



Staff Report

Planning and Development Services

Report To: Committee of the Whole
Meeting Date: May 19, 2020
Report Number: PDS.20.47
Subject: Budget 2020 Planning & Development Services Capital Projects and Staffing
Prepared by: Nathan Westendorp, Director Planning and Development Services

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report PDS.20.47, entitled "Budget 2020 Planning & Development Services Capital Projects and Staffing";

AND THAT Council approve the extension of the existing Development Engineering contract positions to the end of June 2021;

AND THAT Council approve establishment of a Full-time, Permanent Building Plans Examiner/Inspector position to replace the existing 24-month contract position;

AND THAT council approve the purchase of an additional Sport Utility Vehicle for the Building Services Department.

B. Overview

This report discusses the Planning & Development Services 2020 Budget and seeks Council approval to proceed with the items outlined in the report.

C. Background

Council has requested that a follow up report be brought to Council for all additions to the 2020 budget before the hiring or tendering processes begins.

D. Analysis

The 2020 Budget contained a variety of staffing enhancements proposed to assist the municipality with addressing workload associated with a strong development/housing market. While below the \$50,000 threshold set by Council for items that should return for consideration, the department's proposed budget also included a \$25,000 item to fund Consolidation of Office Space that staff felt it prudent to bring this project back to Council given recent circumstances related to COVID-19.

The 2020 Budget for the Planning & Development Services Department included the following:

Building– Convert existing 24-month Contract Examiner/Inspector position into a Full-time Permanent position.

Building – Create new 24-month Contract Examiner/Inspector position.

Building – Create new 24-month Building & Zoning Coordinator position.

Building – Convert existing 24-month Permit & Inspections Assistant position into a Full-time Permanent position. NOTE: On May 4, 2020 Council elected to extend the contract of this position by another 12 months. No decision on this is required on this position through this Staff Report.

Development Engineering – Extend existing contracts for two Development Engineering Review Technicians to June 2021.

With the benefit of first quarter Building Department statistics as well as up-to-date information on workload demand for Development Engineering services, staff offer the following to support Council's decision on these matters:

Building

- The Town of The Blue Mountains is experiencing significant growth of residential subdivisions, the redevelopment of existing buildings and an increase in commercial/industrial activity. The added growth is projected to continue well beyond 2023, based on the number of developments that are existing, under construction or being proposed.
- Despite any perceived impacts/restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Building Services Division continues to experience significant increases in the number of building permit applications for the construction of residential dwelling units as a direct result of the approved developments.
- During the first quarter of 2020, revenue has increase 30% over the same period in 2018 and 2019, while the number permits issued for residential dwellings has increased by 60%. Note all work and permits issued by the Town Building Services Division has been in compliance with Provincial Orders and Town protocols in place at the time. Many dwellings constructed in The Blue Mountains can be very large with complex designs which take up a considerable amount of staff time for plans review and building inspections.
- The number of monthly inspections conducted by the Building Department staff for the first quarter have outnumbered each monthly inspection for the same period in 2018 and 2019. The start of the second quarter continues to see a steady flow of permit applications comparable to the past few years.
- Funds associated with the purchase of an additional Sport Utility Vehicle for the Building Services Division to facilitate the increase in inspections was also included in the 2020 proposed budget. This vehicle was originally contemplated to be a hybrid vehicle with

\$50,000 allocated from Gas Tax funding identified in the original 2020 Budget document. However, the purchase of a standard small SUV (Ford Escape size, or equivalent) is estimated to cost approximately \$26,000 instead.

- Currently the Building Department is staffed with a permanent Plans Examiner, two permanent Building Inspectors and one Building Inspector/Plans Examiner on a 24-month contract. The existing 24-month contract expires in January 2021.

