

The Corporation of the City of Kawartha Lakes

Planning Committee Report

Report Number Plan2017-049

Date: July 5, 2017
Time: 2:00 p.m.
Place: Council Chambers

Ward Community Identifier: All

Subject: Planning Approvals Task Force Recommendations Update

Author and Title: Chris Marshall, Director

Recommendation(s):

RESOLVED THAT Report Plan2017-049, Planning Approvals Task Force Recommendations Update, be received.

Department Head:

Legal/Other:

Chief Administrative Officer:

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

This report provides an overview of the recommendations that were intended to be implemented by the end of June 2017.

Rationale:

In the last few years the City of Kawartha Lakes has experienced an increase in development activity. This increase is the result of a number of factors including: the effects of increasing housing prices in the GTA; forward thinking infrastructural work (eg. Northwest Trunk and the Colborne pumping station); and a number of development process changes that were instigated by the Planning Approvals Task Force. 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 the first five months of 2017.

Building Department

In the first five months of 2017 we are seeing 50% of the yearly total dwelling permit numbers from 2016 and 70% of the yearly total for 2015. On the immediate horizon are two subdivision agreements with a combined 60+ lots that are pre-sold, in addition to a few other subdivision phases that were recently registered.



Building Permits for New Residential – By Type

Type of unit	2015	2016	2017 – YTD May 31 st
Total	210	298	150
singles	177	260	107
semis	2	0	2
towns	30	0	0
apartments	1	38	41
mobile homes	0	0	0

Building and sewage permit numbers are up in the first 5 months of 2017, over the previous two years, by 7% and 14%, respectively.

Building and Sewage System Permits

Permit type	2015 Jan-May 31st	2016 Jan-May 31st	2017 Jan-May 31st	2015 year total	2016 year total
Building Permits	363	374	403	1071	1161
Sewage Permits	150	162	186	265	307
Sewage Reviews	52	57	65	156	129

Building Division staff is 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 presently at full complement and added two new positions 2017 (Building and Zoning Intake Clerk and a second Part 8 Inspector for sewage system permits)



Planning Department

The Planning Department has also experienced a steady increase in applications. Five months into 2017 the Planning Department is already at or above the total number of Official Plan Amendments, Zoning Amendments Site Plan, Consent and Subdivision applications that were processed in all of 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Application	2017 to May	2016	2015	2014
Official Plan Amendment (D01)	8	3	4	4
Zoning By-Law Amendment (D06)	20	23	24	29
Minor Variance (D20)	28	60	63	50
Consent (D03)	14	16	34	54
Site Plan (D19)	8	12	8	24
Subdivisions and Redline Revision (D05)	2	1	2	2
Condominiums (D04)	0	1	0	0
Compliance Letters	242	625	512	547
Consent Inquiries	21	21	19	35
Pre-Consultation Applications (D38)	35	68	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 June 2017.

1. Customer Service/Checklists (See Appendix A and C)

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**.

There is also a Corporate-wide development of a Customer Service Standard that will be rolled out in 2017 with a commitment to timely customer service. Customer service staff will also be realigned throughout the City to provide better support for departments with high volume inquiries such as the Development Services Departments.

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 be hired:

Two new staff were budgeted for 2017 including a new Building and Zoning Clerk to handle many of the counter inquiries for the Planning and Building Departments and provide consistent interpretations of the Zoning Bylaws. This staff member will help 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.

- This new position was filled April 10, 2017 and is already providing much needed support at the Planning and Building counters handling zoning inquiries.

The second new staff person is intended to take on the larger more complex development applications and help to guide these applications through the process. This person will have an economic development focus. Providing a dedicated staff person to these complex applications will speed up their processing time and free up the other planning staff time to process the other applications in a more timely way.

- This position was filled internally June 16, 2017 so there has not been time to assess the effectiveness of this new position.

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.
 - o 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.
 - o This information is now being included in Pre-Consultation Reports.
 - o 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.
 - o This information is now being included in Pre-Consultation Reports.
- Hold more pre-consultation meetings in order to reduce the backlog of applications.
 - o Instead of holding more pre-consultation meetings, staff has changed the length of the meetings from half day meetings to full day meetings. This will take care of any backlog of applications.
- Enable applicants for minor applications to attend pre-consultation meetings via telephone conference to help streamline the process.
 - o Staff have not had an opportunity to experiment with this option as of yet but are open to the idea.

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.

- o The Planning Department has two new summer students and they are working on redoing these application guides.
- o The Engineering Department is drafting a Subdivision Application Process Guide with similar details to the Site Plan Application Guide. This new guide is scheduled to come to the August 2017 Planning Advisory Committee Meeting for review.

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 is recommending 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. Full implementation of this program will take six months (transfer of older files and information). This program will eventually enable 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 will be 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 are scheduled to be reviewed at the July 5, 2017 Planning Advisory Committee Meeting.

- Engineering Department has also clarified the model home building process in the Subdivision Guide and clarification has also been included in the new pre-servicing agreement template

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 rise 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 has 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.

- The City is introducing a new website in July of 2017 that will provide 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 being presented to Council 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 floodplain mapping (Omemee, Dunsford Creek) 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. In the period from Oct. 2016 to Dec. 2016 – 77% of Permits were issued within the established timeframe; from Jan. 2017 to Apr. 2017 – there was a slight increase to 79%; and in May and June 2017 – 100% of Permits were issued within this timeframe.

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 an expansion of the 'Streamlined Application' process to encompass lots for new dwellings which are within the Regulated area but have been recently reviewed by both CKL & KRCA Staff and are on full municipal services. These Permits are expedited within days by Staff and are subject to a reduced fee.
- KRCA has instituted a customer service call back option to assess our customer service performance and actions taken to address any recurring issues.
- KRCA have listened to, and acted upon, our customer feedback and discontinued the 'One-window permitting process' with Ontario Waterways (Parks Canada) in order to further expedite Permitting in these areas;
- 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.

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 will report to the Planning Committee semi-annually to update 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 dramatic increase 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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