

Council sets ambitious reduction targets

By Mark Pavilons

Urged to put their money where their mouth is, King councillors voted to make a 45% emissions reduction target as their goal through 2030.

In receiving the draft Energy Management Plan, council decided to up the ante, and increase a 45% reduction target for energy and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG).

Township staff presented potential targets to committee members and using feedback from its 2014 energy management plan and subsequent data, prepared the draft plan. The completion of the draft plan ensures municipal compliance with provincial legislation and is viewed as 'the beginning of defining our choices as we go forward,' according to staff.

The Energy Management Plan guides King's efforts for reducing energy and GHG emissions related to major infrastructure such as facilities, street lights, vehicles. It also identifies practices and energy-saving opportunities and allows staff to continue to make improvements over time.

A proposed Climate Change Plan will provide a broader spectrum approach to the goals for future reductions.

The first step in creating the plan was setting targets to reflect King's vision for the future. Statistical data suggested a 30% reduction in corporate energy emissions by 2030 and a 35% energy reduction in corporate facilities.

These 'support tangible energy management improvements in King through 2050,' according to staff.

Input from the public and other sources suggested a 45% reduction in corporate energy emissions.

Members of the public urged council to not only solidify their commitment but increase the targets.

Ann Raney said it's vital that we match the latest UN recommendations of 45% reduction. She presented a petition signed by 389 residents from King.

The sooner we act, the less costly it will be she said, noting the next few years are 'vitally important.'

She said we can't afford to linger, stressing we have a very short window to act decisively.

Bruce/Craig said to meet our goals in just 11 short years (2030) we have to 'roll up our sleeves and try to get there.'

Mayor/Steve Pellegrini said King has always been fiscally responsible and things are changing. More electric vehicles will become commonplace in the years to come and costs will come down. King's fleet of vehicles will eventually be converted to electric, too. 'We're moving that way,' he pointed out.

He said such a plan is important because for every decision the Township makes, the environment and these targets will be in the forefront. Just acting in that manner will make King greener, he said.

The admittedly frugal Councillor Bill Cober said this evolution will come with a hefty price tag and councillors may have to make some tough decisions in the future regarding services. He said it may come down to building a new facility, or reaching targets.

Councillor Jakob Schneider agreed, noting the Township will have to be 'particular in how we get to those targets.'

Staff did point out that many energy-savings moves come with a cost. Converting signage to LED at the Nobleton Arena will cost roughly \$80,000 and solar conversion in halls in Pottageville and Schomberg will cost upwards of \$40,000. The installation of EV charging stations across King will cost upwards of \$50,000.

Staff stressed that implementing the target will require 'a significant investment' and the 10-year cost would range from \$6.3 million to \$22 million.

'The desire to increase target levels must be weighed against other municipal needs and priorities, understanding that delivery of a program of this magnitude will most likely require reductions in service levels elsewhere,' staff warned.

Staff have upped annual funding to \$100,000 they pointed out that won't be enough to meet the long-term target.

'Undertaking these initiatives will have significant financial implications that will require identification or alternate source of funding in the near term.'

King CAO/Dan Kostopoulos stressed this plan is about energy consumption and not greenhouse gas emissions. King's recently passed tree bylaw actually goes a long way to offsetting GHG emissions. The Climate Change Plan will look at the broader approach.

He also stressed energy consumption isn't always discretionary. The 30% target was already a stretch, he said, and relies on future

technology. Even at 30% it will place some financial constraints on the municipality.

Mayor Pellegrini said this move by council will light a fire to motivate council to make tough decisions and look for new innovations. It's an aspirational goal.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer said if the science says 45% reduction is needed, then why not aim high?

Councillor Avia Eek said we all have to challenge ourselves to make improvements. The 45% target is not a hard number.