
MEMORANDUM

PDS-C 5-2021

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

Date: February 17, 2021

To: Planning and Economic Development Committee

From: Doug Giles, Acting Commissioner

Community and Long Range Planning

Current Status of Operations

Significant work is ongoing to advance the Region's Official Plan this year. It remains the department's largest project and is proceeding in a work-from-home setting with regular group meetings. Without a modern Official Plan, the Region is at a competitive disadvantage to other municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area.

In April, Community and Long Range Planning Staff will deliver a significant report on all matters relating to the Official Plan. That will include Natural Heritage System options and the Regions' land needs assessment (i.e. population and employment forecasts), among other things. Draft Official Plan policies will be provided for many sections. In the months that follow, the Region will seek feedback on these matters from the public, LAMs, and interests' groups.

Prior to April, staff are hosting dozens of meetings with local staff, local councilors and Regional Councilors. This is to provide a preview of what to expect in April. The work that is being advanced now is a culmination of years of input from stakeholders, local staff and others.

Development Planning & Approval Services

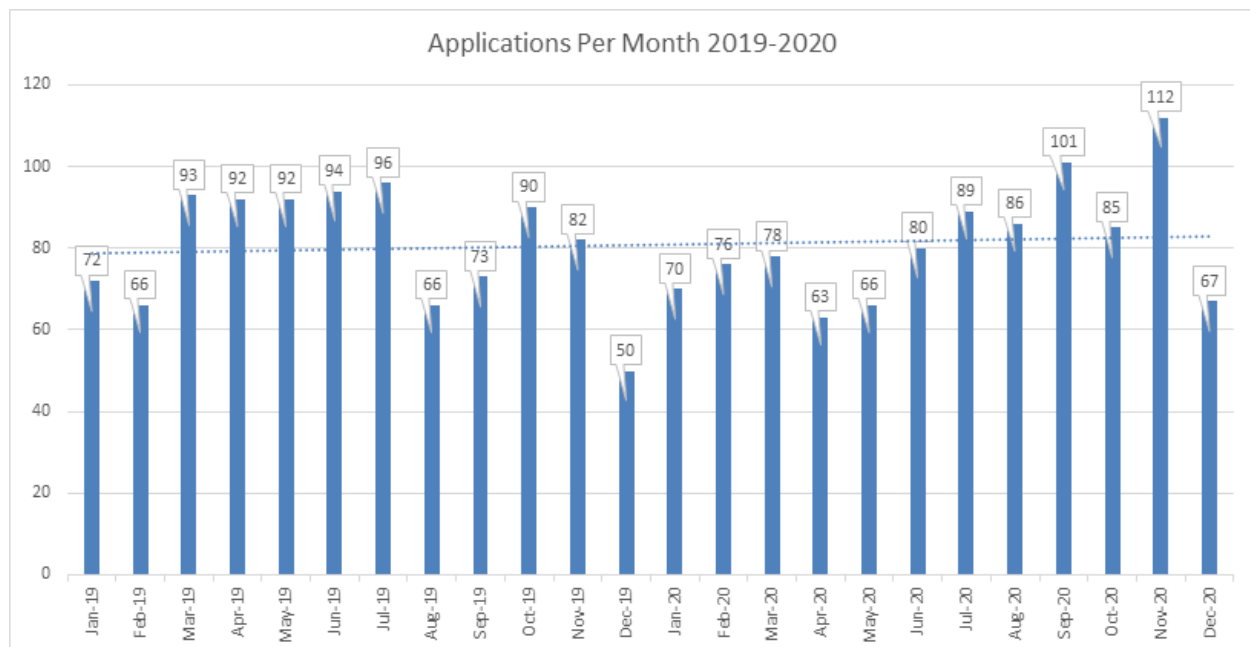
Current Status of Operations

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 December:

