

Here are the highlights from the Lanark County Council meeting held Wednesday, May 25.

Early Learning and Child Care Agreement Proceeding: Council has received an initial information report regarding the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) Agreement following a presentation by Director of Social Services Emily Hollington at the community services committee meeting last month.

Hollington outlined the county's progress on implementing the new \$13.2 billion child care agreement reached between the Ontario and federal governments. The agreement spans six years for a national child care plan to provide more accessible and high-quality child care. Families with children under age six or who turn six before June 30 and who receive child care from a centre that opts into the program can expect to see costs of an average of \$10 per day by the end of 2025, Hollington explained. It is expected that 86,000 new spaces will be created for children up to age five by the end of 2026, and the agreement includes better wages for Registered Early Childhood Educators working with children up to age 12.

The program is fully funded by the provincial and federal governments. There is no financial impact for the county, and there is administration funding available to cover the costs of the "significant increase in workload," Hollington said. The county's 2022 funding allocation of \$3.5 million is based on data representing the current licensed child care system. Future allocations will be based on a new funding formula. "All current child care programs and funding portfolios remain in place; CWELCC is an addition," Hollington added.

As service manager, the county administers the CWELCC program along with the current child care system. "Current licensed child care providers must choose to opt in or out of the CWELCC program by mid summer," Hollington explained. "If they opt in, they must apply to the county to determine eligibility and meet conditions." Providers that opt out can continue their ongoing operations. Those that opt in will receive new service schedules and requirements based on CWELCC guidelines. County staff are currently developing an application package with new CWELCC policies and procedures, a new provider funding formula including allowable profit margin and updating old policies to align with the new program and reporting practices."

In addition, the county will be required to develop a space expansion plan and meet updated guidelines. The province will be developing and implementing a child care start-up grant program. More information will come back to council over the summer. For more information, contact Emily Hollington, Director of Social Services, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 2101.

County Designates Portions of OVRT as Accessible: Council passed a by-law amendment that changes definitions in the by-law regulating the Ottawa Valley Recreational Trails to include "accessible" and "wilderness" sections.

In a presentation to the economic development committee earlier this year, CAO Kurt Greaves explained accessible sections meet the accessible design standards as defined by Ontario Regulation 191/11 (Integrated Accessibility Standards), while wilderness sections are exempted from the standards.

The sections designated as accessible are from 800 metres south of John Street to Carrs Street (2.81 km) in Mississippi Mills and from the Hwy. 7 underpass to Townline Road (2.14 km) in Carleton Place. For more information, contact Kurt Greaves, CAO, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1101.

Vaccination Policy Revisions Approved: Council has approved staff-recommended changes to the corporate COVID-19 vaccination policy.

At the corporate services committee meeting earlier this month, CAO Kurt Greaves indicated the changes are minor to allow for flexibility in testing requirements as the pandemic evolves.

The revisions also make adjustments related to booster doses for designated staff members at the discretion of the Director of Long-Term Care and the CAO. For more information, contact Kurt Greaves, CAO, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1101.

Fire Communications and Dispatch RFP Results Received: Council received a report regarding the request for proposals results for fire communications and dispatch services. Staff have been directed to develop a contract for council consideration.

In a report to the corporate services committee earlier this month, Clerk Jasmin Ralph explained the county contracts fire communications centre services on behalf of the local municipalities, a service which has been provided by the Town of Smiths Falls since 2005. The last five-year agreement expires July 1, 2022. Consequently, an RFP was issued in consultation with the municipal fire services in March.

Ralph explained the RFP included the transition to the Next Generation 911 (NG911) system, which is a federal mandated evolution of 911 capability to a new platform, along with requirements to meet certain National Fire Protection Association standards.

The only response received was from the Town of Smiths Falls. Ralph indicated it meets the RFP requirements and is within a reasonable budget. The RFP provided for a five-year contract with two possible five-year extensions based on mutual agreement.

"The local municipalities have been involved and consulted during the development of the RFP and will continue to have input in the development of the contract," Ralph noted. For more information, contact Jasmin Ralph, Clerk, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1502.

Upcoming Meetings: County Council, Wednesday, June 8, 5 p.m.; Community Services, June 8 (following County Council); Corporate Services, June 8 (following Community Services). **County Council, Wednesday, June 9, 5 p.m.;** Public Works, June 9 (following County Council); Economic Development, June 9 (following Public Works). Watch for details about public access to meetings on agendas and through online notifications. For more information, contact 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1502. Like "LanarkCounty1" on Facebook and follow "@LanarkCounty1" on Twitter!

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