



**GEORGINA**

**THE CORPORATION OF THE  
TOWN OF GEORGINA**

**Georgina Economic Development Committee Minutes**

Date: Monday, March 29, 2021  
Time: 7:00 PM

Members Present: Andi Mahony (Chair)  
Margaret Quirk, Mayor  
Dan Fellini, Councillor, Ward 2  
Frank Sebo, Councillor, Ward 4  
Heidi Wong  
James Beechey  
Susan Gorman

Members Absent: Elsa Mateus  
Matthew Brady  
Kostas Kyriopoulos

Staff Present: Karyn Stone, Manager of Economic Development  
Sean Columbus, Economic Development Officer  
Cristina Liu, Marketing & Promotions Coordinator  
Jamie-Lee Warner, Administrative Assistant, Economic  
Development and Tourism  
Katrina Ellis, Marketing & Social Media Specialist

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

“We would like to begin today’s meeting by acknowledging that the Town of Georgina is located over lands originally used and occupied by the First Peoples of the Williams Treaties First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples and thank them for sharing this land. We would also like to acknowledge the Chippewa’s of Georgina Island First Nation as our close neighbour and friend, one with which we strive to build a cooperative and respectful relationship.”

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**2. ROLL CALL**

As noted above.

**3. COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None.

**4. INTRODUCTION OF ADDENDUM ITEM(S)**

None.

**5. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**RESOLUTION NO. EDC-2021-0001**

Moved By Frank Sebo

Seconded By Heidi Wong

**Carried.**

**6. ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

**RESOLUTION NO. EDC-2021-0002**

Moved By James Beechey

Seconded By Dan Fellini

**Carried**

**7. DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTEREST AND GENERAL NATURE THEREOF**

None.

**8. DELEGATIONS/ SPEAKERS**

None.

**9. PRESENTATIONS**

None.

**10. REPORTS**

1. Economic Development Updates

Economic Development staff

- Karyn Stone shared with the Committee that the Georgina Trades Training Institute (GTTI) has full enrollment of students in their new Skilled Trades Institute (STI) until the end of 2021. STI is currently running programs out of the Salvation Army Conference Centre GTTI has secured a loan from the municipality and is now working on the site plan in order to start construction of their new facility on lands they will lease from the municipality and located at 1614 Metro Road.
- Karyn Stone noted that the Ontario Water Centre (OWC) received a \$650,000 loan from the municipality to cover the installation of the water and sewer services to the property at 1614 Metro Rd. North,

which will service both the OWC and GTTI's STI. An agreement is in the process of being signed recognizing that both parties will pay their proportionate share of the utilities.

- Karyn Stone mentioned that 200 acres at the north end of the business park has been purchased by the Panattoni Development Company, a world-wide developer of industrial sites, with three sites recently completed in the GTA and the construction of forty-seven Amazon sites. They have had meetings with the Town over the last two weeks and are looking at minor modifications to the draft plan that was approved a few years ago and will move forward with the first phase, which will be a large distribution type building at the north end of the Glenwoods site. Katrina Ellis and Cristina Liu will be assisting them with any joint marketing efforts. The Town's Rebate program and the completion of the new Site Plan By-law review will assist us in processing applications in the business park as we have delegated the approval authority for site plan approval to the Director level.
- Karyn Stone shared that the Waterfront Strategy development is ongoing and the information received from the public input sessions last summer and fall as well as from the online survey will be reported to Council this Wednesday, March 31, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. This will be an initial report and the Consultant will be seeking public input again in the development of the final strategy.
- Sean Columbus explained that the Town approved its first Broadband strategy and action plan in 2020, which contains a vision, guiding principles and top priorities. As part of this project, a Request For Information (RFI) was launched to engage internet service providers and there is an undertaking to develop key policies. YorkNet has been constructing dark-fibre throughout the municipality with the majority already complete. Currently there are two internet service providers - Ruralwave and Vianet - that are leveraging YorkNet's government funded fibre in the Udora area. Dark fibre has also been installed to Georgina Island.
- Sean Columbus shared with the Committee that the Town will be resuming public engagement with the BIAs regarding Streetscape Design Standards, which was paused due to the pandemic. Concepts will be re-visited and feedback will be obtained and a report will be presented to Council on May 19, 2021.
- Sean Columbus mentioned that the Town will be hosting two Bids and Tenders virtual information sessions (April 20, 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. and April 21, 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.) catered to local businesses interested in learning how to do business with the municipality through the Bids and Tender program.

