



**The Corporation of the Municipality of Wawa
Staff Monthly Report**

Office of Community Services and Tourism

Prepared For: Corporate Planning Committee	Report No.: AP 2017-12
Agenda Date: October 24, 2017	File No.: 9.30.3

Preamble

This report details the activities of the Department of Community Services and Tourism in the months of June, July, and August, 2017

General

In Memoriam – Lori Johnson, Director of Community Services and Tourism

This summer, the Municipality of Wawa lost one of the biggest contributors to our community, a co-worker, and a friend to many. Her loss continues to be felt and will continue to be felt by this community for years. Lori has been instrumental in the development and redevelopment of Wawa, and has been the champion of tourism for this community for her 25 years with the Municipality. We extend our sincere sympathies to Doug and Kathleen Johnson.

The Summer of Celebrations – Canada 150

This summer the Municipality had a lot to celebrate! Canada's sesquicentennial brought with it some important milestones for Wawa, including the unveiling of the 3rd Wawa Goose. Throughout the summer the Department of Community Services and Tourism assisted and planned several community events small and large. The most important part of this summer was the amount of community partnerships formed between the Municipality and community groups. The integration of the Wawa Music Festival in our Canada Day Celebrations was critical to the success of both the Festival as well as the Municipal celebration. This also allowed the Municipality to partner with the Wawa Legion, Rotary Club, and many local artisans to provide a truly memorable summer. We look forward to continuing to develop these partnerships in the future.

New Assistant Director of Community Services and Tourism

The Department welcomes Brian Lachine as the new Assistant Director for the Department. He has worked with the Municipality for the last 6 months coordinating many of this summer's special events and recreation programming.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Prepared By:

**Alex Patterson, Director,
Community Services and Tourism**

Capital Projects

Wawa Goose and Tourist Information Centre

The Wawa Goose was completed on schedule and within budget – just in time for the unveiling on Canada Day as part of Wawa’s Canada Day Celebrations. This project was a great example of community involvement and the importance of pursuing funding for large projects. The Wawa Goose Monument cost the Municipality \$272,000, of which 100% came from funding or community fundraising. We would like to thank all who contributed to the extensive fundraising campaign as well as all the staff who put such hard work into the Project.

Staff continue to wait on the MTO permit to complete portions of the Project. The TIC improvements will continue into the fall and may necessitate an earlier than normal shutdown of the TIC. The Project has been extended to compensate for the delay in MTO permitting, and if the permit is not received soon there is a possibility of extension into Spring 2018.

Wayfinding Signage

The Wawa Wayfinding signage is almost complete, with most signs installed at the time of writing of this report. The project will be complete before October, within budget and schedule. There will also be MTO signage installed in the fall welcoming visitors to the community. This will conclude phase 2 of the Wawa Wayfinding project. In Phase 3, staff will investigate any needs for new signage and prepare this as a capital budget item for future consideration.

Olympia Ice Resurfacer

The Olympia ice resurfacer has been delayed until December due to a large volume of orders received by Olympia this spring. Staff have been able to keep the original Olympia in operation for the duration of the 2017 season. This will impact the operating budget for 2017 as the expense of operating the original Olympia was only expected for the first half of the year. Staff will compensate in other areas to ensure the overage does not adversely affect the overall budget.

MMCC

Summer Rentals and Events

This summer was another busy one at the MMCC. Over 50% of weekends in the summer were booked for special events, as well as several others that occurred during the week. As the MMCC is now the only large accessible hall in the community, these bookings put extra pressure in a time where staff have commitments throughout the community.

These rentals and special events are an important service to the community as well as an opportunity for revenue generation for the Community Centre.

MMCC Gym Improvements

Thanks to community donations and staff effort, a revitalization of the Wawa Gym has been completed. This included a new piece of equipment, a fresh coat of paint and some creativity from our recreation staff to give a whole new look to the facility. Included in this revitalization is an equipment replacement plan to ensure that the gym is always relevant by making small improvements every year. Staff expect to see a rise in membership as well as a diversification of our members with the addition of more weight related equipment to balance the traditionally cardio-focused facility.