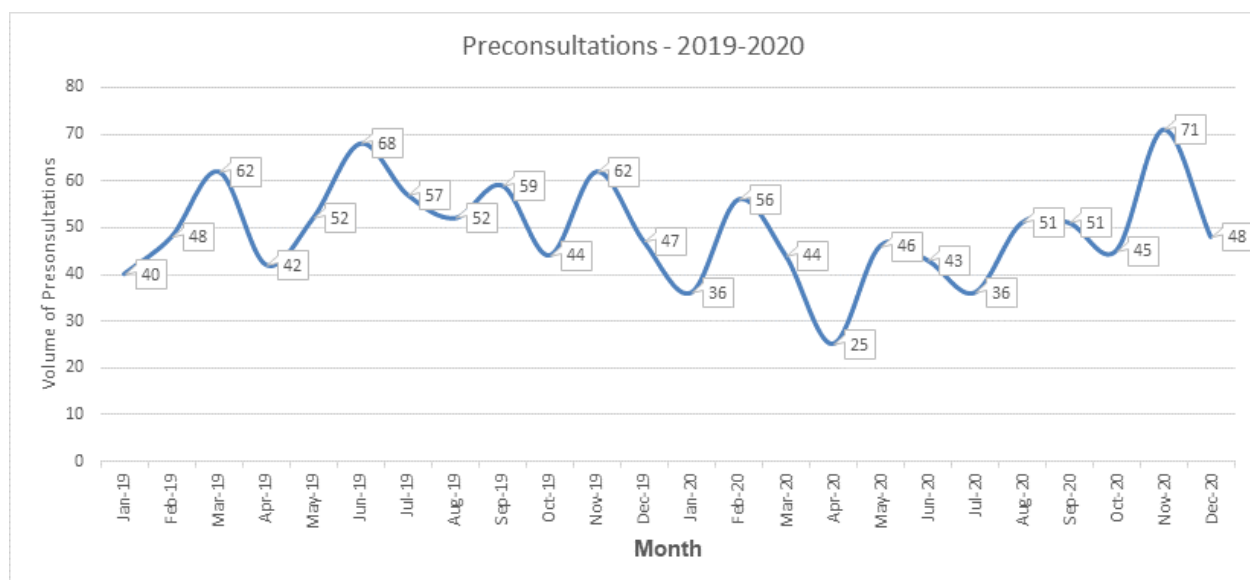
- Planning Applications (includes zonings, subdivisions, site plans, etc.) - **31**
- Engineering Applications (includes servicing reviews, site plans, etc.) - **13**
- Private Septic Applications - **23**
- Pre-consultations – **48**

The total volume of applications (67 excluding pre-consultations) represents a 40% decrease compared to November 2020 (112 applications). Decreases leading up to the Christmas holidays, however, is typical. Nevertheless, the December 2020 volume exceeded the December 2019 volume (50) by 25% as shown in the graph below.



Pre-consultations experienced a 32% decrease from the November volume (71 development proposals). Similar to formal development application volumes the decline is partly due to holiday schedules. Also, as previously reported, while there was a decline in pre-consultations at the early stages of the pandemic due to the shutdown, with the lowest volume for 2020 of 25 proposals received in April, volumes have continuously increased to similar levels as 2019. Overall, however, the impact of the pandemic is evident as the final volume for 2020 (552 pre-consultations) was below the 2019 volume (633), which represents an approximate 13% decrease.

It is also noted that the declines in application and pre-consultation volumes experienced following the shutdown in March 2020 is not anticipated to re-occur as local municipalities are now fully prepared for remote application intake and virtual meetings.



Q4 and 2020 Total Development Volumes

The final 2020 development application volume received was 917 applications (planning, engineering and septic) compared to 964 in 2019, an increase of seven applications overall or approximately 1%. Accordingly, despite the initial reduction in the early stages of the pandemic the total overall development volume was not adversely affected. As discussed, a short term reduction initially experienced following the shutdown was addressed as local area municipalities as well as the Niagara Escarpment Commission geared up to process applications and schedule pre-consultation and public meetings remotely.

It is noted, however, that planning applications and engineering applications in 2020 declined by 4% and 8%, respectively (17 applications each). Early declines in the first two quarters where, however, offset in the latter part of the year such as a 25% increased planning applications volume in Q4.

The Regional Woodland By-law came into effect on February 1st, 2021, and the Region has assumed administration of the By-law from the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. Recruitment for a Regional Forester has been completed, and a separate report is being presented to the PEDC for appointment by Council of the Regional Forester to administer the By-law.

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 commencing the 2021 W&WW Master Servicing Plan (MSP) Update project with GM Blue Plan in consultation with W&WW team and Local Municipalities. 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/early 2022. 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 and Fort Erie, respectively, as well as the 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