MUNICIPALITY OF MORRIS-TURNBERRY
CLASS EA FOR STORMWATER DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS
(COMMUNITY OF BLUEVALE)

NOTES FROM THE
PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

Details: April 14, 2011
Bluevale Community Hall, Bluevale
Open House: 7:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Presentation and Questions: 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

In Attendance: Paul Gowing, Mayor, Morris-Turnberry
Jason Breckenridge, Deputy Mayor
David Baker, Councillor
Jamie Heffer, Councillor
Jamie McCallum, Councillor
John Smuck, Councillor
Neil Warwick, Councillor
Nancy Michie, Administrator Clerk-Treasurer
Gary Pipe, Director of Public Works
Steve Fortier, Chief Building Official
Bruce Potter, B. M. Ross and Associates Limited (BMROSS)
Scott Allen, BMROSS

Stakeholders: 55 (Approximate)

Media Representation: The Citizen, Wingham Advance-Times

Notes:

1.0 Presentation

Several display panels were arranged prior to the presentation component of the meeting to provide details on key study issues, including the Municipal Class Environmental (Class EA) process, the location of study area, the nature of existing drainage problems, the options proposed to improve stormwater drainage and probable project costs.
The nature and scope of the project was summarized to the audience via a Powerpoint presentation. The presentation proceeded in the following manner:

- Mayor Gowing welcomed the audience on behalf of the Municipality.

- S. Allen outlined the framework for the meeting and provided background on the study area. He followed with an overview of the existing drainage infrastructure in Bluevale and an outline of the key deficiencies with these facilities. Three preliminary servicing plans were presented to mitigate the noted concerns:
  - Option 1: Storm sewers on streets west of Clyde Street, a new outlet across cemetery lands
  - Option 2: Option 1 works plus a new storm sewer on Clyde Street
  - Option 3: Options 1 and 2 works, storm sewers on roads east of Clyde Street

It was also noted that private drain connections would be provided to all planned storm sewers to receive sump pump discharge from adjacent properties.

- Probable project costs for Option 1 were presented, including preliminary details on the range of per property costs. It was noted that the probable capital cost for this servicing alternative is $1.1 million. S. Allen advised that a preliminary cost allocation plan was developed to recover project costs from benefiting property owners. Based upon the proposed plan, all affected properties would be assigned a flat rate of $5,000 for the storm sewer system. For the remainder (balance) of storm sewer costs, an area rate would be applied to recognize the drainage contribution of larger parcels. In review, parcels situated within the Option 1 service area would be assessed a median per property cost of $11,500 if no federal-provincial grants were available. Attendees were advised that the Municipality would be seeking a provincial-federal infrastructure grant for the proposed work to mitigate concerns regarding project affordability. It was noted that the senior governments typically subsidize 50% or 66% of project capital costs.

- S. Allen provided a brief overview of the Class EA study framework and summarized the status of the investigation. It was emphasized that the public meeting was being carried out to promote public involvement in the process. The audience was also provided with the results of the landowner survey conducted in Spring 2010. In review, approximately 37% of respondents reported previous problems with either surface water drainage or elevated groundwater levels (e.g., surface ponding, basement flooding).

- The Powerpoint presentation notes were provided to the public at the outset of the meeting. Comment sheets were also made available.

2.0 Question and Answer Session

At the conclusion of the presentation, the audience was given the opportunity to comment on the information provided. The following generalizes the comments received from the public and the corresponding responses from municipal representatives and other parties.
a. Need for Project

A number of audience members questioned the need for storm sewers, particularly in areas east of the Duncan Street corridor. It was suggested that as the drainage problem was relatively localized to certain sites within the Option 1 service area and, as a result, the works set out for Options 2 and 3 were not warranted to address the problem.

In reply to these concerns, B. Potter advised that the three proposed options are considered practical strategies for providing communal stormwater drainage facilities in Bluevale. It was noted that the benefit gained from any new drainage works would vary from property owners, however all lands within the defined service areas would contribute drainage to the proposed system and should be incorporated into the storm sewer plan. He added that the objective of the Class EA process is to identify a preferred strategy for addressing historic drainage problems in Bluevale. Accordingly, input received from stakeholders would be considered to help define the most practical and effective strategy for addressing localized flooding concerns and for improving surface drainage throughout the community.

B. Gowing reiterated that there have been historic concerns with drainage in Bluevale and that the Municipality is interested in developing a plan to address these issues. He further explained that a formal stormwater drainage plan is needed to support future applications for federal-provincial grants. The audience was also advised that project implementation may be phased over several years depending upon factors such as funding availability, the severity of drainage problems and future road reconstruction plans. It was noted that Option 1 would likely be the first phase to proceed, given that it would target the area with the most prevalent surface drainage concerns.

b. Project Scope

An audience member inquired whether private drain connections would a mandatory requirement of this project and whether project costs included work on private property (e.g., sump pump connections, private catch basin construction and connections). B. Potter advised that (1) property owners would not be required to connect their sump pump outlets to the new storm sewer and (2) all costs incurred improving drainage on private property would be the landowner’s responsibility.