Development Engineering

- Since March 23, 2020, applicants/development industry stakeholders have had altered and/or remote working arrangements, and have been working diligently with Development Engineering staff to advance the designs of several project including Clarksbury (Bayside), Towns of Thornbury, Lora Bay Phase 4, and Skyline Site F. Upon the anticipated re-opening of the Province and construction-related Provincial Orders being relaxed and/or lifted, additional fees are expected to be received with the approval of the sets of engineering drawings related to the Subdivisions and/or Site Plans that have been under review. In addition to design work, site work and inspections have also been proceeding where it has complied with Provincial Orders in place at the time. As a result, Development Engineering staff have also been attending sites.
- Other projects are undergoing preliminary review associated with the Planning process. Based on recent assessment of workload volume, market demand for the Town's review of these designs is not expected to subside. In fact, an upward trend for workload related to getting "shovels in the ground" could be anticipated if higher levels of government introduce measures to stimulate the economy, including the construction industry
- When considering the anticipated volume of work and the assumed work estimates for each fee type, the Fees Review recently completed by Watson concluded that the Development Engineering Division requires approximately 3 FTE's to function at current service levels and workload.
- In the near term, the future workload of Development Engineering will also include completion of legacy engineering matters associated with subdivisions that have already paid fees to the Town in the past. These matters include subdivisions under default (i.e. Ridge Estates and Peaks Meadows), dealing with issues such as entrance permits in unassumed subdivisions, analysis of drainage works in recent developments (i.e. Lora Bay), in addition to typical development design review, construction oversight, and resident liaison.
- A case should be made for the continuance of the current Development Engineering staff complement through June 25, 2021. These positions are currently scheduled to end in September 2020. It is anticipated that this June 2021 timeframe will allow the Division to adequately address legacy issues as well as set up enhanced systems and processes to increase productivity and efficiency in the longer term.

Therefore, considering the existing trends observed by staff, but remaining aware of potential for longer term impacts on the housing market and economy, staff recommend the following be incorporated into the Planning & Development Services Department Budget for 2020:

Table 1

Division	Position/Project	Recommendation
Development Engineering	Development Engineering Review Technician	Extension of the existing Development Engineering contract positions (2) to the end of June 2021
Building	Examiner/Inspector	Establish a Full-time, Permanent Building Plans Examiner/Inspector position to replace the existing 24-month contract position
Building	Additional Vehicle	Purchase additional Sport Utility Vehicle to facilitate anticipated inspections.

At this time, staff feel it is prudent to proceed with the above actions. While first quarter statistics indicate continued strength in the market, the need for other positions initially requested through the Budget 2020 process will be reassessed through the Budget 2021 process. This will allow for longer-term decisions to be made with the benefit of more knowledge of the development market and impacts on workload.

Furthermore, the Planning & Development Services Department 2020 Budget also included a small capital project associated with consolidating office space. The value of this project was estimated at \$25,000. While this remains an important project and would benefit the function of the department, it is not an urgent expenditure in the context of recent events. For the year 2020 and with the deferred pursuit of additional Planning and Development Services staff as noted above, staff feel this project is best to reassessed if and when additional staff may be required. The department's office space will need to be repositioned to accommodate any additional staff that are approved for 2021 and beyond and the capital project could be best pursued at that time.

E. The Blue Mountains Strategic Plan Goal #1: Create Opportunities for Sustainability

Objective #1 Retain Existing Business

Objective #2 Attract New Business

Goal #3: Support Healthy Lifestyles

Objective #3 Manage Growth and Promote Smart Growth

Goal #4: Promote a Culture of Organizational & Operational Excellence

Objective #3 To Consistently Deliver Excellent Customer Service

Objective #4 To Be a Financially Responsible Organization

Objective #5 Constantly Identify Opportunities to Improve Efficiencies and Effectiveness

F. Environmental Impacts

No direct environmental impacts are anticipated from the recommendations in this report.

G. Financial Impact

The Building Services staffing request and additional vehicle for the Building Division outlined in Table 1 will be funded through building permit fees collected by the Town. While fees are anticipated to cover the costs, Building Reserve funds remain available during periods of funding shortfalls.

The Development Engineering staffing request outlined in Table 1 will be funded through Development works fees and other development related review fees. It is anticipated that sufficient fees have been and will continue to be collected to cover the costs associated with these contract extensions. While fees are anticipated to cover the costs, Development Engineering Reserve funds remain available during periods of funding shortfalls during the contract extension period.

The Office Consolidation Capital Project was to be funded through the Building Reserve Fund and the Development Engineering Reserve. Deferral of this project will retain funds within those reserves.

H. In consultation with

Jennifer Moreau, Director of Human Resources

Ruth Prince, Director of Finance & IT

Shawn Everitt, Chief Administrative Officer

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has not been subject to a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre as neither a Public Meeting nor a Public Information Centre are required. Comments regarding this report should be submitted to Tim Murawsky, Manager of Building Services/Chief Building Official at cbo@thebluemountains.ca or Brian Worsley, Manager of Development Engineering at bworsley@thebluemountains.ca.

J. Attached

N/A

Respectfully submitted,

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