

City Council Meeting – February 24

By **Christopher Oldcorn** - February 24, 2020



Photo by Christopher Oldcorn

The fourth City Council meeting of 2020 started with two former mayors and the current Mayor joking about how long this City Council meeting would go with three mayors talking.

Ontario Mental Health and Addictions Research and Training Institute Proposal



The Institute will use a holistic approach to mental illness and addictions by integrating Indigenous knowledge and western science. It is a partnership between Algoma University, Northern Ontario School of Medicine, Sault Area Hospital, Sault College, and Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig.

It will focus on the treatment and prevention of mental illness, addictions, and the opioid crisis. Educational programs to train mental health and addiction professionals. A comprehensive system of prevention, treatment, and healing focusing on Northern and rural communities' unique needs.

The Institute will focus on crisis care where the police currently have to deal with those crisis points. It will take some of the pressure off the police.

Wendy Hansson, CEO of Sault Area Hospital, said the Institute will utilize an "evidence-based approach." Cllr Shoemaker pointed out that the hospital is not presently able to provide adequate mental health services. Wendy responded that they are working on it. The hospital still has not implemented the previous mental health proposal which is a level 3 withdrawal facility. Wendy said, "it's still in play."

Mayor Provenzano pointed out that much of the crime in the Sault is because people are stealing to pay for their drug addiction. The Mayor conveyed two stories of local families suffering from drug addiction.

The proposal for the Institute is currently seeking approval from the provincial government. The motion passed Council unanimously.

Community & Corporate Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory 2017

Emily Cormier, Climate Change Coordinator of FutureSSM, presented the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory. The purpose of the GHG report provided a baseline measure to work towards GHG reductions. Sault Ste. Marie participates in the Partners for Climate Protection Program (PCP) with over 350 municipalities across Canada.

Emily pointed out that the report contains only estimations. It is impossible to be accurate because of the many different variables and estimation methods. The estimations are used as a guideline to help create policy. If nothing is done, the Sault will increase its GHG by 0.7% per year.

There were two parts of the report. A community inventory measures the emissions within the boundary of the Sault. A corporate inventory measures the emissions from municipal-owned operations.

In the community inventory, almost 70% of emissions were industrial natural gas, which is on par with other industrial cities such as Hamilton. Car emissions only counted for 12%. Other causes of GHG emissions were propane and fuel oil, railways, solid waste, residential buildings, and commercial and institutional buildings.

In the corporate inventory, more than half of all emissions come from fleet and equipment (56%). A lot of those emissions come from snow removal. The large snow removal and plows require big engines that pollute more. Buildings accounted for 34%, wastewater at 10%, and outdoor lighting at 0.4%. The building emissions came from natural gas.

The recommendations to the city were to create a committee or stakeholder working group, educate the community about GHG, and incorporate the GHG inventory into the Sault Ste. Marie Official Plan Update.

Community Development Fund

The City wants to combine multiple existing funding programs into the Community Development Fund (CDF). They include the Economic Development Fund, Cultural Financial Assistance Funding, Financial Assistance for Sustaining and Other Grants, Conference and Special Events Fund, Green Committee Fund, and the Tourism Development Fund.

City Council can give tax rebates, reduced fees, or a cash grant to private sector companies through the three different Community Improvement Plans (CIP). They are the Rental Housing Community Improvement Plan, the Downtown Strategy, and the Economic Growth Community Improvement Plan.

There is no plan to combine the existing CIPs with the new CDF. The new CDF will provide over \$1.5 million in funding. No new funds are required to create the CDF.

CLlr Shoemaker expressed concern about how the money would be allocated within the new CDF. Funding will remain the same for each initiative.

Ontario Municipal Commuter Cycling Program

For this summer, the City wants to use its funding from the Ministry of Transportation's Ontario Municipal Commuter Cycling Program (OMCC) to create Active Transportation projects. The projects were all previously approved but now have funding through the OMCC. They discussed "road diets" which is code for vehicle lane reductions.

The City was approved for \$580,535 in OMCC funding. That funding is contingent on the City spending \$145,134 towards the projects. The total budget is \$725,669 between the OMCC and City funding.

The projects included:

- nine priority cycling routes
- replace the sidewalk on the Hub Trail with a multi-use path
- create a west end route to the Northern Community Centre
- Create a link between the former St. Mary's Paper redevelopment site and James Street

Four of the nine priority cycling routes were approved in 2019:

- Pine Street – Northern Avenue to Queen Street
- Willow Avenue – Northern Avenue to McNabb Street
- Wawanosh Avenue/Willoughby Street – Grand Crescent to Pine Street
- Queen Street East – the Sault Golf and Country Club property to Dacey Road

The money must be spent in 2020 so the City is working quickly to finish planning the five remaining cycling routes.

Christopher Oldcorn

Christopher Oldcorn is an investigative journalist who covers politics, social policy, economics, and international affairs. In the past, Christopher covered Syria, Israel-Palestine, and UK, US, Canadian, and Ontario politics. Christopher appeared on the radio in 38 countries. He studied at The Centre for Investigative Journalism @ Goldsmiths University of London.