- Sean Columbus noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted the business community, resulting in a need for new economic recovery programs. Through these programs, \$308,816 in financial support has been provided to local businesses to assist with rent payments and costs associated with COVID-19. The programs include:
  - Georgina Emergency Response Benefit
    - Administered by South Lake Community Futures
    - \$247,500 in financial support to 66 businesses across the municipality
  - COVID-19 Community Improvement Plan
    - Enhanced with new application streams
    - Created to assist businesses with COVID related renovations, technology-based programs or upgrades of tech equipment or software programs.
  - COVID-19 Development Rebate
    - Revisions were made to assist with building permit costs associated with COVID.
  - COVID-19 Not-for-Profit and Charitable Organizations Program
    - Support through grants of \$1,000/month for a period of 3 months to cover lease payments and/or operating costs.
  - Temporary Patio Program
    - Created to assist restaurants through the restrictions and allow those establishments to have outdoor seating to help maintain business operations.
  - Patio Grant within the CIP Areas
    - Launched this year for businesses within the CIP Areas for those businesses wanting to create a new or expand existing patios.
  - Pivot Planning Squad
    - Cristina Liu explained that this program was launched at the end of October 2020 to assist businesses who had to pivot due to COVID by providing them with business and marketing expertise and community connections within Georgina. One on one consultations offered free marketing, training and support, online audits, education, assessment for eligible grants through the Town or other levels of government and referrals to support

programs such as Digital Main Street to assist businesses with ecommerce platforms. To date, the squad has provided 31 business consultations. The program is ongoing and interested businesses can apply by visiting our website.

- Sean Columbus went over statistics related to the above programs, which illustrated that in 2020 we received the most amount of CIP and Development Rebate applications since these programs started in 2015.
- Sean Columbus explained to the Committee that as part of the Community Collaboration project with VentureLAB, there were a variety of tech solutions to help business transition due to the pandemic and also plan for the future, such as retail sale software, crowd monitoring, outdoor heated furniture and pick up/delivery locker solutions. In addition to these VentureLAB solutions, there was also the Digital Main Street ShopHere Program, which assisted businesses with online presence and the Town's COVID-19 CIP Technology grant, which businesses in the BIAs were eligible for if they implemented software programs due to the pandemic.
- Sean Columbus shared with the Committee that as a result of increased investment interest from businesses, revisions were made to the Development Rebate program. Originally the program was capped at \$20,000 for multiple applications, but now the program provides rebates based on floor area and the number of full time employment positions created. The program has also been separated into three different tiers, with the highest tier now capped at \$50,000 for multiple applications. We have increased the annual budget for the program from \$100,000 to \$150,000.
- Jamie-Lee Warner explained to the Committee that three Community Betterment grants were approved in 2020 and five have been approved as of March 1st for 2021. All event organizers applying for this grant are required to provide the Town with a COVID Safety Plan, which has been added to the application process. Through this program, we are providing support to our events as we did with the Georgina Studio Tour, which includes, videos, meetings, signage, online ads and COVID-19 support.
- Jamie-Lee Warner shared that the Economic Development and Tourism Division along with Recreation and Culture Department and the Communications Division prepared a briefing note for Council on January 27, 2021 regarding commercial filming in Georgina. We will be updating the Film Policy, which was approved by Council in 1997 and will be working on enhancing our efforts to market the filming program.
- Katrina Ellis reviewed marketing and tourism initiatives undertaken during 2020. The team created 65 spotlights including 19 videos on

