

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Township Provides Context on Review of Stirling-Rawdon BIA and Future Opportunities

STIRLING-RAWDON, ON – August 11, 2026 – The Township of Stirling-Rawdon would like to provide additional context regarding Council's ongoing review of the Stirling-Rawdon Business Improvement Area (BIA), following a meeting between representatives of the Township and the BIA Executive.

Council has not made a decision to dissolve the BIA.

At its July 7 meeting, Council directed staff to prepare a report outlining the process that would be required should Council decide to dissolve the BIA. The resulting staff report was presented to Council on August 4 for information and outlined both the dissolution process and potential alternatives for supporting downtown businesses, events and economic development.

Rather than taking action on dissolution at that meeting, Council received the information and requested an opportunity to meet with members of the BIA Executive to hear their perspective and discuss the concerns identified in the report.

The Township appreciates the BIA representatives who participated in that discussion and recognizes the significant amount of volunteer time that current and past BIA members have contributed to the community.

The Township would also like to clarify some information that has circulated publicly.

Council's review is not about whether BIA-sponsored community events are successful or valued. The Township recognizes the popularity of events such as the Farmers' Market, Holiday Market, Harvest Market and other activities supported by BIA volunteers.

The Township has also received correspondence expressing support for these events. That feedback is appreciated and will be considered as Council moves forward. However, support for individual community events should not necessarily be interpreted as support for retaining the existing BIA governance and funding structure.

The BIA is a legislated municipal board with a specific mandate under the Municipal Act. Its approximately \$7,500 annual budget is funded through an additional tax levy on commercially rated properties within the designated BIA area.

The issue Council is considering is whether that structure continues to be the most effective way to support downtown businesses, beautification, events and broader economic development.

The staff report identified several concerns with the current model, including participation and engagement, limited financial resources, restrictions associated with the BIA framework, and limited communication between the BIA Board and the Township that has resulted in missed opportunities for collaboration on events, downtown initiatives and a shared long-term vision for beautification.

As part of efforts to improve communication and better understand BIA membership, the Township also mailed information directly to BIA property owners in May. The correspondence explained membership and voting rights and invited property owners to confirm their membership, identify corporate representatives or provide tenancy information, as applicable. The actual letter also invited property owners to provide feedback directly to the Township.

“There is no question that BIA volunteers have worked hard and have organized events that people enjoy,” said Mayor Bob Mullin. **“Council’s responsibility is to look beyond any one event and determine what structure will best serve our businesses, our downtown and the broader community over the long term. That is why Council asked for information first and then chose to meet directly with the BIA Executive before making any decisions.”**

Importantly, dissolution of the existing BIA would not mean an end to downtown events, beautification or economic development efforts.

The staff report identified a number of alternatives Council could explore, including working more closely with the Central & North Hastings Chamber of Commerce, establishing a Main Street organization, redesignating a BIA with a structure that better aligns with Township and community interests, and/or considering an Economic Development Officer position focused on these initiatives.

The Township believes these options deserve further discussion with businesses, community organizations and volunteers.

Looking ahead, 2027 will also be a transitional year for the downtown. The Township is preparing for major road and infrastructure reconstruction in the downtown core. As a result, events and activities normally held within the construction area, including the Farmers' Market, may need to be temporarily relocated.

The Township intends to work collaboratively with organizers to find appropriate alternatives so that community activities can continue during construction.

“Whatever Council ultimately decides about the BIA structure, we want to build on the good things that have been accomplished,” said Mayor Mullin. “There are dedicated volunteers, successful events and people who care deeply about Stirling. Our goal is to find a sustainable model that brings those strengths together and creates more opportunities for partnerships, investment and community involvement.”

Council will consider the information received from the BIA Executive, the staff report and community feedback before determining its next steps.

-30-

Media Contact:

Township of Stirling-Rawdon
2529 Stirling-Marmora Road
Stirling, Ontario