
MEMORANDUM

PDS-C 28-2020

Subject: COVID-19 Response and Business Continuity in Planning and Development Services

Date: December 9, 2020

To: Planning and Economic Development Committee

From: Doug Giles, Acting Commissioner, Planning and Development Services

Community and Long Range Planning

Current Status of Operations

In January, a presentation and report will be brought forward to Planning and Economic Development Committee (PEDC) on the Climate Change Work Program. This will include an overview and update to the work program and directions with respect to climate modeling and projections in Niagara.

Last summer, the Region's Employment Work Program was delayed at PEDC's direction to allow work by the City of St. Catharines to be advanced. That has now occurred, and the Region will be reporting to PEDC on employment, along with other matters, in early 2021.

Also in the New Year, staff are anticipating receipt of key inputs from its consultants on land needs and affordability. This will allow staff to advance our work on these subjects, for presentation to local municipal staff, local and Regional Councils, key stakeholders and the public.

Official Plan policy development is continuing. Our intention is to provide Council with a comprehensive report in spring 2021. This will be a lengthy report that set out how all components are interrelated. It may include policies on subjects that are sufficiently advanced, such as aggregates, regional structure, employment (as noted above), housing, and secondary planning. This report will also provide information relating to environmental options.

The above-described Spring Report will be comprehensive and detailed. In January, we will provide a detailed report outline of what is forthcoming in that Spring Report.

Development Planning & Approval Services

Current Status of Operations

The following temporary, short term adjustments have been made to Development Planning & Approval Services as of November 5, 2020:

- Pat Busnello – Acting Director Development Approvals
- Lola Emberson – Acting Manager Development Planning

Development Planning & Approval Services continues to adapt to ensure the delivery of core development review functions including: review and comment on all development applications from a Provincial and Regional perspective, coordinating and analyzing internal review/comments from Urban Design, Environmental Planning and Development Engineering for a “one-window” Regional response.

The following development volumes were received by the department during October:

- Planning Applications (includes zoning, subdivision, site plan etc.) - **28**
- Engineering Applications (includes servicing reviews, site plan, etc.) - **14**
- Private Septic Applications - **43**
- Pre-consultations – **45**

The total volume of formal applications (**85** - excludes pre-consultations) represents a marginal decrease of **five** applications or approximately **6%** compared to October 2019 (**90** applications). October 2020 volumes also experienced a minor decline from September 2020 volumes of **101** applications (16 fewer or approx. 16%). Minor fluctuations in application volumes from month to month is anticipated, and this current routine fluctuation is not indicative of an economic downturn or other event such as the lockdown during the early stages of the pandemic where significant declines occurred (e.g. March decline in planning applications received was approx. 37%).

The new Regional Woodland Conservation By-law was approved by Regional Council in October and will come into effect on January 31st, 2021. Responsibility for enforcing the by-law, as well as the position of Regional Forester, will be transferred back to the Region from the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA). The NPCA has

been notified of the termination of the service level agreement relating to the bylaw and recruitment for the Regional Forester has been initiated.

Infrastructure Planning & Development Engineering

Current Status of Operations

Development Engineering

We are continuing to respond to development applications with engineering comments, legal agreements for road works, and processing Environmental Compliance Approvals (ECA) under the Transfer of Review program for new sanitary and storm sewers. Additionally, we are continuing with Stormwater Management (SWM) review, Transportation review/meetings, and Water & Wastewater (W&WW) review/meetings as it relates to development applications and inquiries. We are working on the SWM Guidelines Project with Wood Consulting Engineers and assessing schedule/deliverables to adapt to current situation. We are participating in the MECP sessions on the proposed changes to the Consolidated Linear Infrastructure ECA Process for the entire sanitary or stormwater management system. Once fully implemented this will result in changes and new processes for all local municipalities and the Region for the two-tiered sanitary (wastewater) system and stormwater management system in Niagara.

Infrastructure Planning

We are reviewing the proposals received for the 2021 W&WW Master Servicing Plan (MSP) Update project in consultation with W&WW team. This is an important project for the Region and all local municipalities with urban water and sanitary sewer services. It will require significant effort, analysis, and consultation with the majority of work to be completed by end of 2021. The resulting growth capital water and wastewater projects are an essential input for the Development Charges Background Study and By-law update.

Collectively, there are ongoing corporate wide-efforts to coordinate long range planning/growth with infrastructure planning projects (2021 W&WW MSP update) and the upcoming Development Charges Background Study & By-law update.

Development Industry Liaison

We are continuing with the review of the potential build out scenarios for the urban areas in collaboration with planning group. This is necessary for the 2021 W&WW MSP update to evaluate servicing implications and supporting infrastructure. We are leading the development application process for the Linhaven and Gilmore Long Term Care (LTC) Redevelopment Projects and coordinating with St. Catharines, MTO, and other review agencies to ensure that site plan application can be approved and the timelines associated with this project remain on track (Government funding is tied to this as well). Participating with development industry meetings (NHBA) to understand impacts and restrictions from COVID to residential development industry and housing stock.

Private Sewage/Septic Systems Program

The Private Sewage System group (responsible for Part 8 of the Ontario Building Code) is continuing to receive and respond to septic permit applications, inspections, development applications, special requests and complaints.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

Doug Giles, BES, MUP
Acting Commissioner
Planning and Development Services