



REPORT

Council

Meeting Date: November 20, 2023

FROM: Strategy, Policy and Communications Department

DATE: November 7, 2023

SUBJECT: Community Energy Partnerships

LOCATION: Town Hall

WARD: Town-wide

Page 1

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That future community energy planning and partnerships proceed through Future Energy Oakville.
2. That the town no longer appoint a Council member to the Oakville Energy Task Force.
3. That the Services Agreement between the town and Future Energy Oakville in Appendix A of the report from the Strategy, Policy and Communications department be endorsed.
4. That a Councillor be identified for inclusion on the Future Energy Oakville (FEO) Board of Directors, and that the town work with the FEO Board of Directors to recommend the inclusion of that Councillor on the FEO Board of Directors.
5. That \$50,000 in town funding be released to Future Energy Oakville for 2023 and \$50,000 in town funding for 2024 be released pending approval of the 2024 town budget.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- Council unanimously endorsed the Community Energy Strategy (CES), presented by the Oakville Energy Task Force (OETF), on February 25, 2020, which was developed in collaboration between the Town, Sheridan College, and the OETF.

- The original 2018 OETF charter established a mandate to provide a forum for community-based oversight in the development of the CES. The charter noted that the mandate of the task force would be completed upon Council's approval of the CES.
- The CES included the recommendation to create a standalone organization, now known as Future Energy Oakville (FEO), to accelerate and help coordinate the CES implementation. FEO's mandate is to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy through engagement and collaboration with government, local businesses, the community, and other stakeholders.
- FEO delegates annually to Council, providing a progress and financial update as per its Services Agreement with the town. As of 2022, the town has transferred \$250,000 to FEO, through the capital budget, to support start-up costs. The town has also budgeted additional capital dollars for 2023, 2024 and 2025.
- Despite setbacks beyond its control, FEO has built momentum to advance its mandate, including conducting or planning public education initiatives, podcasts, discovery workshops, and a fundraising campaign to support the execution of the CES. FEO has also indicated interest in working with stakeholders and the town on home energy retrofit training for contractors and residents, district energy systems, and updating the CES, which will begin in late 2024.
- Staff thank the OETF for its efforts in championing community energy considerations and supporting the creation of FEO. Staff understand that, in effect, the OETF is defunct based on several considerations and that future community energy planning and partnerships should proceed with and through Future Energy Oakville (FEO) as a valuable partner.

BACKGROUND:

Community Energy Strategy

A priority action of Council's 2019–2022 Strategic Plan was for the town to facilitate partnerships to develop and implement the town's first [Community Energy Strategy](#) (CES). Council unanimously endorsed the CES, presented by the Oakville Energy Task Force (OETF), on February 25, 2020, which was developed in collaboration between the Town, Sheridan College, and the OETF.

The CES established a common community vision for innovation and collaboration to achieve a sustainable energy future and set 2041 community-wide goals for improving energy efficiency, reducing GHG emissions, and enhancing the local economy.

The CES represents a significant part of the community's response to Oakville's climate emergency, as declared unanimously by Council on June 24, 2019.

In September 2022, Council received the 2022 [Community Energy Strategy Implementation Update](#) report, which provided a progress update on CES implementation, and which this report builds on.

Oakville Energy Task Force

To develop the CES, the town and Sheridan College brought together local leaders from business, government, utilities, and citizen groups to form the Oakville Energy Task Force (OETF) and undertake extensive community consultations.

The OETF was developed as a cross-sectoral group of local energy and community leaders to leverage community relationships and perspectives to advise on and advocate for the successful development and implementation of the CES. The inaugural meeting of the OETF was [January 23, 2019](#).

The OETF [charter](#) established a mandate to provide a forum for community-based oversight in the development of the CES. Specifically, it provided guidance, challenge and support, technical advice, community knowledge and networks, and an ongoing forum for consultation and feedback to the public and Council at key points through the development of the CES.

