

**The Corporation of the City of Kawartha Lakes**  
**Planning Advisory Committee Report**

**Report Number PLAN2018-012**

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**Date:** February 14, 2018

**Time:** 1:00 p.m.

**Place:** Council Chambers

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**Ward Community Identifier:** All

**Subject:** Planning Approvals Task Force Recommendations Update

**Author and Title:** Chris Marshall, Director

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**Recommendation(s):**

**RESOLVED THAT** Report PLAN2018-012, Planning Approvals Task Force Recommendations Update, be received.

**Department Head:**

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**Legal/Other:**

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**Chief Administrative Officer:**

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## **Background:**

At the January 24, 2017 Council meeting the following resolution was adopted:

**RESOLVED THAT** Report DEV2017-001, **Planning Approvals Task Force Recommendations**, be received;

**THAT** staff be directed to implement the recommendations outlined in Report DEV2017-001 **Planning Approvals Task Force Recommendations**; and

**THAT** the Director of Development Services report to the Planning Committee and Council semi-annually, starting in June 2017, outlining the implementation status of the recommendations listed in Report DEV2017-001 **Planning Approvals Task Force Recommendations**.

**CARRIED**

The Director of Development Services provided the first update on Planning Approvals Task Force at the July 5, 2017 Planning Advisory Committee. The July 5, 2017 Report provided an update on the implementation of the recommendations from the Task Force for the period from January – June 2017. This report is the second update which is intended to cover the period from June to December 2017.

## **Rationale:**

The City of Kawartha Lakes continued to show signs of development growth in the second half of 2017. To show the rate at which development activity is growing in the City of Kawartha Lakes, staff included Planning and Building application summaries for 2015, 2016 and 2017.

## **Building Department:**

In 2017 we experienced a 15% increase of the yearly total dwelling permit numbers from 2016 and 67% increase of the yearly total for 2015. With the recent activity surrounding the three large development parcels in the northwest quadrant of Lindsay, the potential for these numbers to continue to rise over the next several years is quite possible.

With the implementation of a new software tracking system in 2017 resources were required to build, launch and implement the software. As a result, the applicant tools and guidelines recommended by the Task Force was delayed somewhat and work will occur in the 2018 calendar year to complete this task.



### Building Permits for New Residential – By Type

Type of unit	2015	2016	2017
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>352</b>
Singles	177	260	287
Semis	2	0	6
Towns	30	0	12
Apartments	1	38	47
mobile homes	0	0	0

Building and sewage permit numbers were up in 2017, over the previous two year average, by 11% and 19%, respectively.

### Building and Sewage System Permits

Permit type			2017	2015 year total	2016 year total
Building Permits			1241	1071	1161
Sewage Permits			341	265	307
Sewage Reviews			140	156	129

Building Division staff are continuing to process permits well above the provincially mandated expectation. In fact turnaround times are predominantly within the mandated timeframes even when applications are incomplete.

## Building Division Staffing

The Building Division is once again struggling to remain at full complement, at this time. However, with the addition of the two new positions in 2017 (Building and Zoning Intake Clerk and a second Part 8 Inspector for sewage system permits), as well as remaining staff stepping up to assist with workload relating to the vacancies, the processing timelines are not suffering.



## Planning Department

The Planning Department experienced a significant rise in a number of 2017 Planning Applications including a 24% increase in Consents (severances) from 38 to 47, a 78% increase in Site Plan applications from 9 to 16 and a 35% rise in Pre-Consultations from 64 to 87. These are important increases as the Site Plan applications are developments that are ready for construction and the large increase in Pre-Consultation applications points to an increase in development activity in the future.

<b>Application</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>
Official Plan Amendment (D01)	8	7	10	4
Zoning By-Law Amendment (D06)	32	37	21	29
Minor Variance (D20)	49	57	72	50
Consent (D03)	47	38	34	54
Site Plan (D19)	16	9	7	24
Subdivisions and Redline Revision (D05)	4	5	10	2
Condominiums (D04)	2	1	0	0
Compliance Letters	468	561	508	547
Consent Inquiries	21	21	19	35
Pre-Consultation Applications (D38)	87	64	63	73

## **Task Force Recommendations**

The objective of the Planning Approvals Task Force was to improve customer service as well as streamline the planning and development approval processes, and implement strategies to accelerate growth and development in the City. In January of 2017 Council adopted a series of recommendations to help achieve these goals. The recommendations were broken into 4 main headings including:

1. Customer Service/Checklists;
2. Security Deposits and Application Guidelines
3. Communications
4. KRCA Process Improvements

Under each of these headings were a number of recommendations and a time frame to implement the recommendations. Below is a summary of the recommendations that were intended to be completed by the end of 2017:

### **1. Customer Service/Checklists**

The most common complaint from the public was the lack of customer service that was being provided by the Planning and Building Departments to the public. There is a perception of the public that staff has a negative or adversarial attitude, without care for the applicant. There is impatience when dealing with those not familiar with the process.

