision of quality, accessible programs and services in a sustainable manner</i></p>

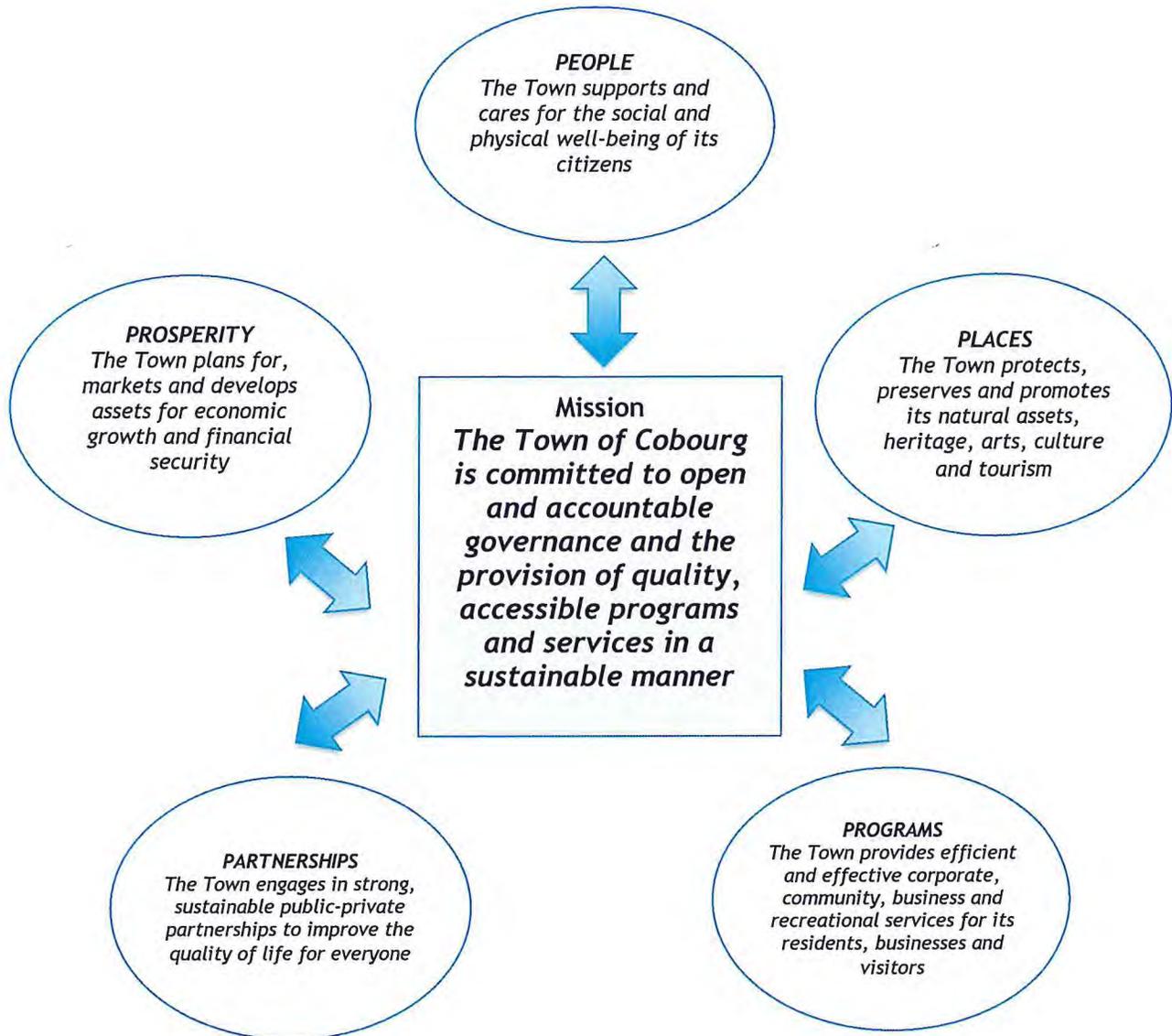
SUPPORTING PILLARS/OBJECTIVES

Objectives describe the results the Town wants to achieve in key areas. Objectives further define the mission and keep it focused. They provide the link between the mission and the strategic actions. Objectives answer the question, “*What will the mission achieve?*”

The discussion of objectives to support the mission and vision was based on the overall assessment of the current situation including the environmental scan and key issues. It was agreed that it would be useful to use “pillars” or words to succinctly capture the key elements of the objectives.

The draft supporting pillars and objectives developed by members of Council are shown on Page 13. All are considered to be of equal importance.