The term of the OETF charter noted that the mandate of the task force would be completed upon Council's approval of the CES and that the OETF is charged with determining its ongoing role in supporting the implementation of the CES. According to the [minutes](#) and discussion from the OETF meeting on [November 6, 2019](#), the OETF was envisioned to become a board of directors or advisory board and affirmed their mandate to oversee an Implementation Management Office (now known as Future Energy Oakville). It is unclear if the OETF charter was formally updated and there is no Memorandum of Understanding between FEO and OETF.

Currently, the OETF only has one co-chair, with the other previous OETF co-chair departing the role to join the FEO Board of Directors as Chair. Staff understand that the OETF has not met since April 2022.

Future Energy Oakville

Future Energy Oakville (FEO) was established in 2021 as an independent, community-based, not-for-profit organization that is supported by the Town of Oakville and a variety of forward-thinking investors, community sponsors, and partners.

FEO's mandate is:

“to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy through engagement and collaboration with government, local businesses, the community, and other

stakeholders. We will coordinate an Oakville tailored approach to this effort focusing on the roadmap outlined in Oakville's Community Energy Strategy by providing information and engaging the community with talks, workshops showcasing global best practices, innovative solutions and advocating for policy changes. Our approach will be positive and collaborative, with a focus on achieving measurable outcomes to the community."

The FEO is overseen by a Board of Directors. The board was originally comprised of OETF members, three of whom still sit on the FEO Board. FEO membership and board members are one and the same, apart from the last noted Co-Chair of the OETF, who declined a seat on the FEO Board but remains an FEO member. FEO members include post secondary institutions, industry, and public representatives. Unlike the OETF, the town does not have representation on the FEO board.

The town's Services Agreement with FEO was first executed in June 2021 for a 14-month term, ending August 2022. This agreement was then extended in September 2022 for an additional 6 months, until March 31, 2023. FEO delegates annually to Council, providing a progress and financial update as per the Services Agreement. As of 2022, the Town has transferred \$250,000 to FEO, through the capital budget, to support start-up costs. The town has also budgeted additional capital dollars for 2023, 2024 and 2025.

FEO will delegate at the November 20, 2023 Council meeting to provide an update on work to date and request the release of 2023 funding and 2024 funding, pending Council approval of the 2024 budget.

In addition to town funding, Sheridan provides in-kind support to FEO and Suncor has provided \$180,000 to FEO, specifically earmarked towards additional fundraising. FEO has also shared that they are securing additional funding and advancing a fundraising plan more broadly.

With the appointment of an interim Executive Director and new Board Chair, FEO has been building its community presence and momentum in 2023. This additional funding will help advance FEO's mandate and support a number of public education initiatives, including [Moving Energy Forward](#) in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and Professional Engineers of Ontario on November 7, 2023, ongoing podcasts, delivering several Discovery Workshops (workshop tentatively scheduled for February) and launching a fundraising campaign to secure the resources needed to increase FEO's ability to support the execution of the CES.

Going forward FEO has indicated its interest in expanding upon the above-mentioned initiatives as well as working with stakeholders and the town on home energy retrofit training for contractors and residents, district energy systems and is well positioned to work with the town and other partners to update the CES, which is planned to begin in late 2024.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

With an update to the CES planned to begin in late 2024, clarity on roles and responsibilities between FEO and OETF is necessary and there is inherent overlap between the two organizations. FEO has its own board of directors, there is some duplication in membership and the mandates of the two are similar. Whereas OETF was to act as knowledgeable and trusted connectors and advocates to support FEO, FEO looks to engage and collaborate with government, local businesses, the community and other stakeholders. Hence, input from the community would be sourced from specialized groups or advisory panels focused on specific priority projects, comprising community members with expertise in the relevant fields.

Staff believe that despite a slow start due to some factors outside of its control, FEO is building momentum and would be well positioned to take a lead role, along with the town, Sheridan College, and Oakville Enterprises Corporation, in developing the next five-year CES. Staff recognize that, at FEO's discretion, there may be an opportunity for OETF to transition into an FEO advisory body for the next CES.