businesses who either went through one of our Division programs or participated in a signature event. A new blog was launched, which can be found at [georgina.ca/businessnews](http://georgina.ca/businessnews), where 30 articles have been published highlighting Division announcements, new business openings, program support and tourism assets and events. Our Facebook channel has more than doubled in followings since it was launched. We have had over 30k interactions (shares, likes, comments). We are currently working on expanding our communications channels and hope to add Instagram this year. Our online ads in 2020 had a local focus promoting the Farmers' Market, Studio Tour and our Recovery Programs. Last year we invested in new advertising channels such as the new radio station and mobile signs throughout the community. At the end of the year, we spotlighted businesses who demonstrated community support during the pandemic and provided them with a certificate of appreciation. The Discover Georgina Guide was redesigned, however it was not printed due to COVID but was available for online viewing. Our office published two 16-page newsletters, which were distributed to all Georgina businesses and we continued to distribute biweekly online newsletters to all of our subscribers. Numerous content and optimization updates have been made to all of our business and tourism webpages. Our business pages have seen an 80% increase in page views overall from 2019. We have also imbedded a new business and attraction dashboard on many of our business pages, allowing interested parties to navigate through statistics.

- Cristina Liu shared with the Committee that the Economic Development and Tourism Division's Field to Table event - a self-guided farm tour started in 2018 - was pivoted to an online event due to the uncertainty of the pandemic. All participating farm locations were featured on nine pre-recorded promotional videos that were released weekly on our Facebook page. The Field to Table online promotion was concluded with a Field to Table virtual live event, which reached over 200k people and provided a behind the scenes look at each location along with a live Q&A session with the farmers. Grant funding was received from the Greenbelt Foundation and Central Counties Tourism. We will be receiving funding for this year's event as well. The pre-recorded videos and live event were viewed over 100k times online. The event won a Festivals and Events Ontario award for our ability to pivot. We are now working on the 2021 event, which will take place on August 21 and are currently working on a hybrid model if possible. After being surveyed, the participating farms noted they have seen an increase of sales by 30% from 2019 and the majority have indicated that the promotional videos have directed new customers to their business.

- Cristina Liu introduced to the Committee the newest Economic Development and Tourism Division's event, The Taste of Georgina, that was launched this year. The purpose of this event was to increase local spending at dining establishments and support the shop local movement for long term economic benefit. This pilot program was launched in February 2021 and was supported by the Reconnect Festival and Events Ontario grant, which we applied for in partnership with the Recreation and Culture Department. Ten restaurants participated and over the two week period, 900 items off the Taste of Georgina menu were purchased resulting in \$28,000 in sales. The dedicated webpage for this event has received approximately 12k views and the Facebook event received 650 responses and reached more than 15k viewers. Participating restaurants concluded that on average more than 45% of their sales came from new customers due to this event and approximately 80% of the participating restaurants had experienced a 40% increase in sales over the two week period in comparison to the previous weeks. Due to the overwhelming positive comments we have received from residents and participating restaurants, we are working on a second event for this September.
- Jamie-Lee Warner shared with the Committee that the Georgina Farmers' Market proceeded in 2020 with a shortened season. The Economic Development and Tourism Division provided support by ensuring COVID-19 safety protocols were in place as per York Region Public Health and the province and staff were present at the market to assist with these protocols. The division also provided support with increased signage, photography and social promotion. The Farmers' Market plans to open again this year starting Sunday, May 23 and we are currently working on putting similar COVID-19 protocols in place again for this year.
- Sean Columbus outlined the Selling Food to Ontario workshop to the Committee. This was a half-day virtual workshop in partnership with York Region and OMAFRA. The workshop targeted food and farm businesses to learn how to expand into new markets (i.e. Farmers' Markets, food service, retailers). There was a total of 300 registrations, which was the largest amount of registrations for this type of event in Ontario possibly due to its virtual nature, which increased accessibility. The event was comprised of presentations from NSF, Sobeys, Green Enterprise Movement and Food Industry Consultants. Overall, it was a well-received workshop. This event has support a number of entrepreneurs in the growth of their business operations.
- Karyn Stone shared with the Committee that as part of our tourism and hospitality recovery efforts, we had an opportunity to apply to the Ministry of Labour for a Skills Development Fund in partnership with East Gwillimbury and York University's YSpace to run a program