The application processes are seen as being very complicated and confusing and there was consensus that there needed to be more staff to work with the public and walk them through and explain the application process.

In order to resolve these concerns the Task Force recommended that:

- I. City Staff be required to take customer service Training:
  - As customer service was the most common complaint by the public, customer service training was set up for the Development Services staff and was completed in **December 2016**.

- Corporate-wide Customer Service Standards were also rolled out in December 2017. These standards identify recommended time frames for returning telephone calls and emails and proper etiquette for face to face interaction and meetings with the public. The Customer Service Standards states that customer calls are to be returned as soon as possible when they are received. As a general rule, telephone calls will be returned within two (2) business days. Regarding letters, customers will receive a response to a general inquiry within five (5) business days; and regarding email, customers will receive an initial response to an email inquiry within two (2) business days.

## II. Improvements to general inquiries:

- The Engineering Department has standardized the approach to serviceability inquiries (i.e. connections to water and sewer services) to ensure improvements to overall public inquiries.
- Planning Department staff is working on a policy of returning emails and phone calls within 48 hours. Even if staff are unable to deal with the email or phone call immediately, at the very least they are encouraged to let the customer know that they got the message and can't deal with their inquiry right away but will get back to them within a certain time frame with the answer.

## III. Two new staff members hired:

Two new staff were budgeted for and hired in 2017 including a new Building and Zoning Clerk and a Large Development Planner. The new Zoning Clerk was filled in April 2017 and has been a great addition as she has been able to handle many of the counter inquiries for the Planning and Building Departments and provide consistent interpretations of the Zoning Bylaws. This staff member is able to steer the general public to the right staff and departments for their inquiries and reduce some of the confusion that the public faces when it comes up to the Building and Planning Departments.

The second new staff person was hired in June 2017 and is responsible for the larger more complex development applications. The intent of this new staff member is to provide a dedicated staff member to the larger development and guide them through the application process. This will provide reduced processing times and better customer service.

## IV. Pre-Consultation Summary, Application Guides and Checklists

In order to clarify what the applicant will be expected to provide in terms of studies and plans with their application and provide some understanding of the fees they will incur, the Task Force is recommending that the following changes be made to the pre-consultation process:

- Provide outline of costs of application process and fees.
  - This information is now being included in Pre-Consultation Reports.
- Provide a basic checklist of reports followed by project specific details. This will enable staff to understand the scope of the project and make a judgement call on whether particular professional studies are required or not.
  - This information is now being included in Pre-Consultation Reports.
  - Engineering Department comments are provided in writing to ensure that what has been discussed with the applicant from an engineering perspective is shared consistently.
- Communicate time frames for the various steps in the application process. The expectation is that applicants will not see the process as a delay if the timelines meet expectations set out at the outset of the application process.
  - This information is now being included in Pre-Consultation Reports.
- Hold more pre-consultation meetings in order to reduce the backlog of applications.
  - Instead of holding more pre-consultation meetings, staff has changed the length of the meetings from half day meetings to full day meetings. Instead of only being able to handle 6 pre-consultation applications a month with the half day meetings, the full day meetings allowed for the review of 10 pre-consultation applications. This took care of the backlog of applications but meant for very long days for staff. As of February 2018, staff are going to try two half day pre-consultation meetings which will be easier on staff and will enable a total of 12 pre-consultation applications to be reviewed each month.
- Enable applicants for minor applications to attend pre-consultation meetings via telephone conference to help streamline the process.
  - Staff have used the telephone conference call on a number of occasions and are satisfied that this is an effective way of handling minor applications.

It was recommended that the application guides for each of the planning application processes be shorter and easier to read. It was suggested that staff look at the Township of Selwyn pamphlets as an example.

- The Planning Department hired two Planning Graduate students for the summer of 2017 and they rewrote four of the Planning application process guides with the intent of making them more lay person friendly and easier to follow and understand. The Draft Guides will be circulated to relevant staff and to the public for input before circulating final copies.
- The Engineering Department presented infrastructure guidelines and the subdivision development process to Planning Advisory Committee in August 2017. Information has been made accessible and placed on the City website.

#### V. Application Tracking System be Implemented

Presently when a member of the public phones in to complain about a pothole in the road or a ditch being over grown, customer service staff document the complaint, give it a number and send it to the appropriate department to deal with the complaint. With this type of tracking system the public can follow up on their issue and track its progress.

The Task Force recommended that a similar tracking system be put in place so that applicants can go on line punch in a tracking number and see what stage their application is at and who is responsible for the file. This would enable the applicant to follow the process and make staff more accountable for the timing of the application.