Staff thank the OETF for its efforts in championing community energy considerations and supporting the creation of Future Energy Oakville. While there is no formal mechanism to dissolve the OETF, it is recommended that the town no longer appoint a Council member to the OETF board.

Staff also recommend that future community energy planning and partnerships proceed with and through Future Energy Oakville (FEO), based on the following:

- The OETF's last formal meeting was in April 2022. Since the town appointed a new representative to the OETF in November 2022, no OETF meeting has occurred.
- The OETF has not replaced the second co-chair since the vacancy of that position in March 2023
- There is considerable overlap between the role of the two organizations in supporting the current and future CES. FEO was created to accelerate and coordinate the implementation of the CES and is well positioned to support the development of the updated CES.
- FEO has a Board of Directors and would not require a second oversight body.
- The OETF's original charter noted that the task force's mandate would be completed upon Council's approval of the CES.
- FEO has built momentum through its startup activities and is well positioned to continue to cultivate partnerships, to champion community energy considerations with its expertise, and to work with the town and other partners such as Sheridan College and Oakville Enterprises Corporation to renew and update the CES.

Staff recommends, based on the workplan that FEO has shared, the above-noted momentum that FEO is building, and in recognition of FEO being an important partner in developing the next CES, that the updated Services Agreement between the town and FEO in Appendix A be endorsed, with some of the following key highlights and changes to note:

- FEO no longer requires administrative support from the town.
- The town will continue to provide technical advice and support with staff attending board meetings as an advisor.
- The Town will work with the FEO Board of Directors to recommend the inclusion of a Councillor on the FEO Board of Directors.
- The release of town funds in the amount of \$50,000 for FEO as planned for 2023.
- The release of town funds in the amount of \$50,000 for FEO, as planned for 2024, pending approval of the 2024 budget.
- FEO to report back to Council by November 2024 on updated progress and financial information.
- FEO to work with the town to develop the scope and terms of the update to the CES planned for 2025, for which FEO will be the lead partner.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

Community stakeholders have committed significant hours to date to support the setup and establishment of Future Energy Oakville. Significant community engagement also went into the development of the Community Energy Strategy.

(B) FINANCIAL

The Services Agreement (Appendix A) builds on the Town's commitments from the unanimously endorsed February 25, 2020 Town Council report and original Services Agreement executed in June 2021. The Services Agreement is for the period November 20, 2023 to December 31, 2025 and outlines the terms of financial contributions from the town to Future Energy Oakville.

To-date, the Town, through the capital budget, has approved \$300,000 for FEO to support start-up costs, based on the below breakdown:

2020: \$100,000

2021: \$100,000

2022: \$50,000

2023: \$50,000 (previously approved and to be released following this report)

2024: \$50,000 (pending budget approval)

2025: \$50,000 (pending budget approval)

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

The energy initiatives led by the Town that directly support implementation of the Community Energy Strategy's 2020-2025 priority projects are being spearheaded and supported by several departments including: Strategy, Policy, and Communications; Facilities and Construction Management; Finance; Legal Services; Municipal Enforcement Services; Oakville Transit; Planning Services; and Transportation and Engineering.

(D) COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This report addresses Council's strategic priorities related to: Environmental Sustainability.

(E) CLIMATE CHANGE/ACTION

Future Energy Oakville and the progress on the priority projects outlined in the Community Energy Strategy is fundamental to mitigating our community's impact to climate change. The Community Energy Strategy provides the pathway to achieving an ambitious greenhouse gas reduction goal. Future Energy Oakville provides the mechanism for realizing the goals of the Strategy by championing a livable, sustainable, and resilient energy future for Oakville.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Services Agreement

Prepared by:

Swaraj Mann – Manager, Corporate Strategy

Recommended by and Submitted by:

Julie Clarke – Director, Strategy, Policy and Communications