
Memorandum

CAO 10-2020 Appendix 4

Subject: COVID-19 Response and Business Continuity in Planning and Development
Date: April 23, 2020
To: Regional Council
From: Rino Mostacci, Commissioner, Planning and Development

Community and Long Range Planning

Current Status of Operations

The Province has not changed the deadline for Regional planning policy conformity with Provincial policy. The Council approved timeline for the completion of the Regional Official Plan remains 31 December 2021. Background reports under the major categories are being finalized and once complete will be reported to Council to authorize next steps. Continuing to provide oversight of the Development Application Portal project.

Service/Operational Changes

The Employment Inventory, the survey of businesses which is administered during the summer months, will not rolled out under the traditional format. As an alternative, there will be an increased effort in directing businesses to the online survey which last year attracted a 20% response rate. This will be useful information to understand the local business impact of the Pandemic.

Significant Initiatives or Actions undertaken

Area Planners meetings (Region, Local Area Municipality, NPCA planners) has continued online. Meetings are planned every 2 weeks to communicate the current status of Provincial, Regional and Local planning requirements and service.

A series of online public surveys will be initiated to supplement information and opinions collected to inform for the Regional Official Plan while Public Information Centres and other forms of direct consultation are on hold.

Operational Outlook

1 month

- None

3 months

- None

6 months

- The inability to conduct traditional Public Information Centres and other forms of in-person consultation may impact the work program for the Regional Official Plan.

Development Planning

Current Status of Operations

Have adapted processes to continuing 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.

Urban Design

Reviewing PRIP submissions and participating in cycling grant application review. Continuing to review and comment on all development applications that require Urban Design input. Providing background work and for the new Regional Official Plan and supporting GO implementation the Niagara Falls GO.

Environmental Planning

Continuing to review and comment on all development applications within or adjacent to core natural heritage features, including Environmental Impact Studies (EIS) and related

plans/drawings, both recently submitted and backlogged in que. Screening all pre-consultation meeting requests, site visits, scoping of EIS requirements, Terms of Reference review, and daily coordination with Development Planners. Continuing to address new and outstanding email inquiries from Local Area Municipalities, consultants and internal staff regarding environmental requirements for previously scoped studies, secondary plans, future high-value development applications, Regional properties, etc.

Service/Operational Changes

- Preparing for and attending virtual Pre-consultation meetings with LAMs to discuss application requirements on potential future developments.
- Staff presentation to University of Buffalo on Planning in Niagara Region, including an overview of government structure, planning framework, and planning/development trends to use as a comparison with New York State.
- Participation in Development Application Portal project through the development of a standardized application form.
- Continuing to participate and provide support in departmental policy projects and special requests from Economic Development Staff.

Operational Outlook

1 month

- Service changes include moving to a virtual interaction with our local municipal partners for Pre-consultation meetings and Area Planner meetings. Additionally some projects that required public information centres have been deferred until we develop a virtual platform that allows for effective public engagement. There have been adjustments to how we accept development applications and payments.

3 months

- Development Planning is monitoring development application activity along with fee revenue on an ongoing basis. Expecting several public information centres for the Woodland By-law update that has been paused once an approved virtual platform is up and running.

6 months

- Development Planning will be preparing for an increase in development applications as the economy gets back on track. Expecting there will be additional demands on the team to offer support to the development industry to leverage and support economic recovery.

Infrastructure Planning & Development Engineering

Current Status of Operations

Development Engineering

Adapting to responding to development applications with engineering comments, legal agreements for road works, and processing ECA's under the Transfer of Review program. Continuing with SWM review, Transportation review/meetings, and W&WW review/meetings. Reviewing SWM Guidelines project with WOOD and assessing schedule/deliverables to adapt to current situation. Continuing with SWM Guidelines project.

Infrastructure Planning

We are continuing with the development of the RFP for the W&WW MSP Update project in consultation with W&WW team. Target for RFP to be out in September to ensure work can be completed by end of 2021 to be an input for the DC By-law update. Continuing with Baker Road PPCP and additional flow monitoring work for project. Coordinating with local municipalities (West Lincoln, Lincoln and Grimsby). Wet weather management program is continuing and adapting to the current situation.

Development Industry Liason

Continuing with the review of the potential build out scenarios for the urban areas of Niagara. This must be completed to be part of the W&WW MSP update to better understand the potential servicing implications for build out. Leading the development application process for the Linhaven LTC Redevelopment Project. Coordinating with St. Catharines, MTO, and other review parties 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).

Service/Operational Changes

- Part 8 – Private Sewage System Services is continuing to receive and respond to permit applications, development applications, special requests etc.
- Infrastructure Planning - Reviewing the CSO Program and outreach to all local municipalities to understand the cash flow constraints relative to the status of the 2020 CSO program - may likely be placed on hold.

Significant Initiatives or Actions undertaken

- Part 8 – Private Sewage System Services - Coordinated with Legal to provide a formal letter explaining Part 8 Services during COVID-19 with the new restrictions. Formal letter has been shared with all septic installers and designers, and is attached to every septic permit issued.
- Development Industry is connecting with the NHBA and development industry to understand how they adapting to the current situation. Actively participating in all NHBA associated virtual meetings regarding COVID and the industry.
- Initiating the economic outlook and potential recovery strategy for the residential development industry.

Operational Outlook

1 month

- Service changes include handling septic permit applications by mail/courier/electronic as hand delivered and front counter meetings are no longer available. Outreach to septic installers and designers with letter providing details to the functioning of the Private Sewage Program during COVID restrictions. Communications with local building departments and Chief Building Officials continue daily as new changes occur and impact the building permit process. Moved to virtual meetings with Transportation, W&WW, and municipal partners for development applications. The Transfer of Review Program for Environmental Compliance Approvals on behalf of the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks continues with electronic submissions only. There have been adjustments to how the Region accepts development applications and

payment for application fees. Review of CSO Projects as the 2020 program will likely not be able to be funded due to insufficient wastewater funding.

3 months

- Continuing to provide comments and review for development applications and Environmental Compliance Applications, and provide Private Sewage Systems Services while monitoring application volume and fee revenue. Continuing to move forward with the SWM Guidelines project and the preparation of the RFP for the W&WW Master Servicing Plan Update which provides input to the DC By-law update. Working with the residential development industry to understand and compliment efforts and strategies for economic recovery with Economic Development.

6 months

- As the economy recovers, it is anticipated that there will be a backlog of development applications, approvals and permits that will need to be processed. The implementation of the economic recovery plan for Niagara should be kicking in. Continued engagement with the residential development industry to address key priorities to move projects forward.

Respectfully submitted and signed by,

Rino Mostacci, MCIP, RPP
Commissioner, Planning & Development Services