- On June 22, 2017 the Planning Department went live with a new software program called Cityworks. This program enables staff to store digitally all the information on properties including tracking for applications. At this stage the public is not able to access the information online but if an applicant calls to find out what stage their application is at, any staff member is able to call up the application on the computer and see which staff member is responsible for that file and exactly what stage the application is at. This will provide much better customer service as the applicant will get answers right away even if the Planner dealing with the application is on holidays or not available for whatever reason.

#### VI. Delegation of Authority

In order to help reduce redundancy and application processing time, the Task Force recommended that the Director of Development Services and the Mayor be given delegated authority in the draft plan approval motion by Council to execute the subdivision agreement once conditions of Draft Plan Approval are met. Presently, this subdivision agreement must be presented to Planning Committee and Council after the conditions of Draft Plan Approval are met, which can add approximately two months to the subdivision process.



- Staff has not been able to complete this recommendation as there was an OMB case related to this step in the subdivision process that needs to be researched before this delegation of authority can be adopted by Council.

## VII Pre-Servicing Agreements

The Task Force recommended that the Pre-Servicing Process be better defined.

- The Engineering Department has updated the Pre-Servicing Policy and revised the Pre-Servicing Agreement Template. These updates were reviewed at the July 5, 2017 Planning Advisory Committee Meeting and the Pre-Servicing Agreement Template has been updated.
- Engineering Department clarified the model home building process in the Subdivision Guide and clarification has been included in the new pre-servicing agreement template.
- All updates have been received and approved through Planning Advisory Committee and Council.

## **Transfer of Review Process – Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change**

- The City of Kawartha Lakes entered into a Transfer of Review Program agreement with the MOECC for Type “A” works. The City has pursued an update to this agreement with the MOECC for additional stormwater management reviews. The new agreement is being drafted by MOECC. This new process will save the applicants months in processing time as the City’s Engineering staff will be able to review the drainage plans much more quickly than Ministry Staff

## **Financial Securities and Application Costs (Appendix D)**

Staff completed a survey of application fees with comparable municipalities for Planning applications and Building Permits and our fees were fairly similar to the other municipalities. The Task Force did not see any need to raise or lower the application fees and the public did not say that application fees were an issue. Although the application fees are comparable, it was recommended that the fees be adjusted on a sliding scale to acknowledge the size or complexity of the application.

- Staff adjusted a number of the Planning applications to address this recommendation. There are now “Minor” and “Major” Zoning and Official Plan amendment application fees.

## Security Deposits

The Task Force heard from a number of builders and developers that all of the costs of development were requested at the beginning of the development process prior to any of the vacant lots, houses or apartments being sold.

## Development Charge Deferral Policy

To better align developers' costs and cash flows, and thereby encourage development, the Task Force recommended that a Development Charge Deferral Policy be adopted to enable the payment of development charges to be deferred. This policy was adopted at the September 20, 2016 Council meeting. Subject to a maximum deferral period of 3 years, the policy gives developers/builders a number of options, including:



(a) Deferral to Condominium Registration and Occupancy: For residential condominium buildings, development charges for units occupied prior to condominium registration are payable at time of registration; otherwise, they are payable at time of occupancy.

(b) Deferral by Phase-In: For high-density residential buildings, development charges for each half of the units are payable at 1.5 and 3 years, respectively, after time of development agreement.

(c) Deferral to Occupancy: For low-density residential buildings (e.g. single-detached homes), development charges are deferred to time of occupancy.

(d) Deferral to Building Permit Issuance: For any building, development charges are deferred to time of building permit issuance.

The deferral of Development Charges provides substantial relief to the development industry. For instance, in 2017 a developer building a 75 unit condominium would have previously paid 75 times \$13,133/unit, or almost a million dollars, at the time of building permit issuance. This would especially be burdensome during the early stages of development as proceeds from condominium unit sales must be held in trust until registration. Now the condominium developer can defer development charge payments over time to registration and occupancy, aligning payment and cash flow timelines.

- This new policy has made it possible for a number of developments to proceed. For example the new apartment buildings (The Railway Lands)

that have started construction on Victoria Street were able to get started as a result of this new policy.



The Railway Lands under construction.

## Communications

### External:

Develop multi-platform approach that includes traditional and social media approaches to effectively communicate externally the new customer service standards and helpful tools available for residents and developers.

- A new website for the City was completed in July of 2017. This new website provides better tools for the public to get information.
- The new Cityworks software will enable faster, clearer and more accurate information to the customers.

