

Draft official plan addresses wind farms, agri-tourism

BY SARAH FISHER

The draft of the 2006 Essex official plan includes zoning instructions for wind-generated power farms, plans to draw agri-business to Essex's agricultural areas and a study with the Ministry of Transportation about the possibility of development adjacent to Highway 3.

Essex councillors started reviewing the 2006 proposal for the official plan July 31. The official plan offers a 20-year guideline of development for the municipality. When the official plan is approved, it will replace the official plans for the four different municipalities included in the amalgamation of 1999. Typically, the plans are reviewed and amendments are made every five years.

"It's been in works for a little while," said Chad Jeffery, the town's planner. "It

kind of got put on the back burner for a while, while we waited for the county's official plan to be approved. Right now we're aggressively working to a point where council can adopt it and have the county council consider it for approval ... The county is the approval authority."

Among the more interesting components of the official plan draft, Jeffery said, is the subject of wind farms. Currently, there is no zoning in the municipality of Essex that would allow for the development of a wind farm. Jeffery addressed the topic in the official plan after receiving several calls from businesses considering Essex as a possible future site.

"Wind farms shall be permitted in the agricultural, lakeshore residential, lakeshore residential/agri-tourism designations subject to a site-specific zoning by-law amendment where the applicant

demonstrates, through appropriate studies, undertaken by qualified professionals, that all issues related to the amendment application shall be addressed," the draft reads.

The studies the town may require from wind-generated power companies include a noise impact study, a visual impact study, and an environmental impact study.

Jeffery said municipalities are being instructed by the provincial government to encourage development that promotes energy conservation. Official plans must be in accordance with the provincial policy statement, which encourages development within urban centres and protects agricultural areas. Higher density development within urban areas will give people the opportunity to be less reliant on automobiles and ensure that the city centres fill up before development pushes the boundaries of a municipality. Construction is also encour-

aged to include energy conservation, such as designs that maximize sunlight exposure.

The official plan also includes plans to encourage agri-tourism within the municipality. The report states much of the lake-front area east of the Colchester hamlet is designated residential/agri-tourism. The area is listed as a prime location for vineyards. The plan states that the predominant use of the land should be single unit dwellings, small inns and agricultural uses. It says "home occupations" would be permitted, but that all agri-tourism development must be serviced to the town's satisfaction.

The July 31 meeting was the first review of the official plan draft. Other meetings are expected before town councillors approve the plan.

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DELIVERY FROM SCHNEIDER'S – Pat Heffernan, manager of the art department for Schneider Foods, left, offers his congratulations to Harry Bergman, the executive director of the Canadian Transportation Museum and Historic Village, during a ceremony at the museum Aug. 3. Schneider Foods donated three antique delivery vehicles to the museum. The cars are a 1913 Model T, a 1931 Model A Sedan Delivery, and a 1950 Chevrolet. Heffernan said the cars were stored in a warehouse in Kitchener. The company plans to move its art department and decided to give the vehicles to the museum.

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