



Staff Report

Administration – Chief Administrative Officer

Report To: COW- Admin, Corp and Finance, SI, Comm. Services
Meeting Date: June 30, 2025
Report Number: ADM.25.020
Title: Planning Services Delegated Approval Authorities
Prepared by: Adam Smith, Interim Chief Administrative Officer

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report ADM.25.020, entitled “Planning Services Delegated Approval Authorities”;

AND THAT Council support a request to the County of Grey to investigate additional planning approval responsibilities to be delegated to the Town;

AND THAT Council direct staff to work with the County of Grey in the development of a Memorandum of Understanding outlining the approvals to be delegated and responsibilities in the development review process.

B. Overview

The intent of this report is to seek Council direction on exploring planning responsibilities currently with the County of Grey that can be delegated to the Town. Given the status of the new hybrid model of planning services proposed to be delivered by the County and efforts by both County and Town staff to find efficiencies, the timing may be appropriate to reassess planning responsibilities. Similar to the approach in instituting a hybrid model for participating municipalities, a non-participant MOU could be executed to clearly outline roles and responsibilities under a new arrangement.

C. Background

On March 21, 2025 the County of Grey hosted a joint meeting of Council with all member municipalities and presented PDR-SJM-19-25 Hybrid Planning Services Model Update (Attachment 1). The report outlined the shift to exploring a hybrid service delivery model for planning services across the County where not all municipalities participated. The Town of The Blue Mountains has opted out of the model whereby all land-use planning services would be delivered by the County.

As an alternative, staff are seeking to further advance the recommendations contained within PDR-CW-07-22 Delegation of Planning Approvals and Process Efficiencies (Attachment 2). This

report was partly driven by a request from the Town of the Blue Mountains in the previous term of Council to explore the possibility of delegating subdivision, condominium, condominium exemption, and part lot control approvals to the Town. Further to the analysis completed within the report, there are options for the manner in which implementation can occur, particularly as it relates to subdivision approvals and applying transitional provisions.

D. Analysis

Both regionally and provincially, there has been a significant realignment in the delivery of land-use planning services. Regionally, with the proposed centralization of planning services, there has been recognition that the variability in policy at the local level can create inefficiencies in the development review process and further, recruiting and retaining planners in small communities is an increasingly difficult task. Provincially, the foremost priority has been to accelerate housing starts and to do so, reform the local land-use planning process. The key objective in undertaking this reform has been ensuring timely decision-making related to development applications and reducing the cost-burden on proponents that may impact affordability or the viability of projects.

Understanding these shifts, there is an opportunity to align with regional and provincial direction and find efficiencies at the local level that also reduce costs for proponents. This is particularly salient as the Planning and Building Services Fee Review has recommended increases to the fees of most development applications. For approvals such as plans of subdivision that reside with the County, staff between both orders of government will work collaboratively to facilitate a process that is both timely and effective. However, there are structural issues with this approach that can impact timing including the need for these applications to proceed to both Town and County Council. Further, there is the risk that reviewers may have different planning opinions and in the event of an appeal, there may be differing perspectives on navigating either a settlement or hearing.

To investigate the potential of additional land-use obligations coming to the Town, County staff have advised that through resolution by Council, resourcing can be directed to assess feasibility. Among the principle challenges identified is in the transition which will require careful consideration in terms of which files will be subject to the previous review regime versus the new system. Further, given the extent of time in which this planning regime has been in place, there are many files and records that will have to be provided to the Town which will take considerable effort.

Based on the criteria outlined by the County in PDR-CW-07-22 Delegation of Planning Approvals and Process Efficiencies (Attachment 2), the Town is positioned to accommodate additional planning responsibilities. However, prior to proceeding with an MOU there will need be an analysis as to whether doing so will result in a net-benefit for the municipality in terms of efficiency in the development review process and supporting the capacity of the County as a commenting agency. Following the completion of this analysis, a subsequent report will be presented to Council seeking direction on an MOU.

E. Strategic Priorities

1. Communication and Engagement

We will enhance communications and engagement between Town Staff, Town residents and stakeholders

2. Organizational Excellence

We will continually seek out ways to improve the internal organization of Town Staff and the management of Town assets.

3. Community

We will protect and enhance the community feel and the character of the Town, while ensuring the responsible use of resources and restoration of nature.

4. Quality of Life

We will foster a high quality of life for full-time and part-time residents of all ages and stages, while welcoming visitors.

F. Environmental Impacts

N/A

G. Financial Impacts

N/A

H. In Consultation With

Shawn Postma, Manager of Community Planning

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has not been the subject of a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre as neither a Public Meeting nor a Public Information Centre are required. However, any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Adam Smith, Interim Chief Administrative Officer cao@thebluemountains.ca.

J. Attached

1. PDR-SJM-19-25 Hybrid Planning Services Model Update
2. PDR-CW-07-22 Delegation of Planning Approvals and Process Efficiencies

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Smith
Interim Chief Administrative Officer

For more information, please contact:
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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	ADM.25.020 Planning Services Delegated Approval Authorities.docx
Attachments:	- Attachment-1-PDR-SJM-19-25-Hybrid-Planning-Services-Model-Update.pdf - Attachment-2-PDR-CW-07-22-Delegation-of-Planning-Approvals-and-Process-Efficiencies.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Jun 23, 2025

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Adam Smith - Jun 23, 2025 - 11:56 AM