modeled after York University's Side Hustle program. The program is to assist with pivoting or transitioning from hospitality to other careers related to the new normal in the tourism sector as well as encourage entrepreneurialism in the tourism sector. We are awaiting the outcome of the grant application, where we applied for \$464,000. If we are successful, we will be proceeding quickly and it will start as a virtual program. It is our goal to get 75 people through the program in one year's time. The East Gwillimbury and Georgina Chamber of Commerce both provided letters of support and will help us get the word out if we are successful in receiving the grant.

- Karyn Stone explained to the Committee that we have also been working on the Business Incubator/Accelerator grant application through the Rural Economic Development Fund, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. This application would support a two and a half year pilot incubator/accelerator program. We are looking at hosting it out of the Link, located on Dalton Road in Sutton. This is a collaborative effort with East Gwillimbury, York University's YSpace and VentureLAB, with support from Central Counties Tourism, York Region, the East Gwillimbury and Georgina Chamber of Commerce, South Lake Community Futures and the Chippewa's of Georgina Island. The turnaround time to submit the grant was only a few weeks. We are hopeful this grant will be forthcoming.
- Sean Columbus noted that as part of the partnership with Georgina Chamber of Commerce, Optifi and Central Counties Tourism, we will be launching a tourism visitation pilot project this year. The objectives include observing the movement of visitors and tourists throughout the municipality, calculate their length of stay as well as the specific timelines they are in the area. This will give us an insight on tourism and assist us with other strategies as well. This will provide us with more accurate data by merging Optifi data with envionics data (postal code data) from Central Counties Tourism, which helps with target marketing. Optifi has previously worked with Trent Severn Waterways and the province.
- Katrina Ellis shared with the Committee that the Economic Development and Tourism division has recently implemented TIEIT, a Content Management System (CMS). Several other N6 municipalities are also utilizing the program. TIEIT will allow us to enhance our follow-up with investment opportunities, increase communication with the business community and allow us to generate reports detailing the activity within the division.
- Katrina Ellis introduced the Georgina Made program to the Committee, which is an awareness campaign that promotes the makers, growers, producers and supporters of products made in Georgina. The initiative is intended to instill a sense of civic pride, encourage existing

businesses to sell locally made products and attract new businesses looking for a collaborative community. The key component of the campaign will be a dynamic directory that will live on the Town's website, which will consist of maps, photos and contact links. Once the directory is made, participating businesses will have their own back-end portal login in order to update their information. We are currently onboarding businesses and we plan to launch the directory in early summer.

- Cristina Liu shared with the Committee about the Georgina Street Banner pilot program - another new initiative the division is working on. Every year we install street banners in our downtown areas to enhance beautification and encourage local shopping. This year as a pilot, we put a call out to artists to showcase local artists and reflect the culture, heritage vibrancy and creativity of our town and build on civic pride. Georgina artists, art students and designers are invited to submit proposed street banner designs that could be displayed throughout the community. The theme for this year is Georgina Strong - COVID-19 recovery and community support. The call to artists closes on April 2 and a total of six submissions will be selected. Banners will be displayed between May and September 2021 and if they are in great condition, they may be re-used for an additional year. The successful designs will receive a \$150 honorarium and will be promoted on our website. A total of 19 artists have applied to date and the judging panel consists of Mayor Margaret Quirk, a representative from the Chamber of Commerce, the Executive Director of the Georgina Arts Centre and Gallery, a BIA representative and we are seeking a representative from the Economic Development Committee (EDC). After this presentation, we would like Andi Mahony to select a member of the EDC to participate in the banner selection committee.
- Sean Columbus discussed upcoming plans for spring 2021 in terms of BIA planning. The BIAs are organizing their AGMs and establishing their budgets. We are currently investigating the merging of the Sutton and Jackson's Point BIA. There will be a report to Council on May 19 2021 regarding this process.
- Sean Columbus explained to the Committee that as part of the progression of the temporary patio program, the Economic Development and Tourism division is working closely with the Planning Department on developing a policy enabling permanent patios, which may align with the proposed streetscape design standards. As part of 2020's temporary patio program, a survey was conducted where all responses indicated that they wanted to see a permanent patio program. Feedback also suggested that enabling restaurants to offer outdoor seating will have a positive impact on tourism.

