



Staff Report

Planning and Development Services

Report To: Committee of The Whole
Meeting Date: April 23, 2018
Report Number: PDS.18.36
Subject: Development Review Process Improvements
Prepared by: Michael Benner, Director of Planning and Development Services

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report PDS.18.36, entitled “Development Review Process Improvements” for information purposes;

AND THAT Council endorse the improvements being made to the Town’s Development Review Process as outlined in report PDS.18.36.

B. Overview

Report PDS.18.36 provides Council with information pertaining to recent improvements to the Town’s Development Review Process.

C. Executive Summary

In March of 2015 the Town implemented a revised development review process utilizing a Development Review Team Approach. Although this approach works well during times of normal development application volume, the increasing development volume experienced over the last 2 to 3 years has placed increased burden on individual workloads resulting in a decreased Development Review Team efficiencies. The intent of this report is to provide Council with an update on the direction that the Planning and Development Services Department has and will be taking to further improve the development review process.

D. Background

On March 16, 2015 Council received staff report CAO.15.03 which recommended changes to the Town’s organizational structure. That report generally recommended that all development related engineering review functions were to report through the Director of Planning and Development Services. Throughout 2015 and 2016, the Planning and Development Services Department (PDS), in consultation with the development community, local stakeholders and agencies developed and began implementing an updated development review process that was based on a Development Review Team model.

Over the last 3 years, the Town has experienced increasing development activity as demonstrated in record breaking development application and building permit activity. This increased activity has placed increased pressures on the PDS staff and other Town departments. It is anticipated that this increased development pressure will continue over the next 2 to 3 years as existing developments work their way through the development approval process and new development applications enter the development review process.

In January 2018, the Georgian Triangle Development Institute (GTDI) provided input regarding the Towns Development Review Process through the Town's Economic Development Advisory Committee. This input, included as Attachment "1" to this report provides 14 observations regarding the Town's Development Review Process and other matters. Some of these observations cannot be easily implemented as they pertain to matters beyond the Town ability to control, other observations concerning the development review process are being assessed by staff as we continue to look for process improvements.

To that end, the Planning and Development Services Department has implemented several improvements to our development review process methods and staffing as described in the next section of this report.

Staff look forward to continuing to work with the GTDI on these and other important development and economic issues.

E. Analysis

An integral and, perhaps the most important, part of the Development Review Process is how the review process functions from an internal Development Review Team (DRT) perspective.

The DRT approach provides a venue where design, operation and legislative aspects can be discussed amongst staff, and with the applicant, to arrive at design and operational decisions that work for the Town and the proponent. The premise behind the DRT approach is to have all staff involved in development review working together simultaneously reviewing their respective areas of responsibility and reporting back through the Manager of Development Engineering as development review lead.

Staff involved in the review team would typically include front line staff involved in the day to day operation of the Town's infrastructure such as the Manager of Parks and Trails, Manager of Roads and Drainage, Manager of Water and Wastewater and the Engineering Design Technologist. Building Department staff, Planning staff, the Manager of Engineering and the Development Engineering Reviewer also form part of the review team. The Manager of Development Engineering provides the proponent with technical and engineering comments and the planner assigned to the file provides planning and legislative comments.

Although the DRT approach works well during times of normal application volume, it can become overwhelmed during times of increased application volume and individual workload. As such the following additions have or are being implemented to bolster the DRT approach during times of high workload:

1. Through the 2018 budget process, additional contract staff positions were identified for the Building Services Division and the Development Engineering Division. These positions have now been filled. In addition, a second permanent Plans Examiner position has been included in the last 2 budget cycles for the Building Division. This position has also been filled.
2. Development Application Review Team meetings are now being set up for mid and large-scale development applications. These meetings are held at the conceptual stage of development, prior to the receipt of a formal application, to introduce the proposal to senior staff and to identify any major issues with the proposal at the beginning of the process. These meetings typically include the developer and their consulting team, senior Town staff members, planning staff and Development Engineering staff who will be taking on the project as well as outside agencies.
3. Development Review Committee(DRC) and Technical Review Committee (TRC) meetings have been arranged to occur monthly to provide an opportunity for Town staff involved in the DRT to discuss development applications as they come in, through the DRC meeting, and to discuss any necessary engineering review of applications, through the TRC meeting, as developments move through the approval process.
4. Planning staff will be preparing more Informational Reports to the Committee of the Whole on mid and large-scale development proposals as they are received. These reports are intended to give Council and the public a “heads up” on new developments occurring within the Town and will be informational only with no expectation for approvals being issued at such an early stage in the development process.
5. Planning staff will also be including an Executive Summary section in their reports to the Committee of the Whole where appropriate. The Executive Summary will provide a synopsis of the nature of the report and any recommendations and conclusions stated in the report.
6. Staff are also requesting that Development Signage be erected at all mid and large-scale development sites early in the approval process. The Intent of the signage is to inform the public of the proposed development and any upcoming information sessions or public meetings associated with the development approval process.

