

The Corporation of the City of Kawartha Lakes

Committee of the Whole Report

Report Number ERTF2020-002

Meeting Date: July 7, 2020

Title: Development Applicants Survey

Description: Results and recommendations from a survey conducted with recent development applicants

Ward Number: All

Author and Title: Emily Turner, Economic Development Officer – Heritage Planning

Recommendation:

That Report ERTF2020-002, **Development Applicants Survey**, be received.

Background:

On May 26, 2020, Council established the Economic Recovery Task Force in order to respond to the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic and to provide support and direction for Council and staff to help stimulate local economic recovery. The Task Force terms of reference includes three strategic priority areas:

- Critical Infrastructure Investments
- Planning and Development Stimulus
- Business Recovery and Support

A key emphasis for planning and development stimulus was advancing a focused approach to a streamlined execution of development policy and approvals. The intention of reviewing this area of City activity was to assist the local economy by stimulating private sector construction and investment through residential and non-residential growth.

This report, and the survey undertaken by staff to assess the current status of the development and planning processes, addresses that direction.

Rationale:

Focusing on the construction sector as an important economic driver coming out of the pandemic, it was recognized that City policies and development processes needed to support development and investment in that sector. In order to assess the current policy and approvals process, staff undertook a survey of recent development applicants to gather their feedback on the process.

A list of recent applicants was developed by Planning staff and included a cross section of the types of applicants the City typically works with. They included local planning consultants, construction companies and developers, and individuals who had recently filed applications. The types of applications files that they had submitted were also varied, from large commercial and residential developments to minor variances and severances.

The survey was carried out by Economic Development staff between June 15 and June 26 and included responses gathered by both phone and email. Each respondent was asked a standard set of questions which requested information about their recent applications, positive aspects of the development process, negative aspects of the process, and suggestions for potential changes which would streamline development applications and approvals. In general, the respondents had a significant amount of feedback for staff and were interested in participating in the discussion.

A number of common themes emerged from the surveys and generally fell into two broad areas of focus, specifically the need to streamline the application and approvals process and the need to develop and implement clear City policies regarding expectations and requirements from applicants. In general, the respondents were concerned about the amount of time it took to get an application from the initial pre-consultation to final approvals and wanted the City to examine how to expedite the process. At the same time, there were also concerns regarding the City's requirements for development and the need for policies and procedures that made it clear to applicants what was required of them when submitting an application.

A summary of the survey responses is included as Appendix A. The summary outlines the positive aspects of the process identified by many of the respondents, the areas where they saw issues or had concerns, and their suggestions for improving various aspects of the process.

Other Alternatives Considered:

The results from the survey broadly covered two areas of focus, namely policy and process, where the respondents felt that the City could make changes to improve and expedite the development process. The Task Force may want to consider having staff review these areas and come back with recommendations for specific changes that will address some of the concerns raised by the respondents.

If the Task Force would like to direct staff to further review and report back, an alternative recommendation would be as follows:

That Report ERTF2020-002, **Development Applicants Survey**, be received;

That staff be directed to review and provide a report to the Task Force on process changes that could be implemented to streamline the development application process; and

That staff be directed to review and provide a report to the Task Force on policy initiatives that could be implemented to provide clarity to development applicants.

Financial/Operation Impacts:

There are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations of this report.

Relationship of Recommendation(s) To The 2020-2023 Strategic Plan:

The recommendation of this report support the following strategic priorities from the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan:

- A Vibrant and Growing Economy
- Good Government

The review of development processes and policies supports a vibrant and growing economy by providing recommendations for streamlining processes which directly impact the construction and development sector. It supports the priority of good government by focusing on increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery.

Consultations:

Director, Development Services
Manager, Economic Development
Manager, Planning

Attachments:

Appendix A – Development Applicant Survey Summary



Development
Applicants Survey Sun

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