- Andi Mahony asked if all of the Economic Development and Tourism grant program applications are being approved by the Economic Recovery Team (ERT). Karyn Stone confirmed that the ERT took over the review and approval process of all the grants since March 2020, however, now that EDC has commenced its meetings, as indicated to Council, the review and approvals of the grant applications will be moved back to EDC with the exception of those that are timely and COVID related. The ERT will continue to review any grant applications under the new COVID Recovery programs.
- Andi Mahony inquired what the general community response towards the new grant programs has been. Karyn Stone noted that the grant programs have been well received by the community. Under the Municipal Act, it is difficult to provide grants to business owners unless they are in a Community Improvement Plan area and within a Business Improvement Area. Therefore, expanding our Community Improvement Area to include businesses across Georgina has been requested particularly as it relates to the Keswick Business Park and businesses within rural areas who have the opportunity to scale-up and expand.
- Margaret Quirk noted that over the past year, the Economic Development and Tourism Division has been busy continuing on with programs and developing new ones and have been working with the Chamber of Commerce to get the information out. She explained that the pandemic has been overwhelming to business owners and she thanked the Division for their effort in assisting these businesses and the community.
- Dan Fellini inquired which BIA would be represented on the street banner selection committee as we have three. Karyn Stone confirmed that we require one representative on behalf of all BIAs.
- Frank Sebo mentioned that he noticed that the majority of banners hanging on Dalton Road are fouled and asked when we would be addressing these banners. Karyn Stone noted that this year we had to go back out to tender for street banner installation and removal as well as street banner manufacturer. We are working with the Procurement Division and are in the final stages of selecting the installer. Jamie-Lee Warner has recently secured the permit from York Region to allow work on the Regional road allowance.
- Heidi Wong asked what the uptake was like for the Development Rebate program and which we are seeing more of - new investors or business expansion? Sean Columbus explained that this program was established in 2018 and since then, most applications have been for business expansion. Sean Columbus noted that in 2020, we did not receive any applications through the regular program, but when we

implemented the COVID-19 Development Rebate for building permits, we received quite a few applications, some of which were existing businesses and some new. With the new three tier structure, there is a focus on the Keswick Business Park lands and applications similar to the ones submitted by Weller's Tree Services and Sterling Tire who have also utilized this program.

- James Beechey commented that the Economic Development and Tourism staff have done a great job and he is sure the community appreciates the work that has been done.
- Karyn Stone commented that she has noticed more organizations working together this year than in the past including all levels of government and small business support agencies. .

## 2. Verbal Update - BIA's

Councillor Dan Fellini and Councillor Frank Sebo

- Dan Fellini shared with the Committee that this Thursday, April 1, the Uptown Keswick BIA Executive is having a meeting to discuss this coming years' events and set up a time for the Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- Frank Sebo noted that the date is still to be confirmed for the Sutton BIA AGM and it is yet to be determined if the Jackson's Point BIA AGM will be held this spring. The potential merger of the two BIAs will be discussed.

## 3. Verbal Update - Chamber of Commerce

Susan Gorman

- Susan Gorman informed the Committee that the Chamber of Commerce has been diligently communicating federal and provincial updates and summaries throughout the pandemic. The Chamber hosted the Wonder Woman Women in Business Conference last Friday, March 26, where 85 women attended. In 2019, 100 women attended the in person conference. The Business Town Hall was well attended and held on March 5 with panelists Mayor Margaret Quirk, Ryan Cronsberry, Karyn Stone, MPP Caroline Mulroney, MPP Prabmeet Sarkaria and Doctor Karachiwalla. Jennifer Anderson is shooting the 39th episode of "Mind Your Business", which is a 30 minute show on Rogers TV. They have produced and aired 38 episodes with 119 guests from 87 businesses, organizations, stakeholders and representatives from all levels of government. The Chamber is shifting their tourism marketing this year and focusing on day trippers and staycations within the community. Ambassador displays will showcase local content, encouraging local shopping and adventures. In 2019 at the request of the Chamber, Council

