

The Corporation of the City of Kawartha Lakes
Council Report

Report Number PLAN2018-068

Date: August 14, 2018
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 PLAN2018-068, 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 is the third update that the Director of Development Services has presented to the Planning Advisory Committee and Council. This update is for the first half of 2018 for the months of January to the end of June.

Rationale:

Staff from the Planning, Building and Engineering Departments have implemented most of the recommendations from the Planning Approvals Task Force. However, this does not mean that there is not more staff can do to improve the customer service and application processes. This Fall the Planning Department will be reviewing the Site Plan Process and redoing the Site Plan Application Guideline document to find ways to improve the application process. The Planning Department has just completed the Terms of Reference for the Zoning Bylaw Consolidation work that will consolidate 17 Zoning Bylaws this work will begin in the Fall.

The Building Department will be adding guides and forms to the City Website to help the public with the Building Permit process. Building Department staff are regularly attending training sessions to ensure they are up to date on the latest changes to the Building Code and meet as a team on a monthly basis to work through any issues and share experiences.

The Engineering Department has updated many of their forms and guides for the subdivision application process and have found a number of ways to save the applicant money and time and make the application process clearer and easier to understand.

Planning and Building Department Statistics

The City of Kawartha Lakes had steady growth in the first half of 2018. Below is a summary of the Planning and Building Department applications over the last 4 years.

Building Department:

Thus far in 2018 the Building Department has seen a drop in single family dwellings and an increase in apartment style development. In speaking with the Chief Building Official for the City of Peterborough, they are seeing a similar drop in single family housing starts but are also seeing a rise in multi-family development.

The total value of construction in the City of Kawartha Lakes has been increasing steadily over the last four years from \$108 million in 2015 to \$152 million in 2017. In the first 6 months of 2018, the value of construction is slightly more than half the 2017 total value.



New subdivision in Lindsay under construction

Building Permits for New Residential – By Type

Type of unit	2015	2016	2017	First 6 Months of 2018
Total	210	298	352	174
Singles	177	260	287	76
Semis	2	0	6	2
Towns	30	0	12	4
Apartments	1	38	47	91
mobile homes	0	0	0	1
Value of Construction	\$108,174,2017	\$134,493,300	\$152,783,878	\$78,079,660

Building and sewage permit numbers are down in 2018 and this reflects the reduction in single family development.

Building and Sewage System Permits

Permit type	2015	2016	2017	First 6 Months of 2018	
Building Permits	1071	1161	1241	555	
Sewage Permits	265	307	341	129	
Sewage Reviews	156	129	140	45	

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.



Lot sold in new subdivision in Lindsay

Planning Department

In the first 6 months of 2018, the Planning Department applications have had mixed results. The Official Plan, Zoning, Deeming Bylaws and Minor Variance applications are higher than last year at this time but the Consents, Site Plans and Compliance letters are down. The most encouraging sign is the large increase in Pre-consultation meetings that is trending well above the last four years numbers. This increase in Pre-Consultation applications will result in higher numbers of Planning applications in the future. The increase in pre-consultation applications was made possible by staff increasing the number of Pre-consultation meetings which was a recommendation from the Task Force.

Application	2014	2015	2016	2017	First 6 months of 2018
Official Plan Amendment (D01)	4	10	7	8	4
Zoning By-Law Amendment (D06)	29	21	37	32	18
Minor Variance (D20)	50	72	57	49	33
Consent (D03)	54	34	38	47	10
Site Plan (D19)	24	7	9	16	4
Subdivisions and Redline Revision (D05)	2	10	5	4	2
Condominiums (D04)	0	0	1	2	1
Compliance Letters	547	508	561	468	153
Consent Inquiries	35	19	21	21	19
Pre-Consultation Applications (D38)	73	63	64	87	57
Deeming Bylaws	2	2	9	9	11

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. Development Costs
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 how the recommendations were implemented:

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 and this included a perception that:

- Staff had a negative or adversarial attitude with applicants;
- Staff were impatient when dealing with those not familiar with the process;
- that there were not enough staff to help the public through the application processes;
- and that the application process was too complicated, confusing and expensive.

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.

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 this staff member 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 developments 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 recommended 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.
 - Staff tried a couple of different ways of handling the backlog in Pre-consultation applications. Instead of having one half day per month for Pre-consultation meetings, staff held one full day to review Pre-consultations applications and this increased the number applications reviewed each month from 6 to 10. This took care of the backlog of applications but resulted in very long days for staff. As of February 2018, staff are holding two half day Pre-consultation meetings per month which has been easier on staff and enables up to 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 option 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 Planning Students hired this year have completed the remaining three guides and they are being circulated for input.
- The Engineering Department presented infrastructure guidelines and the subdivision development process to the 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 a 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 recommended Council have oversight over the execution of the Subdivision Agreement.

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.

- The 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.

VIII Transfer of Review Process

The City of Kawartha Lakes entered into a Transfer of Review Program agreement with the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) for Type “A” works in April 2018. The new agreement saves applicants months in processing time as the City’s Engineering staff are now able to review the drainage plans and can do so much more quickly than Ministry Staff.

2. Development Costs

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. For many developers these costs are difficult to finance. In order to relieve some of these financial pressures, the City made a number of changes to application fees, security deposits and development charges.

I Application Fees

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.

II Security Deposits

At the July 17, 2018 Council meeting a motion was adopted to remove site plan securities for engineering related work on private property. This will reduce the up front cost that developers will be required to pay. Prior to this motion

applicants were required to put up securities for 50% of the onsite engineering works.

III 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, 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 such as the new apartment buildings (The Railway Lands) that are close to completion on Victoria Street.



The Railway Lands under construction.

3. 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 used by the Planning and Building Departments 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 old Mason Homes lands (Craft Lands) at the Corner of Colborne and Highway 36.

4. Kawartha Region Conservation Authority (KRCA) Process Improvements

The KRCA was a member of the Planning Approvals Task Force and have implemented a number changes to their application and permit processes to improve customer service and expedite the application process:

Dedicated Support to CKL Planning Files

- The KRCA hired a qualified Professional Planner (OPPI/ CIP) which has enabled them to utilize staff resources more 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);
- The KRCA completed draft floodplain mapping (Bobcaygeon, Dunsford Creek, Burnt River) and held open houses in 2018 to review this mapping. This mapping 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 continues 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 and Council 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

Department Head E-Mail: cmarshall@kawarthalakes.ca

Department Head: Ron Taylor, CAO

Department File: D00-99-018