### Internal:

- a) Better use of technology/software to ensure effective communication by or between departments throughout a project, including outside agencies involved in the project.
  - The new Cityworks software that was incorporated into the Planning and Building Departments will help to coordinate all information on properties and make sure everyone is on the same page and providing the same information to the customers.
  - The Engineering and Planning Departments host Wednesday morning coordinating meetings to try and centralize discussions on Planning Applications and/or grading issues through building permits.
  - Development Review Team Meetings are held with staff from all development related departments and the KRCA to discuss upcoming Planning Applications.

- b) Alignment of Economic Development Department with Building & Planning Departments to help promote particular areas for growth.
- The Planning Department is more consistently including the Economic Development Department staff in pre-consultation meetings with applicants and including their input on Planning Application reports.
  - The new Economic Development Strategy adopted in July 2017 emphasizes the need for better collaboration between the Planning and Economic Development Departments.

### **Advocacy for Development with Government Agencies:**

- a) Increase advocacy efforts with MTO on both the staff and political levels to find solutions to help facilitate development along provincial highways.
- Staff has taken a more active role in advocating for solutions with outside agencies. A good example of this is the work that Planning Staff did bringing together staff from MTO, KRCA, Mason Homes, and City Staff to resolve the Fill Permit for the Mason Homes lands at the Corner of Colborne and Highway 36.

### **Kawartha Region Conservation Authority Process Improvements**

From the Kawartha Conservation perspective, here are some points that can be added to the 6 month follow-up report for the Planning Approvals Task Force:

#### **Dedicated Support to CKL Planning Files**

- Hiring of qualified Professional Planner (OPPI/ CIP) allows KRCA to utilize staff resources effectively so that planning applications and processes (e.g. Pre-consultation meeting, comments pertaining to Planning Act applications) within the CKL are dealt with in a timely and professional manner; at the same time, it allows the Director of Planning, Development and Engineering to focus on CKL priority projects which are critical to economic development in the area (e.g. Large Fill Permit for Mason Homes, expansions to servicing capacity and Official Plan Review);
- Completion of new draft floodplain mapping (Bobcaygoen, Dunsford Creek, Burnt River) will lead to open houses in the Spring of 2018 and will help to inform municipal planning documents and provide precise information to land owners and potential developers on flood hazards in these areas.

### **Permit Process Timing Improvements**

- The timing of Permit processes is reported to the KRCA Board of Directors on a monthly basis. Statistics reveal;
  - a notable improvement in Permit process timing since the fall of 2016.
  - an increase in total Permits issued by the KRCA in the past three years from 290 permits in 2015 to 461 Permits in 2017.

### **Customer Service Process Improvements**

- KRCA has doubled the number of pre-consultation meetings (now weekly) to prevent clients from having to wait any more than a few days to meet with Staff in order to discuss the development potential of their lands.
- KRCA has (in direct response to discussions with the development industry) instituted a new “Letter of Permission” as an on-the-spot Permit issued following a pre-consultation meeting for minor development activities within the Regulated Area; and
- KRCA continue to optimize the use of electronic and internet technologies, wherever possible, to simplify Permit application submission, payment and sign-off processes as well as in providing Planning comments to our Municipal partners in a timely fashion.

### **Other Alternatives Considered:**

There were no other alternatives considered in this report.

The establishment of the Task Force was intended to provide an open and transparent venue for development and public stakeholders to provide inputs and advice to improve the City’s planning approval processes.

City staff also capitalized on this opportunity to review and improve processes and efficiencies, while educating the public and development stakeholders of legislated and risk management process requirements. Council and the City are committed to implementing ongoing process improvements and efficiencies, priority infrastructure supporting growth, and investment attraction efforts to realize forecasted growth in the City.

The Director of Development Services is committed to reporting to the Planning Advisory Committee semi-annually to provide updates on the implementation status of the recommendations of the Task Force, and other ongoing and planned process improvements and major growth-supporting special projects.

## **Financial/Operation Impacts:**

The implementation of the Planning and Development Task Force recommendations is already providing financial benefits to the City of Kawartha Lakes. This is seen in the increases in Planning and Building applications which translates to more jobs, building supplies, customers for businesses, and taxes, development charges and application fees to the City.

## **Relationship of Recommendation(s) to the 2016-2019 Strategic Plan:**

Council adopted the Strategic Plan identifying the following Strategic Goals namely:

- Goal 1 – A Vibrant and Growing Economy
- Goal 2 – An Exceptional Quality of Life
- Goal 3 – A Healthy Environment

This report aligns with the vibrant and growing economy Strategic Goal as it outlines the ways in which the City can be better positioned to take advantage of the growth in development that is taking place now and into the future.

## **Consultations:**

The following Departments and Agencies were consulted for this report:

Building Department  
Planning Department  
Engineering Department  
Economic Development Department  
Kawartha Lakes Conservation Authority

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