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Draft Corporate Mission and Supporting Pillars/Objectives



STRATEGIC ACTIONS AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

Strategic actions refer to high level, key initiatives to be undertaken that will support the objectives. The actions focus on strategic as opposed to routine, day-to-day items, and represent new or high priority work to be undertaken. Strategic actions answer the question, *“How will the objectives be supported?”* Members of Council and senior staff developed strategic actions to support each pillar/objective.

In addition, the group developed desired outcomes. Desired outcomes are broad statements of the results to be achieved if the strategic actions supporting the pillars/objectives are successful. They are high level, qualitative and describe an end state or the positive results that will be experienced. Outcomes are not to be confused with performance measures that are quantifiable, measurable and focused specifically on the strategic actions.

The group discussed the desired outcomes related to each pillar/objective and their supporting strategic actions. They are shown on Pages 15-19 and like the strategic actions, they are not listed in any priority.

PEOPLE	The Town supports and cares for the social and physical well-being of its citizens
Strategic Actions	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a housing strategy that is in alignment with Northumberland County’s housing strategy 2. Implement a municipal youth program 3. Encourage healthy lifestyles across all age groups 4. Continue to pursue the Age-Friendly Communities designation 	
Desired Outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are able to find attainable housing in Cobourg • There is a broad variety of housing types available for ownership and rental • Residents of all ages are engaged in a wide range of physical activities • Cobourg residents are healthy and happy • Cobourg’s youth participate in community activities and events • The Town is enriched by the skills, ideas and perspectives of its youth 	

PLACES	The Town protects, preserves and promotes its natural assets, heritage, arts, culture and tourism
Strategic Actions	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investigate the creation of additional heritage conservation districts as outlined in the Heritage Master Plan 2. Create a Climate Change Action Plan 3. Review the expansion of boat slips into the west harbour recommendation contained in the Waterfront Master Plan 4. Upon completion of the Cultural Master Plan, consider the creation of a Town arts, culture and tourism division 5. Continue implementation of the Downtown Vitalization Plan 6. Review and improve the financial performance of Town operated facilities 	
Desired Outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts, culture and heritage are key defining characteristics of the Cobourg community • Daily lives of residents are enriched • Cobourg’s natural environment will be safeguarded and protected • The Town of Cobourg will be good stewards and practice sustainable actions 	

PROGRAMS	The Town provides efficient and effective corporate, community, business and recreational services for its residents, businesses and visitors
Strategic Actions	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop an information technology strategic plan 2. Develop an integrated records management system 3. Implement a comprehensive management plan for all of the Town’s assets 4. Explore the feasibility of enhanced sidewalk snow clearing program 5. Review and assess appropriateness of agreements with third party contracts 6. Continue to explore communications priorities including social media and public engagement tools 	

Desired Outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People will be well informed, know what is going on in the Town and how to get information • The Town will be resilient and safe from cyber attacks • Information will be easier and faster to access through a variety of means • People will be informed with the facts • Information will be stored in a way that is accessible for present and future generations 	

PARTNERSHIPS	The Town engages in strong, sustainable public private partnerships to improve the quality of life for everyone
Strategic Actions	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore feasibility of partnerships to develop a social services community hub for community health priorities such as food security, mental health, drug addiction and homelessness 2. Explore future partnerships with Venture 13 to promote innovation, education and entrepreneurial opportunities 3. Continue to work with Sustainable Cobourg and other stakeholders on greening Cobourg initiatives 4. Work with transit authorities in the area to integrate transit services 	
Desired Outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships will be a key component of how the Town works and does business • Cobourg will be a strong community • Resources will be maximized • The Town will be able to realize initiatives it undertakes 	

PROSPERITY	The Town plans for, markets and develops assets for economic growth and financial security
Strategic Actions	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a policy for establishing shovel-ready development lands 2. Coordinate funding opportunities to optimize community development capital and special projects funding 3. Review the feasibility of expanding the Northam Industrial Park 4. Explore innovative solutions to improve the connectivity between the beach/waterfront and downtown Cobourg 5. Develop resources to support small businesses coming to Cobourg 6. Review the mandate of the Town’s economic development department 	
Desired Outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More jobs are locating in Cobourg • Economic health has created capacity for improved quality of life • Economic development resources are effectively used • Visitors find opportunities to spend money in Cobourg • Cobourg is recognized for its strong and healthy downtown • Labour force skills in the Town match employment needs 	

**PRIORITY
 STRATEGIC ACTIONS**

Members of Council and senior management were invited to review all of the strategic actions and to select those actions that they felt were most important to begin as soon as possible. Each person made their individual choices (limited to four each) and then the results were tabulated and discussed by the group.

The priority strategic actions are shown following and listed in descending order beginning with the ones receiving the most “votes”.

