

# **The Corporation of the Town of Lakeshore**

## **Report to Council**

### **Legislative & Legal Services**

#### **Legislative Services**



**To:** Mayor & Members of Council

**From:** Brianna Coughlin, Manager of Legislative Services

**Date:** May 27, 2020

**Subject:** Impact of Local Newspaper Closures on Town of Lakeshore Business

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#### **Recommendation**

This report is for information only.

#### **Background**

On April 27, 2020, Postmedia Inc. announced the closure of 15 community newspapers. This includes five newspapers in Essex County: the Lakeshore News, the LaSalle Post, the Tecumseh Shoreline Week, the Tilbury Times, and the Kingsville Reporter.

Council then passed Resolution 121-04-2020 at the April 28, 2020 Council meeting:

Direct Administration to send a letter to Post Media expressing disappointment and concern regarding the closure of five local newspapers.

In addition, on May 26, 2020 Council passed the following resolution # 144-05-2020:

Support the resolution of the Town of Tecumseh regarding a Request for Reconsideration of the Permanent Closing of the Community Weekly Newspapers Owned By Postmedia Inc.

#### **Comments**

The Town of Lakeshore is an accountable and transparent organization that believes that its residents should be made aware of the business of the municipality. The closure of local newspapers affects the ways in which the Town is able to advertise and notify residents relating to Town business.

There are specific legislative requirements that require advertisement in local newspapers. These include, but are not limited to notices under the *Municipal Act, 2001*, the *Planning Act*, the *Expropriations Act*, the *Development Charges Act*, the *Building Code Act*.

In addition, the Town's "Notice Policy – Regulatory" outlines the following methods to provide notice:

**3.7** Method of Notice: the following shall be deemed appropriate methods of Notice:

**3.7.1** 1<sup>st</sup> Class Mail;

**3.7.2** Posting on Town's Website;

**3.7.3** Personal Email;

**3.7.4** Advertising in the local newspaper with appropriate circulation area and/or a paper with general circulation (at the discretion of the Clerk).

**3.7.5** Listing and identifying the subject matter on a Regular Meeting Council Agenda.

The following is an overview of how the most frequent uses of advertisement are affected by the local newspaper closures and how Administration anticipates completing the notifications required by legislation.

### Development Services

The Town welcomes and encourages comments from the public and community organizations regarding the development review process. Community organizations have an important role to play in the process and can provide practical and useful insights into the potential impacts of the official plan and zoning by-law amendments, of subdivisions, commercial and industrial site plans and other planning matters that occur in or near their neighbourhoods.

The Province of Ontario establishes the ground rules for land use planning through the *Planning Act* (Act). Municipalities are given all of their powers and authority to act by the province. In accordance with the provisions contained in the Act, specific regulations for each application type sets out the minimum notice requirements, a list of matters for which public notice is required, the form and the manner in which notice is to be given, with the minimum time for providing such notice.

The Development Review Process includes:

- Pre-application Consultation
- Development Application Submission (complete application notification)
- Community and Agency Notification (public meetings notification)
- Decisions (notification of a decision)
- Post Approval

Notifications for official plan amendments, zoning by-law amendments, draft plan of subdivisions, draft plan of condominiums, minor variances, consents, require only the posting of the sign for a public meeting and mailing of a notice to landowners and regulated agencies, to provide communication of the complete application (where specified by the Act), public meeting and decision on an application.

For certain applications, including site plan control approvals, lifting of part lot control, removal of a holding zone, no sign or public notice for a public meeting is required under the Act.

For long range policy projects like an Official Plan, Zoning By-law, Secondary Plan or Shoreline Management Plan or other similar study, a newspaper advertisement is appropriate and in most circumstances required by the Act. With Windsor – Essex to lose 5 of its long standing community newspapers, it will be inconvenient for the Planning Division and perhaps more costly, for both the applicants and the Town, but not disruptive, as advertisements can be done through the Windsor Star or bulk mail outs through the tax department or the Town's community newsletter.

### Engineering and Infrastructure Services

There are several legislative requirements for advertising notices in newspapers relating to engineering and infrastructure projects. This includes notices of land expropriation, environmental assessment notices and public information centres relating to water and wastewater.

