
To: Mayor and Council

From: Amy Cann, Director of Planning & Building

Meeting Date: June 24, 2024

Subject: PB-017-2024 – Closeout of Official Plan Review Budget

Recommendation

Be It Resolved that Council of the Township of Clearview hereby receive report PB-017-2024 (Closeout of Official Plan Review Budget) dated June 24, 2024, for information.

Background

In July 2019 after a comprehensive Request for Proposal review process, Township Council awarded the contract for consulting services for the purposes of completing the Township's new Official Plan. The award went to GSP Group to complete the project for a quoted \$79,044. As part of the 2019 budget, Council allocated \$70,000 to this project with another \$20,000 allocated in 2020 for the balance and to account for any contingency.

At its meeting on May 27, 2024 Township Council adopted the new Clearview Official Plan (OP). The new OP replaces the 2001 version and was completed through an involved policy and public comment review process by GSP Group. The OP review started in 2019 with the completion of visioning and stakeholder engagement sessions and the completion of a number of background study deliverables.

A significant amount of background information went into the OP review in 2019 and 2020. Despite the start of the pandemic in Ontario in March 2020, the drafting of the new Official Plan continued to August 2020.

For a number of reasons, OP review activity slowed in 2021 and 2022. Momentum on the OP Review picked up significantly in 2023. A draft Official Plan was released for public consultation in August 2023 with a final draft released on April 19, 2024. As noted, local adoption occurred on May 27, 2024 and the new Township OP is now with the County of Simcoe for review and approval.

Comments and Analysis

As noted above, the OP review project was awarded to GSP for \$79,044 in 2019. At the outset was understood that the review, including some contingency would cost closer to \$90,000. After adoption of the OP by Clearview Council, GSP has submitted its final

invoice for all works completed, totalling \$121,030. For a number of reasons, the project drew out longer than anticipated and had scope adjustments over the course of work that caused the required budget to increase.

At a high-level, some reasons for the OP review project requiring a longer timeline, adjusted scope, and increased budget include but are not limited to:

- Extended pandemic conditions causing general fatigue in workers and difficulty in executing public engagement activities.
- Staff turnover at GSP and the Township, including change in the principal Planner working on the OP review project and a retiring Township Planning Director.
- An ever-changing provincial Planning legislation framework created uncertainty in crafting local policy, including:
 - [New PPS, 2020](#)
 - [More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019 \(Bill 108\)](#)
 - [More Homes for Everyone Act, 2020 \(Bill 109\)](#)
 - [More Homes Built Faster, 2022 \(Bill 23\)](#)

At the time of the RFP issuance and GSPs original proposal, the OP was intended to plan for the year 2031, and forecasts/policies to 2051 were not in scope. In 2020, the new PPS came into effect and the Growth Plan was amended with 2051 forecasts. The County OP was updated accordingly. Had the OP review been completed in 2020, it would soon be due for another update to plan for growth to 2051.

Notwithstanding considerations respecting possible settlement area boundary adjustment, general housekeeping and mapping updates (e.g., County Natural Heritage System updates), the new OP should be a reliable resource for 10 years. The next fulsome OP review should be more scoped than the current review, which in turn is less costly.

The OP review project team had to adjust to the pandemic and this caused some delays, and also impacted GSP staffing availability and changes more broadly. There was some additional work required to reboot where new staff were brought in the manage the project. Also, the Council visioning session was added to understand the vision of the new Council. Additional project team meetings, public/landowner consultation, and changes in local policy direction (e.g., climate change) were also necessitated over the course of the project. With the added time, some of the data and information provided in 2019 became out of date, and certain components of the OP (e.g. wetlands mapping) had to be reworked as a result of new information.

The original RFP scope of work did not include settlement area boundary review. However, this was added early in the process and conceptual discussions on the

subject were had, some mapping was devised, and some options considered. Nearing the completion of the OP review work, the project team concluded that the matter of settlement boundary adjustments was not fully vetted through impacted landowner consultation and informed by technical Engineering review. Further, the County of Simcoe is not presently in a position to approve the extent of changes being discussed as they were not consistent with the County OP or the Province’s Growth Plan. Ultimately the project team decided to maintain current settlement areas for now and consider changes as a second stage of work. The settlement boundary adjustment data garnered through these early stages will be used as a later date, however, adding this discussion to scope as part of the first stage OP review caused increased costs.

The intensive work put into the new OP has and will produce a number of financial and community development benefits to the Township. Though the project exceeded the originally anticipated scope and budget, the product is a more robust and thoughtful plan. The adopted OP will maintain its usefulness for a longer period of time without the need for immediate revisitation and amendment. The funds attributed to the project in the last year were used to build and refine policies that the process revealed as critical to the future of the Township, including: to add robust policies respecting climate change; to refine and improve policies respecting on-farm diversified uses, agricultural-related uses, and farm consolidations; and to ensure that OP mapping reflected the Township’s vision for the 25 year planning horizon.

It also merits note that the originally anticipated budget of \$90,000 may have been a low estimate. Research reveals that New Tecumseth budgeted \$145,000 for its OP review in 2017, Middlesex Centre \$150,000 in 2019, and Town of the Blue Mountain \$410,000 in 2022. These are a few examples, not necessarily direct comparable, readily available online.

Financial Implications

Original budget for the new OP planning to 2031*	(\$90,000)
Actual expenditure for new OP planning to 2051*	(\$121,030)
Balance in the Planning Policy Reserve on January 1, 2024	\$100,588
Final balance due to GSP for OP Review Completion*	(\$41,810)
Balance in Planning Policy Reserve after settling final invoice	\$58,778

**Including HST*

Planning Staff are satisfied that the balance remaining in the Planning Policy Reserve is sufficient to initiate the Zoning By-law review in 2024. This is a critical project. A

subsequent report will be brought to Council to review the proposed scope and budget of the Zoning By-law review.

It is understood that planning policy work (e.g., OP and Zoning By-law reviews) can partially be attributed to growth and therefore funded by Development Charges. Bill 185, which received Royal Assent on June 6, 2024, reinstated studies as an eligible capital cost under the prescribed inclusions (Development Charges Act, s. 5(3)). As such, the Township Treasurer, together with Watson & Associates will be reviewing the Township's Development Charge By-laws to account for eligible studies once again. This ensures that planning policy studies will, at least in part, be paid for by development as opposed to being funded through taxation.

Clearview's Strategic Plan

Legislated review process.

Report Appendices

None.

Approvals

Submitted by: Amy Cann, M. PL., MCIP, RPP, Director of Planning & Building

Financial Implications Reviewed by: Kelly McDonald, Treasurer

Approved by: John Ferguson, CAO