proclaimed June 11 as Shop Local Georgina Day. This year, June 11 is on a Friday and the Chamber plans to have a weekend event with sidewalk sales, shopping events and contests across Georgina. The Chamber is also planning the 3rd Discover Georgina Scavenger Hunt this May after two successful events last August and October. They are hoping to add a few more task-related stops, but this will depend on current protocols and safety measures. In December 2020, the Chamber launched a Holiday Guide, which was 52 pages and included coupons and gift certificates and was well received by businesses and residents.

#### 4. Verbal Update - Tourism Committee

James Beechey

- James Beechey shared with the Committee that the Tourism Committee completed their three year Community Tourism Plan, which will commence this year. It is a joint plan between Economic Development and Tourism Division and the Chamber of Commerce. The Superintendent of Sibbald Point Provincial Park has joined the Tourism Committee. The Chamber of Commerce became a member of Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO), which is a driving force behind programs for tourism operators. In Ontario, tourism is a \$36 billion business with 400k employees and has been hit hard by the pandemic. The Chamber is working closely with Sean Columbus on the data collection piece and are hoping that Sibbald Point Provincial Park's similar project will integrate with ours. The Tourism Committee has introduced a Tourism Mastermind meeting on the first Monday of every month for anyone who operates a tourism or visitor related business within Georgina. They have seen good cooperation at these meetings where participants brainstorm ideas that can be followed up on. The Chamber of Commerce is planning a Tourism Symposium within the next few months to assist people in planning their way through the pandemic. James Beechey suggests that at an upcoming meeting, he can present the Community Tourism Plan and everything being done behind the scenes to capitalize on the assets and businesses participating in the plan within the community. James Beechey noted that he has been working with Annabel Slaight on a York Region Tourism sub-group, which looks at regional strategies for tourism recovery.

#### 5. Verbal Update - South Lake Community Futures

James Beechey

- James Beechey shared with the Committee that he was named Chair of South Lake Community Futures. South Lake Community Futures was happy to work with the Town on the Georgina Emergency Benefit Program and funds were given out to recipients in a timely matter.

South Lake Community Futures organized a similar program and fifty of these loans were distributed. Unfortunately the businesses debt load is higher than it ever was and therefore it will be a challenge to ensure these businesses keep afloat and expand. South Lake Community Futures is now in the process of hiring a new Loans Manager.

**RESOLUTION NO. EDC-2021-0003**

That the verbal updates from the Economic Development and Tourism Division, BIAs, Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Committee and South Lake Community Futures be received.

Moved By Heidi Wong

Seconded By Susan Gorman

**Carried**

**11. DISPOSITIONS/ POCLAMATIONS, GENERAL INFORMATION ITEMS**

1. General Information Items

None.

2. Disposition Items

None.

**12. OTHER BUSINESS**

- Andi Mahony reiterated a thank you to the Economic Development and Tourism Division for the work that they have done in 2020.
- Andi Mahony noted that a volunteer is needed for the Street Banner Selection Committee. Frank Sebo volunteered to be on the Committee as an EDC member representative and James Beechey Seconded the motion. Dan Fellini volunteered to be on the Committee as a BIA representative.
- Andi Mahony mentioned that the next EDC meeting will include grant application reviews. Jamie-Lee Warner noted that the next EDC meeting will be scheduled for the end of May or early June. With the new online meeting system, two Committee meetings cannot be held at the same time, therefore our meeting schedule will be different going forward.

**13. MOTION TO ADJOURN**

**RESOLUTION NO. EDC-2021-0004**

Moved By Dan Fellini

Seconded By Margaret Quirk

**Carried**