
MEMORANDUM

PDS-C 4-2020

Subject: COVID-19 Response and Business Continuity in Planning and Development
Date: May 13, 2020
To: Planning and Economic Development Committee
From: Rino Mostacci, Commissioner, Planning and Development

Commissioner Comments, Planning & Development Services

Overall the team has adjusted well to working remotely – all core and essential services continue to be delivered. I am personally very impressed with quality and quantity of work that is still be generated. We are making progress on key initiative which will ultimately support economic recover – in particular the Glendale District Plan and work on our Employment Policies. We are in constant contact with our private sector partners and continue to find solutions and offer support as needed. Staff are also supporting the Regional EOC as required.

Community and Long Range Planning

Current Status of Operations

We have met with representatives from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to discuss the status of the Regional Official Plan and as reported previously, the Province has not changed the deadline for Regional planning policy conformity with Provincial policy. As such we are continuing to progress with the New Official Plan in accordance with the Council approved timeline. It is important to maintain this momentum in order to support managing and planning for the regions long term growth in a manner that is aligned with local municipalities and to support private investment.

Service/Operational Changes

Technical Advisory Committees (TACs) for the Regional Official Plan background reports are continuing to hold online discussions to progress to the stage where draft policy will be prepared.

The number of private sector enquiries has increased regarding the status and progress of existing of Official Plan policies and background reports.

Significant Initiatives or Actions undertaken

Regular Area Planners meetings (Region, Local Area Municipality, NPCA planners) have continued online 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 & Approvals

Current Status of Operations

Development Planning & Approval Services has 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

PRIP submissions have been evaluated with funding commitments being issued to successful applicants this week. Working with Transportation colleagues on a new operations procedure that will develop team approach to EAs and Road reconstruction

projects. Continuing to review and comment on all development applications that require Urban Design input. Providing background work for the new Official Plan and supporting GO implementation the Niagara Falls GO. Completed participation in the team evaluation of the Complete Streets Standards Manual prime consultant.

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 inquiries from both internal and external staff regarding environmental requirements for previously scoped studies, secondary plans, future development applications, etc. Participating in review of the natural heritage background work for the new Regional Official Plan.

Service/Operational Changes

- Preparing for and attending virtual pre-consultation meetings with Local Area Municipalities to discuss application requirements on potential future developments.
- 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 (PICs) have been deferred, but preparations are beginning for use of 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 will be monitoring development application activity along with fee revenue on an ongoing basis. PICs for the Woodland By-law Update will

be completed virtually and a consultation summary report posted on the project website.

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). Coordinating with Local Municipal Partners on previously approved CSO Projects and projected cash flow to better inform Finance of demands. 2020 CSO Project approvals are on hold as mitigation measures are assessed by Finance to address the W&WW budget constraints. Wet weather management program is continuing and adapting to the current situation.

Development Industry Liaison

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 and supporting infrastructure 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). Participating with Development Industry meetings (NHBA) to understand impacts and restrictions from COVID to residential development industry and housing stock as things change.

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 on a regular basis 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 and Development Services