

Report PDR-PCD-16-16

To: Chair McQueen and Members of the Planning and Community Development Committee
From: Randy Scherzer, Director of Planning
Meeting Date: March 15, 2016
Subject: **County Official Plan Update**
Status: Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution PCD56-16; Endorsed by County Council April 5, 2016 per Resolution CC46-16;

Recommendation(s)

WHEREAS there are number of studies that have been completed or are nearing completion that include policies that can be incorporated into the County Official Plan;

AND WHEREAS the last five year review update to the County Official Plan was adopted by the County on March 3, 2009, approved by the Province on February 14, 2011 and later approved by the Ontario Municipal Board on June 25, 2012 and October 9, 2012;

AND WHEREAS the Planning Act requires that municipalities review their Official Plans at a minimum of every five years to ensure that they are current and up to date;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Report PDR-PCD-16-16 be received which identifies some of the background information that could be considered for updates to the Official Plan and outlines a process for updating the Official Plan;

AND THAT staff be directed to commence the process for the County Official Plan Update, including the scheduling of a Special Meeting of Council, and to initiate the outreach initiatives identified in the Report to gain as much as input as possible on what should be considered in the Official Plan.

Background

The County Official Plan underwent a five year review which was adopted by the County on March 3, 2009, approved by the Province on February 14, 2011 and later approved by the Ontario Municipal Board on June 25, 2012 and October 9, 2012. The Planning Act requires that municipalities review their official plans at a minimum of every five years. The County Official Plan is due for a five year review update in 2017.

Over the past several years, there have been a number of provincial policy changes, as well as a number of studies that the County has completed, or are nearing completion, which can be incorporated into the County Official Plan. The following is a list of some of the provincial policy changes and County studies:

- [2014 Provincial Policy Statement](#)
- Changes to the Planning Act ([Bill 140](#) and [Bill 73](#))
- Source Protection Plans – [Saugeen, Grey Sauble, Northern Bruce Peninsula Source protection Plan](#), [the Lake Simcoe Source Protection Plan](#), [and the Grand River Source Protection Plan](#)
- [Historic Landfills Assessment Study](#)
- [Transportation Master Plan - TR-CC-55-15 Transportation Master Plan](#)
- [Green in Grey – Natural Heritage Systems Study](#) (nearing completion)
- [Housing and Homelessness Plan](#)
- [Growth Management Strategy Update](#)
- [Housing Study Data Update](#) (draft completed)
- [On-Farm Diversified Use Study](#) completed by University of Waterloo students

Given the fact that a five year review update is due in 2017, County staff believe it would be prudent to consider commencing the five year review update now to incorporate the various provincial policy changes, as well as to incorporate the information contained in the studies that have been completed over the past several years.

Creative Engagement

The Planning Act requires municipalities that are undertaking a five year review of an Official Plan to consult with the approval authority (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing) and with prescribed bodies (e.g. local municipalities, conservation authorities, etc.) with respect to the revisions that may be required to the Official Plan. The Act also requires that the municipality hold a special meeting of council open to the public to discuss the revisions that may be required. In addition to the special meeting of Council, municipalities are required to hold at least one open house and public meeting

to receive comments on the proposed revisions to the Official Plan. Notice requirements for the special meeting of council and the open house/public meeting are prescribed under the Act which includes providing notice to prescribed agencies and by posting a newspaper that is of sufficient general circulation in the area to which the proposed Official Plan Amendment would apply. The above processes may be ill-equipped to garner the feedback and community discussions which should be occurring with a larger policy initiative such as an update to an Official Plan.

Over the years the County has heard from developers and members of the public indicating that they were not aware of the policy changes, or asking when the policy changed and why they didn't receive notification of the change. If a member of the public does not subscribe to a local newspaper (which many of our seasonal and full-time residents do not), or regularly check the County website (which the public cannot reasonably be expected to do), then one would not hear of policy changes being considered. County Planning staff cannot simply assume that if nobody showed up at a public meeting, or wrote letters/emails to staff, that there are no comments on a policy initiative.

County Planning staff have been utilizing enhanced notification techniques for some recent initiatives such as the Transportation Master Plan and the Green in Grey Natural Environment Study, including radio commercials, notifications in tax bills, social media posts, and targeted messaging to special interest groups/industry sectors. The County has been pleased with the success of some of the above-noted notification techniques. However, recent examples by other municipalities across the Province, and advances in technology, have sparked ideas and discussions about how the County could engage using creative engagement techniques.

The idea of asking the public to come to us by attending a special meeting of council or a public meeting is becoming a dated way of thinking. The County Planning Department has been attempting to outreach to the community by attending special interest group meetings and by meeting with business owners at their place of business which has been quite successful. County staff want to further explore the use of creative engagement techniques to better engage the community. Grey County staff have had initial discussions with the Clerks and IT staff to develop a communications strategy for the County OP Update. The techniques that could be utilized as part of the County OP Update include using social media, using online tools such as web-based surveys, and using the County website. In addition, County Planning staff want to do some direct public outreach at existing community events by going directly to the community and asking for people's thoughts on such questions as: 'what would your ideal community look like in 5, 10, 20 years from now?', 'what do you value about Grey County? What would you like to change in Grey County?'

Engaging the Economic Development Steering Committee and Working Group and local municipalities throughout the County Official Plan Update will be important in order to receive their input on proposed policy revisions. This will ensure that the County is working towards achieving the 'Investment Ready' goals and action items identified in the Economic Development Strategic Plan.

As part of the County Official Plan Update, staff want to develop a branding and communications campaign in order to create some buzz around the project. This will help to create a broader awareness that the County is undertaking this initiative and that input to the Official Plan update is very important in order to create a plan that not only works for the community but is created by the community. Some municipalities have been quite successful in developing a brand for their Official Plan update. The City of London for example came up with "Rethink London" campaign that proved to very successful and included a number of outreach initiatives using social media and other communication techniques to make as many people aware of the update as possible and to maximize the input into the creation of the Official Plan. Staff will work with our communications staff on developing a branding and communications campaign.

Proposed Work Plan

The following initial work plan is proposed in order to complete the County Official Plan Update:

- Special Meeting of Council (Spring 2016)
- Creative Engagement (Spring, Summer and early Fall 2016) which will include consultation with the Province, local municipalities, Economic Development Steering Committee and Working Group, conservation authorities, First Nations, Metis, etc.
- Summarize comments and input received in a report to Committee and discussion around potential policy updates (Fall 2016)
- Draft Official Plan Update presented to Committee/Council – October/November of 2016
- Circulation of draft Official Plan Update, Open House and Public Meeting – December 2016/January 2017
- Further Creative Engagement on the proposed policy revisions – December 2016 to March 2017
- Summarize comments received and finalize draft Official Plan Amendment for Committee/Council – July/August 2017
- Adopt Official Plan Update and submit to the Province for approval- September 2017

Financial/Staffing/Legal/Information Technology Considerations

Some of the funding for the Official Plan Update will come from the existing Planning operating budget as well as the Sourcewater Protection Plan Implementation funds received by the Province to implement the Sourcewater Protection Plans. Should the Official Plan update be appealed, legal funds may be required.

Link to Strategic Goals/Priorities

Goal 2 of the Corporate Strategic Plan is about enabling healthy and resilient communities. By having a County Official Plan that responds to the needs of the community and is created by the community will ensure that the County is striving towards achieving this goal.

Respectfully submitted by,

Randy Scherzer
Director of Planning