### Finance Services

Administration has been moving away from print advertising for Finance Services in favour of digital advertising. With the introduction of the Bids & Tenders online program, tenders are able to reach a broader market and do not rely on newspaper advertising deadlines. The introduction of the Bids & Tenders online program ensures that the Town is compliant with procurement laws including the free trade agreements which require notices to be given in particular electronic systems.

Despite the move to digital advertising, there remain some notices that must be advertised in a local newspaper. For example, Section 295 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* requires that a municipality must publish notice each year that copies of the audited financial statements and related information are available to residents upon request.

## Event and Information Communications

Due to the quick pace of information communications, media releases and emergency news is almost exclusively published on the Town's website and Facebook page. Notices are also sent to local newspaper and radio stations who may then choose to publish this news at no cost.

The Town of Lakeshore has traditionally advertised in local newspapers for large scale events or commemorations, such as Remembrance Day and Canada Day. Media outlets have also been invited to report on these events, or Administration would provide information and pictures after the event for reporting purposes.

## Volunteer Opportunities and Employee Hiring

Typically Administration has advertised volunteer opportunities for local boards and committees by way of local newspapers as well as the Town website. In addition, Human Resources has used local print media to promote job vacancies locally at a cost of \$4,500 - \$7,500 annually.

Administration will use other job posting boards in other forms of media to continue to promote job vacancies locally such as Indeed.ca, which is a free online option, as well as other methods of posting vacancies externally depending on the requirements of the position. For example, it is common for the Town to post to online media organizations such as AMCTO, Municipal World and the Municipal Information Network for common municipal positions. In addition, the Town will post using the websites of professional organizations such as Professional Engineers of Ontario for engineering positions and CPA Ontario for accounting positions.

## Municipal Elections

Municipal elections are held every four years and are regulated under the *Municipal Elections Act*. While advertisement for elections can vary based on the type, method and complexity of an election, there are several notices that require advertisement to the entire electorate.

While notices are prescribed in the legislation, there is no specific requirement related to advertisement in newspapers. Section 13.1 of the *Municipal Elections Act* states the following:

Any notice or other information that this Act requires the clerk to give shall be given in a form and manner and at a time that the clerk considers adequate to give reasonable notice or to convey the information, as the case may be.

The next municipal election will be held October 24, 2022. In preparation for the election, the Clerk will develop a communications strategy which will take into account accessibility, transparency, costs and outreach.

#### Alternative Methods of Notice

<b>Advertising Method</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Outreach</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Windsor Star</b>	<b>High</b> approx. \$3,500 for one ad, one day	<b>Low</b> approx. 2,500 subscriptions in Lakeshore	<b>High</b>
<b>Essex Free Press</b>	<b>Low</b> approx. \$250	<b>Low</b> Circulating in southern area of the Town only	<b>High</b>
<b>Tax Bill Insert</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b> Wide range but does not reach all residents (property owners only)	<b>Low</b> Twice per year (January and June)
<b>Water Bill Insert</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b> Wide range but does not reach all residents (property owners only)	<b>Low</b> Every two months (alternating months for each area)
<b>Lakeshore Waves Newsletter</b>	<b>Medium</b> January and June newsletters are inserts with tax bill (\$2,500), Fall newsletter is a mass mailing (\$5,000)	<b>High</b> Mailed to each household	<b>Low</b> 3 publications per year
<b>Mass mailing</b>	<b>High</b> approx. \$5,000	<b>High</b> Can be targeted by location	<b>High</b>
<b>Radio</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b> depends on number of selected stations	<b>High</b>
<b>Television</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b> depends on number of selected stations	<b>High</b>
<b>Facebook</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>

<b>Website subscription</b>	<b>Low</b> Free with website platform	<b>Medium</b> Subscribers only	<b>High</b>
<b>Temporary Road Sign</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b> Limited to targeted location. Short messages only	<b>High</b>
<b>Use of Electronic Road Signs</b>	<b>High</b> Free but frequent or wider usage of them would require the purchase of additional units	<b>Low</b> Limited to targeted location. Short messages only	<b>High</b>

### Financial Impacts

There is a possibility that where print advertising is required, the Town may incur increased costs for advertising due to the closure of the Postmedia papers. This may impact operational budgets and will be reflected in variance reports if necessary. Where possible though, Administration will attempt to mitigate those costs by using other methods.

**Attachment(s):** None.

### Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Impact of Local Newspaper Closures on Town of Lakeshore Business.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Jun 3, 2020

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

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