Arena and Curling

Preparations for Ice In

Staff have been working diligently over the summer months to prepare the arena for another season of ice. This includes many tasks to improve the arena as well as routine maintenance to ensure that everything runs smoothly for the winter season. Painting, replacing tiles, and deep cleaning every corner of the arena are just some of the ways that staff ensure a presentable and safe environment for many residents and visitors.

Parks and Trails

Summer Parks Maintenance

This summer, staff put an emphasis on beautification in key parks and areas of the community. In order of priority, these were: The Tourist Information Centre, Tourism Resource Parks (Scenic High Falls, Sandy Beach), The Waterfront (Roses' Beach to Lion's Beach), Queens' Park, Centennial Park, and the MMCC (sports fields). This leaves parks such as Beck, the Mission Park, and others as a low priority that are not maintained on as frequent a schedule as the others. This was a prioritization undertaken by staff to ensure that the priority parks were always up to a high standard, and had to come at the expense of other areas. This prioritization was based on both usage and promotion. Usage of the parks was estimated based on staff observations over the past 5 years. Some parks – specifically parks we consider Tourism Resources, are promoted by staff at the Tourist Information Centre. These areas of our community that are promoted to tourists are the highest priority as they are often the first or second impression to those unfamiliar with Wawa, as well as location that encourage tourists to extend their stay in Wawa. As this is an economic driver, as well as community recreation resources, these places take highest priority of all parks in Wawa. We have received mostly good feedback on the parks throughout the summer.

William Teddy Park Closure

Unfortunately, this summer the Municipality was forced to close William Teddy Park indefinitely. This resulted in the loss of use of the best boat launching facility on Wawa Lake, as well as most access to one of the most beautiful parks in the Wawa parks system. There have been many complaints regarding this closure from residents. Staff of both CST and IS have worked together on solutions for this park and have had good cooperation from the local OPP. Fundamentally, staff need to solve the source of the problem before reopening the park. This will involve a comprehensive solution that will incorporate physical barriers to damage, signage, and public education. This will also likely involve a complete revitalization of the Park to ensure that the Municipality is able to keep it up to applicable maintenance standards. More information will follow in the form of a plan and staff report detailing the recommended future of the Park.

Queens' Park Tree Maintenance

In response to a ratepayer inquiry, staff determined that there were multiple trees on Municipal parkland that were posing a risk to nearby homes. Both staff and an arborist worked to safely clear the hazard before the winter, and this was completed successfully. Staff will undertake a tree maintenance audit of Queens Park, where several other trees have been identified as potential risks over the next few years. For each tree that will be cut down, staff will replace these with new trees, and make an effort to diversify the tree stock in the park to further mitigate risk. Planting will occur as part of the park opening in spring 2018.

Community Events and Recreation**Canada Day Celebrations – Canada 150, Music Fest and New Wawa Goose**

The Wawa Goose Monument is one of the most photographed monuments in North America. Each year, thousands of travellers on their cross-Canada drive stop to photograph the Goose. This July 1st, our community, past residents, and visitors not only celebrated Canada's 150th birthday, but experienced the unveiling of the New Wawa Goose. Municipal staff, volunteers, and dignitaries pulled together to have a well-attended event that included a concert hosted by The Wawa Musical Festival, Etomica Insect Showcase, inflatables, food, a vendors market, and of course the Wawa Goose Unveiling.

Through major financing from FedNor, NOHFC and Algoma Power, this event was successful and very well attended. The New Wawa Goose looks over Highway 17 with pride and is now in many pictures of tourists and locals alike.

Northern Nationals Drag Race

This year marked the 6th annual Northern Nationals Drag Race. Preliminary numbers indicate the stabilization of attendance as well as driver numbers. This indicates that the race has moved solidly out of the establishment phase of growth and into the sustainability stage of development. As in previous years, the forecast dictated the spectator attendance more so than the weather itself, which held for the entire race weekend. Driver numbers stabilized, though their makeup had some key differences: Super Pro drivers increased, and Street Class drivers decreased. This shows that the Wawa race has established itself as a prominent race on the circuit, and is one of the keys to the sustainability of the event. The drivers also contribute the most to the economic development of the Race, which is expected to grow again this year. Expenses were also more controlled this year, due to a variety of factors. The race results will be presented in detail at a report to be delivered in the following months.

