

Tudor and Cashel continue Strategic Plan discussions

By Mike Riley

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Building upon their discussions on their Strategic Plan on Nov. 5 at their committee of the whole meeting, Tudor and Cashel Township council met with Carey McMaster, business development and growth specialist with TRAICON at their Dec. 5 committee of the whole meeting. By the end of the meeting, they'd agreed to get a proposal from McMaster on how to proceed and to convene an ad hoc Strategic Planning committee to assist with the process. McMaster comments on the meeting. Mayor Dave Hederson opened the meeting by recalling how they'd talked about getting a facilitator to help them through the Strategic Plan process, and Nancy Carrol, the clerk and treasurer, had suggested McMaster. Consequently, McMaster had been invited and was present at their Dec. 5 committee meeting to participate in the discussion. "Some of the things we talked about last time were we wanted to figure out who we really are in Tudor and Cashel. We know we've got three hamlets of Gilmour, Gunter and Millbridge. We also know we have full-time residents, we have seasonal residents, both on lakes and in towns," he says. "Some 790 residents live in Tudor and Cashel full-time year-round, but that number goes up to about 1,700 when the seasonal residents come up in the spring and summer. Hederson conceded it was kind of a mix. "I think what we need to understand is what did we have here, what do we have here today and what do we want to look like going forward? Do we want growth in this township and what does that look like? Or do we want to maintain the status quo?" he says. Hederson spoke of the need to also increase assessed values to offset the cost increases as they do the budget each year, and of taglines, like "wildly authentic" or "a hidden gem," which he said speaks to vision and mission statement, and let's people know who they are. Hederson then invited McMaster to tell council about herself and her credentials. She said her title was business development and growth specialist and that she works with entrepreneurs, not for profits and municipalities in many capacities. Her company is called TRAICON and she's been working in this role for over 20 years. For more information on McMaster, her credentials and TRAICON, go to www.traicon.ca. "So, I do a lot of planning, and helping people with their plans, whether they're organizational plans, strategic plans, financial plans, market research, anything and everything," she says. In response to Hederson's question on how she would approach Tudor and Cashel's Strategic Plan, McMaster said her involvement is at the discretion of the client and can be as much or as little as they stipulate. "It depends on what your scope is and what deliverables you're looking for and your budget," she says. McMaster said they would start out and do a document review (any documents that consolidate where the township is now and where it's going), a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis to provide a framework for matching the township's goals, programs and capacities to the environment in which they operate, a PESTLE (political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental) analysis to give a bird's eye view of the whole environment from different angles one wants to check and keep track of while contemplating a Strategic Plan, and then have stakeholder engagement (with an open forum and giving out surveys). "Once you see where you are now, the next step is to review vision and mission statement and see if it's still relevant. Then take a look at your mandate and then address certain priorities. With regard to municipal priorities, there are a lot. What are your priorities over the next three to five years and then determining what goal statements reflect these priorities and then coming up with some subjectives of what it is you'd like to do and strategies on how you'd like to do them," she says. McMaster said she'd gone over the previous township Strategic Plan that's online and she said there was a lot of good information but not what she'd consider a Strategic Plan. She said that a lot of the information needs to go into policies and procedures, and that it talks about things they'd like to do but not how they'd do them. She said that everything was ongoing and that there were no timelines; no date by which they wanted to get things done. Consequently, she said she'd tighten up the deliverables and what it is they're trying to achieve and want to achieve. "Once we have the strategic direction, then we do the action plan. So, the action plan is more of an operational plan. How exactly are you going to fulfill all the deliverables, all the outcomes you've stated in your Strategic Plan? And then you want to communicate that information to residents, the population, [Hastings] county and let other stakeholders know exactly what it is you're trying to achieve and then it needs to be executed and monitored. So that's how I would approach it. But I like to do everything in depth and make sure that there are key performance indicators and everybody knows what they are and who's responsible for what," she says. Through their discussions, council decided to do a three-year Strategic Plan that the next council could look to for their own plan post 2026. On the advice of McMaster, they also decided to convene an ad hoc Strategic Plan committee by the first week of January, to make the plan a reality. Tudor and Cashel posted on their Facebook page on Dec. 7 about establishing this ad hoc Strategic Planning Development Committee, and

asked for residents to reach out to Carrol if they'd like to participate in the committee's work going forward, with the goal of having a Strategic Plan document drafted by mid 2024. During their discussion with McMaster, council further talked about how to maximize stakeholder engagement, how to make the Strategic Plan have maximum impact going beyond the current term of council, and they asked McMaster to come up with a proposal they could look at and approve by their Jan. 9 council meeting. McMaster asked if they had a budget in mind for the Strategic Plan and she said she could look into possible funding for this purpose. Council thought this was a good idea, and Hederson said that if that didn't pan out, they could access funds from the Modernization Grant money they have in their Reserves. McMaster told council that she thought that theoretically, the plan could be done by the end of May, 2024. "It would be nice to roll out as the cottagers and everyone else is coming back. Then the CAO would do an action plan from the Strategic Plan so they'd do a one-year operational plan, based on the budget and the Strategic Plan," she says. Council made a motion to establish the ad hoc Strategic Planning committee, (representative of the township, facilitated by McMaster and to be approved by council), and to have McMaster get a proposal to them for their perusal and approval by their January meeting. This motion was subsequently passed at their regular council meeting that afternoon at 1 p.m. McMaster told Bancroft This Week that the meeting with Tudor and Cashel on Dec. 5 was successful. "TRAICON has been invited to submit a proposal for facilitating the strategic planning process," she says. "I have no further comments at this time."