Town of Cobourg Strategic Planning Session: February 12-13, 2019 Top Priority Actions		
Pillar	Strategic Action	Votes
Programs	1. Develop an information technology strategic plan	7
People	1. Create a housing strategy that is in alignment with Northumberland County’s housing strategy	6
Programs	2. Develop an integrated records management system	6
Programs	3. Implement a comprehensive management plan for all of the Town’s assets	4
Prosperity	1. Develop a policy for establishing shovel-ready development lands	4
Partnerships	2. Explore future partnerships with Venture 13 to promote innovation, education and entrepreneurial opportunities	4
Places	4. Upon completion of the Cultural Master Plan, consider the creation of a Town arts, culture and tourism division	3
Prosperity	3. Coordinate funding opportunities to optimize community development capital and special projects funding	3
Places	2. Create a Climate Change Action Plan	2
Places	3. Review the expansion of boat slips into the west harbour recommendation contained in the Waterfront Master Plan	2
Programs	4. Explore the feasibility of enhanced sidewalk snow clearing program	2
Prosperity	5. Explore innovative solutions to improve the connectivity between the beach/waterfront and downtown Cobourg	2

Strategic priorities were selected for each of the pillars. Once there is agreement on the strategic priorities, senior staff will develop detailed action plans with information on specific activities to be undertaken to support each strategic action, the timeframe for completing the work, the individuals responsible for the work and resources required. These detailed work plans will be reviewed with Council prior to implementation.

It was agreed that Council, with support from senior staff, will review progress on implementing the strategic priority actions and identify new actions (either from the existing list or as a result of changing circumstances) for completion in 2020. In this way, it is expected that the list of strategic actions identified during the session will be addressed during the term of Council.

**VALUES
 DISCUSSION**

At the beginning of the strategic planning session, it was agreed that the Town should develop values to guide the behaviours of Council and staff. These values would apply to all of the work and relationships with each other, the public and anyone with whom Council and staff interact.

As input into the values discussion, members of Council suggested a number of values for consideration. They are shown below and are not listed in any priority.

Town of Cobourg Strategic Planning Session: February 12-13, 2019 Draft Values for Consideration	
Value	Description
Respect	Having due regard for the feelings, rights and traditions of others
Equity	Quality of being fair minded and impartial
Empathy	Connecting with and understanding people we deal with
Equality	Equal status, rights and opportunity
Integrity	Upholding standards taken as the oath of allegiance upon joining Council
Service	Working to represent and act in the interests of the public
Commitment	Doing the job we signed up for
Perseverance	
Inclusivity	
Sustainability	
Teamwork/Collaboration	
Fiscal Responsibility	

The group questioned the difference between values and principles and agreed that it required further information and discussion. Mayor Henderson offered to speak with staff at the Northumberland Hills Hospital about their values exercise and to report back to Council.

OTHER ITEMS FOR COUNCIL DISCUSSION

It was agreed that the Strategic Plan provides a future direction for the Town and that implementing the strategic actions and priorities contained in the plan must be undertaken within the context of good financial planning. It was pointed out that the timing for the strategic planning discussion was very good as it can inform the budget process which will occur in March.

There was also a comment about the perception by residents that taxes in the Town of Cobourg are too high and the questions of whether taxpayers are getting value for money for their tax dollars. It was suggested that the Town may want to reinstate Cobourg Day as a way to inform residents of the services they currently receive.

As well, it is important to ensure that there is no duplication between services provided by the Town and those provided by Northumberland County and that the Town coordinates with the County over its tax rate increases.

The final item raised involved the Town's committees. A number of the advisory committees are under discussion and there is a suggestion that they be able to act more independently of Council than at present. The Civic Awards Committee is an ad hoc committee of Council that will be reformatted and brought into conformity with other advisory committees of Council. It was suggested that the Sustainability Advisory Committee requires an updated terms of reference given its new mandate.

Members of Council were asked to contact the Mayor or Deputy Mayor about specific views.

SUMMARY COMMENTS AND NEXT STEPS

Before adjourning, the group reviewed the expectations described at the beginning of the session and agreed that the majority were met. The session was felt to be positive and provided an excellent opportunity for members of Council to discuss areas of common interest. It allowed for open dialogue and demonstrated the thought leadership of the new Council. Members of Council appreciated the staff presence and their collaboration and comments. Overall, it was felt that the Council has set a dynamic and exciting vision for the next four years.

In future, consideration should be given to whether printed presentation materials are necessary recognizing that they are available electronically. As well, it would be helpful to have materials developed during the first day, especially the vision,

mission, pillars/objectives and strategic actions, available for review prior to the second day.

Carolyn will prepare summary notes for review by the group and Council will then determine how best to seek input on the draft strategic plan materials. The Mayor thanked everyone for their participation and noted the high quality of the discussion.