

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE - JUNE 20, 2005

VILLAGE OF WOODBRIDGE QUASQUICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

Recommendation:

Councillor Tony Carella recommends the appointment of a committee to plan the celebration in 2007 of the quasquicentennial (125th anniversary) of the incorporation of the Village of Woodbridge as a municipality, said committee to

- be chaired by the Ward 2 councillor, and to
- include His Worship the Mayor and Members of Council (either ex-officio or as active participants, as they may choose and so indicate), and to
- include up to seven members of the community residing in Woodbridge and recruited by the Clerks Department no later than December 31, 2005, in the same manner as employed with respect to appointments to non-statutory advisory committees, and to
- have reasonable and appropriate staff support

Economic Impact:

There will be no immediate economic impact in terms of the creation and operation of the committee; however, one of its principal tasks will be to determine the reasonable costs of appropriate celebrations, both in terms of the 2006 budgetary cycle (with respect to preparatory measures of a capital nature) and of the 2007 budgetary cycle (with respect to expenses connected with the celebrations within the quasquicentennial year).

Purpose:

To reinforce among the citizens of Vaughan an appreciation of the history of Woodbridge.

Background - Analysis and Options:

The Village of Woodbridge has a rich history, beginning in the first years of the nineteenth century. Like many early Ontario communities, Woodbridge developed around a waterway. The Humber River provided a ready-made transportation system and the power source necessary for economic growth. The village consequently became the commercial centre of an excellent farming area.

Woodbridge has its origins with the British Crown granting the west half of lots six and seven, concession 7 of Vaughan Township to Jacob Philips and Hugh Cameron in 1802. During the early 1800's there was some development in surrounding areas. A school had been built on Vaughan's eighth concession; a flour mill and store flourished at Pine Grove, and scattering of houses arose around Smith's mill (what is today Hayhoe Mills at Pine Grove), becoming known as Smithsville. A similar settlement, known as Brownsville, came into being around a mill run by John Brown (on the Humber at what is today Wallace Street). Woodbridge proper, however, did not begin to take the form of a settlement or village until the arrival of Rowland Burr in 1837. Rowland Burr is credited with being the founder of Woodbridge. Between the two settlements of Brownsville and Smithsville, there developed a third settlement. This, too, grew around a flour mill, Rowland Burr's mill, and so took on the name of Burwick. In 1838, Burr also erected a saw mill and textile mill. By the 1840's Burr's enterprises had evolved into the most prosperous businesses in the area. As the population of Burwick increased, the

government was petitioned to establish a post office. In order to avoid confusion with another settlement in Canada West with the same name, Burwick was renamed Woodbridge in 1855.

During the following decade, Woodbridge experienced a great upsurge in growth as a result of the establishment of the Abell Agricultural Works in 1862. Beginning with twenty employees, entrepreneur John Abell's factory came to employ upwards of 200 people by 1874. Abell's plant specialized in the production of steam-powered agriculture equipment; in 1880 his Triumph Tractor and steam engine received a number of awards at the Toronto Industrial Exhibition.

By 1880 a thriving community had developed around Woodbridge's varied business enterprises. In addition to those enterprises noted above, the village could at this time boast two general stores, the village could at this time boast two general stores, a carriage works, two churches, a school, two hotels (the Burwick Hotel and the Inkerman Hotel), a library (the Mechanic's Institute acted in this capacity), two newspapers (in 1873 S.E. Horne published the Woodbridge Enterprise and in 1875 James Mann edited the Woodbridge Free Press), and a post office. Also, there is evidence of further economic activity as early records for the area indicated the presence of a considerable range of professions and trades in 1880's Woodbridge: physician and surgeon, druggist, printer and publisher, watchmaker, butcher, undertaker, tinsmith, bricklayer, and cooper.

By 1882 Woodbridge's population had exceeded 1000, and as a result was formally incorporated as a municipality, the Village of Woodbridge. Brownsville was by this time considered to be part of Woodbridge, and the articles of incorporation granted official sanction to this fact. A Reeve and 5 Councillors were elected, and a small salaried civic administration headed by the Clerk-Treasurer was appointed to deal with day-to-day affairs. The Woodbridge Municipal Government grew to encompass a large variety of functions. By the mid-20th century, it exercised control over public works, law enforcement, fire protection, recreation, and welfare. As well, other areas of municipal life by the 1950's had come under the auspices of a number of local boards; these were as follows: the Public School Board, Planning Board, Library Board, War Memorial Board, Community Centre Board, and the Board of Health; as well as the Woodbridge Hydro-Electric Commission. This system was to continue until 1971 when the Village of Woodbridge amalgamated with Vaughan Township to form the Town of Vaughan.

During the late 1880's Woodbridge experienced a severe economic decline as a result of John Abell relocating his plant to Toronto. However, the local economy was able to weather the storm, despite a pronounced decline in population, and experienced something of a slow but sustained resurgence after World War I. Indeed, the Village's economic dislocation and subsequent rebirth are mirrored in Woodbridge's population statistics over time; its 1884 population of 1400 dropped to just over 600 in 1901; it managed to climb to 672 in 1921, 812 in 1931, 1044 in 1951, 1699 in 1951, 1958 in 1956, 2315 in 1961, 2473 in 1966.

Woodbridge's renewed growth was in part precipitated by the development of new roads. The old toll-roads disappeared, and along with them the Village's three toll-gates. In 1911 the first County Road system was introduced and work got under way in Woodbridge in 1912 with a portion of Pine street being paved at this point; over time, most of the Village's thoroughfares were paved and improved. Moreover, in 1926, the Ontario Government constructed a new metal bridge over the Humber, and as a Depression-era make-work project undertook the construction of Highway #7 during 1930 and 1931.

Also, impetus for growth and commercial potential had been provided when in 1908 the Canadian Pacific Railway Company was routed through Woodbridge (the line's predecessor, the Toronto, Grey, and Bruce had only extended to the village's outer limits

when it was initially constructed in 1870 and 1871). Moreover, 1914 saw the extension of the Toronto Suburban Railway Company's Weston Line to Woodbridge; passenger service continued until 1924, and freight service until 1930, by which time the line's economic usefulness had been superseded by the automobile.

Development was also speeded along by a number of technological advances. In 1891 Woodbridge received limited telephone service, with full service being available by 1909. This was followed in 1914 by the advent of hydro to the village. Water service was reality for many residents by the mid-1920's.

The increase in immigration experienced by Canada as a whole in the post-World War II era also helps to account for Woodbridge's growth. In fact, between 1951 and 1956 a total of 10 sub-divisions arose in the village. This trend of rapid growth was to continue.

Today's Woodbridge, like the City of Vaughan as a whole, is composed of a diverse mix of peoples and cultures bound together by a sense of past and a sense of community. Encompassing the former hamlets of Brownsville, Elder's Mills, Vaughanville, and Pine Grove, recent population statistics put Woodbridge at more than 40 000 inhabitants.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007:

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved.

Conclusion:

To ensure the proper celebration by the City of Vaughan of an anniversary as important as the quasiquicentennial of the incorporation of the Village of Woodbridge requires much time, thought, and effort. Therefore it is appropriate that the first steps be taken so that a committee can be in place no later than January 1, 2006.

Attachments:

None

Report prepared by:

Councillor Tony Carella

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor Tony Carella