The Great Trail – Wawa Access point Grand Opening

The Great Trail is a multi-use trail that goes coast to coast in Canada. The Great Trail includes roads, hiking trails and waterways. On August 26, we celebrated our section of the waterway trail with a ribbon cutting ceremony, dinner, and a concert. With funds sourced from The Lake Superior Watershed Conservancy and the Federal Government, campsites, washroom facilities, signage, and the celebration were all enjoyed by dignitaries and local citizens.

The event included a paddle by voyageur canoe and kayak up the Michipicoten River to The Great Trail site. Around the signage, staff spoke of the importance of the trail, explained the signage and gave a tour of the site. A letter was read from the Lake Superior Watershed Conservancy and the ribbon cutting took place. Wawa Councillor Ivan Besner participated in the event and represented the Municipality at the ribbon cutting ceremony.

The participants paddled back down the river to be welcomed by a dinner. Participants the listened to live music and had the opportunity to spend more time on the water. Approximately 80 participants were at this well attended final event of the summer.

Summer Programming

When the ice goes out in the arena, our sports programs begin outside. Not only did the Community Centre host many of our local schools' soccer tournaments, we also successfully organized and ran the Timbits Soccer and baseball leagues. These served the youth in our community Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays for evening activities. This season we experienced high numbers of participants in both baseball and soccer, with nearly double the participation rate as compared to 2016. There was also many more volunteers that came to help out – and we appreciate the support!

Tourism

Social Media Following

Communication is always a challenge when providing services to a community. By using traditional forms of communication (phone, posters and radio), we are able to connect with certain demographics. With social media and internet communications being used by a large and ever increasing demographic, a strong social media presence is the new gold standard of getting information into the hands of the public. While this makes an important part of our overall media strategy, it is equally as important that we continue communications through more traditional channels to reach the maximum amount of residents.

The Wawa Recreation Facebook group has new members joining every week. We currently have 830 members in this group, with an average of one new member a day over the summer months. The Wawa Tourism page has doubled its following this summer, paying dividends to the exposure our community receives online. This allows for on the spot notifications and community happenings to be effectively communicated to residents and tourists alike, as well as offers the community a new advertising medium at low cost. Recently we have created a Wawa Gym on Instagram. This allows users to share pictures and fitness goals. As technology changes, we will follow a strategy to keep abreast of trends in communication, with the goal of keeping our residents informed and engaged.

Auxiliary Services

National Car Rental

The summer months have seen an increased use of National Car Rental services. June had 36 separate rentals, July had 35 and August had 27. Staff attribute these increases to an increase in natural resource traffic and expect that rentals will return to a more normal 20-25 per month in the winter.

Other Projects

Sandy Beach OCEF

Staff have postponed the OCEF Sandy Beach project this summer due to other commitments in the community such as the Canada 150 celebrations as well as the Evacuation taking priority. This project will resume this fall and continue into next spring. This project will rely on school involvement to accomplish its goals. The Municipality has until 2019 to complete the Project.

Ski Chalet Contents

With the recent sale of the Municipal Ski Chalet, staff have undertaken a project to clear out the contents and store or dispose of the articles contained therein. These articles ranged from heavily damaged ski boots to priceless community artefacts stored there by the Heritage Committee. A contractor has been sourced to undertake the job of safely removing and packaging the contents of the chalet, and staff have worked with the Heritage Committee to transport the artefacts being kept to a secure location for their continued storage.

Funding and Grants**Wawa Waterfront Project**

Staff are ecstatic to announce that our funding application to FedNor has been approved. This was the final application needed to acquire 90% funding for the Project. To date, Staff have sourced \$1,750,000 of the \$1,950,000 project, leaving only \$200,000 to come out of Wawa's tax base. This project's timeline will be changed to reflect the timing of this final funding announcement, and work will start in spring 2018 and continue through 2020. More details, including a public consultation for the environmental assessment will occur over the winter.

Conclusion

The summer of 2017 will be remembered for a very long time in Wawa. Staff are very proud of the multitude of successful summer events that we were able to provide to the community on this 150th anniversary of our Nation. The unveiling of the Wawa Goose in particular will remain one of the milestones of our community and the event was very successful. Staff are now working on switching gears to winter mode, and the focus now shifts to the MMCC as the ice and dance seasons start.

Attachments

End of Report.