Councillor Warwick questioned whether local roads would be reconstructed (lowered) to an urban standard in conjunction with this project to direct runoff to the road structure. B. Potter explained that the project, as presented, would only involve the installation of stormwater drainage works and site restoration. He added that supplementary catch basins would be installed in areas where the road elevation was considered too high for adequate stormwater conveyance. Further to this discussion, an audience member suggested that the elevation of Duncan Street is higher than surrounding lands which contributes to ponding on adjacent properties. The individual proposed that the reconstruction of Duncan Street should be considered as a preliminary component of this project. B. Potter advised that the proposal will be considered as part of the Class EA process.

A resident of Clyde Street provided history on the existing storm sewer along that road and added that it functions effectively and does not need replacement. B. Potter indicated that based upon available information, the storm sewer does not have the capacity to accommodate drainage from the proposed catchment area. He added that at a broader level, the informal network of private drains, sections of
storm sewers, roadside swales and natural outlets in Bluevale does not function effectively. In this regard, a comprehensive communal storm drainage system is required to adequately convey surface drainage throughout the community to the proposed drainage outlet.

In relation to the various concerns regarding project scope, B. Potter and Mayor Gowing stressed that Council has not made any decision on a preferred course of action and that the concerns of landowners would be taken into consideration during the assessment of project alternatives.

c.  
Project Costs and Cost Allocation

Two specific concerns were expressed with the probable costs of the proposed servicing plan and the associated per property cost. Firstly, several individuals expressed concern that the proposed works were too expensive and that more affordable approaches should be pursued. It was further suggested that the probable costs presented appeared to be highly inflated. Secondly, a number of landowners indicated that their properties had no history of drainage concerns and therefore these lands should be excluded from any applicable sewer charges.

With respect to the probable construction costs, B. Potter outlined that the cost estimate developed for the preliminary design of Option 1 was based upon a review of recent construction tender prices for similar projects. He added that the estimates were somewhat conservative in nature to account for fluctuations in construction costs. With regard to cost allocation, B. Potter reiterated that the Municipal Act permits municipalities to apply charges to benefitting properties in a manner deemed appropriate by Council. For this project, all properties which contribute drainage to the proposed system would derive a benefit from a comprehensive stormwater conveyance system. Given this framework, the preliminary cost allocation plan was developed to recognize that (1) all affected landowners would derive a base level of benefit from the provision of a storm drainage system and that (2) property owners of larger lots would realize additional benefit from the works given that storm drainage is primarily a function of parcel size.

d.  
Repayment Plan

Several attendees inquired about the possible length of the sewer charge repayment period. B. Potter and N. Michie advised that under existing municipal infrastructure loan programs, the amortization period could potentially be extended over several decades. The audience was cautioned that interest rates for long repayment periods tend to relatively high.

e.  
Elevated Groundwater Levels

A question was raised whether the project would mitigate local problems associated with elevated groundwater levels (e.g., basement flooding, excessive sump pump operation). B. Potter outlined that BMROSS was engaged to develop a servicing plan for addressing surface water concerns. He further advised that, to date, the remediation of subsurface water problems has not been part of the project scope. It was noted, however, that a comprehensive surface drainage system complete with private drain connections would help reduce the recycling of sump pump discharge water.
f. Related Issues

Concern was expressed that based upon survey results, only a small number of individuals would benefit from the project. An audience member also suggested that the survey should have included information on probable project costs. B. Potter advised that the questionnaire was circulated to gather additional background information on the location and nature of surface and subsurface drainage problems. He added that the survey findings would be considered as part of the technical review of project alternatives.

An attendee inquired whether affected landowners would have the opportunity to vote on the need to proceed with this project. Mayor Gowing stated that Council has been elected to make decisions on behalf of constituents. He added that the decision of Council on this matter will be based upon information gathered through the Class EA investigation and that the opinions of residents will be fully considered during the decision-making process.

An audience member noted that real estate values in Bluevale are depressed and questioned whether this project would generate a positive return on investment. Mayor Gowing suggested that the installation of storm sewers may help retain property values by addressing historic surface drainage problems in the community.

B. Potter advised that any private drains uncovered during construction would be reconnected to the new storm sewer.

3.0 Written Comments

To date, five parties have submitted written comments to the Township following the meeting. Three of the respondents expressed opposition to the project based upon the potential costs and the perceived lack of benefit to their properties. One letter, signed by nine landowners along Clyde Street states that the storm sewer along that street functions effectively and does require replacement. The final respondent suggested that the project should not proceed without the benefit of a grant.

Meeting Notes Prepared by
B. M. ROSS AND ASSOCIATES LIMITED

Scott Allen, Planner (May 3, 2011)