It is intended that these additional steps will provide the Technical Review Team, Council and residents with the tools and information necessary to make informed and timely decisions on development projects within the Town. Further dialogue will continue to be had with the GTDI and other developers and their consultants as staff investigate areas of additional process improvement.

F. The Blue Mountains Strategic Plan

Goal #4: Promote a Culture of Organizational and Operational Excellence
Objective #4: To Be a Financially Responsible Organization

G. Environmental Impacts

It is intended that the Town's Development Review Process will identify and address potential negative environmental impacts brought about by development within the Town.

H. Financial Impact

The Development Review Process is primarily supported by the development industry through application and review fees and other financial contributions.

I. In consultation with

Shawn Everitt, Interim CAO

Brian Worsley, Manager of Development Engineering

J. Attached

1. GTDI Letter

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Benner, MCIP RPP
Director of Planning and Development Services

For more information, please contact:
Michael Benner, Director of Planning and Development Services
planning@thebluemountain.ca
519-599-3131 extension 246



GEORGIAN TRIANGLE DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

January 4, 2018

Town of The Blue Mountains
32 Mill Street, P.O. Box 310
Thornbury, ON N0H 2P0
519-599-3131
519-599-7723 (Fax)
1-888-258-6867 (1-888-BLU-MTNS)

Attn: Economic Development Advisory Committee

RE: Development Application Review Process (DARP)

Dear Member of the Committee,

The GTDI thanks the Town of the Blue Mountains (TOBM) Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) for allowing us to submit our comments about the Development Application Review Process (DARP).

We are also very pleased that the GTDI is a member of the EDAC and look forward to a continued relationship. Our industry is one of the largest economic drivers in the TOBM as we manufacture the places we live work and play. Our products contribute to the lifestyle residents enjoy and contribute heavily to the Towns tax revenue base.

We are also very pleased with the changes that the TOBM made based on the recommendations of Tim Dobbie Consultants in 2015. The largest change was placing development related engineering review and approvals under the sole jurisdiction of the Director of Planning and Building Services.

However, the GTDI recommended in 2017 that the TOBM bring Mr. Dobbie back to review how the recommendations were being executed and if modifications needed to be made. Essentially, a check up by the Doctor. The GTDI understands that this recommendation was brought forth by the Director of Planning and Building Services to members of Council and it was rejected.

As such, we have heard from our members that the Development Application Review Process (DARP) is yet again mired in delays. Our members have articulated some items that they feel may be helpful for the Town to consider to ensure the DARP is efficient and is beneficial to the TOBM.

In no particular order or ranking, here are some of those observations:

1. Council should have Tim Dobbie back to get an update on how things are running.
2. Tim Dobbie should be brought in to lead the CAO search. His name would instantly bring in qualified applicants. He is well respected across the province, the Town and local development community.
3. Staff reports and the Planning applications need to include and adhere to the Statutory Requirements for approval timing. As example, reports and applications should indicate the date that applications are submitted and when the applicant is able to make appeals to the OMB for non-decision by Council. (e.g. 120days ZBA, 180days OPA, Etc)




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4. When a preconsultation meeting occurs there should be documentation including a checklist provided by the Town, so the requirements don't change half way thru the review process. Charge a preconsultation fee if you have to. Town of Collingwood is \$525.
5. ALL internal Departments are required to provide their requirements during the Pre-Consultation meeting.
6. Completion of the comprehensive zoning bylaw is long overdue, current one is from 1983. As part of the update, make it easily accessible through an on line portal. This would allow the public easier access to information.
7. Consider allowing developments to construct sales information centers on lands zoned Development and designated for residential development prior to draft approval.
8. Council should identify what they are going to do with the \$25 million in cash water and waste water reserves. The Town continues to put nearly \$2 million per year in cash into this account. 40 percent of every dollar collected in water and sanitary billing is put into a bank account. What is this money going to be spent on?
9. The Towns DCs are some of the highest in the Province. This is because staff has identified the desire to do full urban design for streets like Hidden Lake Road, Peel Street, Christie's Beach Sideroad. The Town should have real discussions if urban standards or rural standards should be applied. This would be a significant cost savings to DC's.
10. The Town should assume projects within 1 year of lots being registered or substantial completion. Remove the 75 percent building permit requirement. The Town collects taxes on some lots for over a decade but have never provided any maintenance services.
11. ECA permits to the MOECC for development projects should be signed by the licensed engineer in the Planning Department and not the Public Works Department.
12. Unless a subdivision is assumed, entrance permits issued by IPW should not be necessary to build on a lot.
13. The Licensed Engineer in the Planning Department shall sign approvals for Hydro One electrical designs for developments.
14. The Town should organize all of their files such that they are easily accessed and properly archived.

The GTDI is celebrating 25 years in representing the Development Community in our Region. We would be pleased to discuss these, or any other, development related concerns with the TOBM EDAC, Staff and/or Council.

Regards,


Kenneth S. Hale, RPP, MCIP, OALA, CSLA
President, Georgian Triangle Development Institute