

REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

Report Regarding Potential Increases to County of Oxford Development Application Fees

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Director of Community Planning

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Schedule “A” to By-law No. 4889-2007, being a by-law to impose fees and charges for services provided by the County of Oxford that are not covered through direct taxation, be amended effective January 1, 2024, specifically pertaining to Planning Fees as set out in Report CP 2023-371.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The purpose of this report is to obtain Council approval regarding potential fee increases for County development applications in 2024.

Implementation Points

Adopting the recommendation in this report would result in an amendment to the Fees and Charges By-law proposed to take effect in January 2024, whereby application fees related to County development applications would be increased as outlined in this report.

Financial Impact

The fee adjustments proposed in this report will increase budgeted revenues from Planning Fees and Land Division Fees for 2024 by approximately \$90,000, from \$379,380 to an estimated \$470,000, and will serve to off set anticipated increases in operational expenses.

Communications




The revised approved fees and charges for 2024 will be posted on the County website for public information. A copy of the revised fees and charges will be circulated to Area Municipalities and the local development industry.

2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

Oxford County Council approved the [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#) on September 13, 2023. The Plan outlines 39 goals across three strategic pillars that advance Council’s vision of “Working together for a healthy, vibrant, and sustainable future.” These pillars are: (1) *Promoting community vitality*, (2) *Enhancing environmental sustainability*, and (3) *Fostering progressive government*.

The recommendation in this report supports the following strategic goals:

Strategic Plan Pillars and Goals

PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3
		
Promoting community vitality	Enhancing environmental sustainability	Fostering progressive government
Goal 1.2 – Sustainable infrastructure and development		Goal 3.1 – Continuous improvement and results-driven solutions Goal 3.4 – Financial sustainability

DISCUSSION

Background

Council considered Report [CP 2023-250](#) in August 2023 which presented potential options to address staffing and other resource needs going forward with a view to establishing Community Planning service levels into 2024 and beyond. Council passed a resolution in support of developing a comprehensive ‘in-house’ planning service over the longer term that would be typical of a more urbanized municipality of similar size/growth as Oxford has been experiencing over the past number of years, with a goal of providing a broad range of planning services and expertise to the County and Area Municipal partners.

It is anticipated that the enhanced planning service supported by Council will be developed and implemented over time, with annual review to determine specific needs/expertise and the most appropriate approach (i.e. retaining staff and/or consulting services) to providing planning services/support desired by the County and Area Municipalities.

With the foregoing in mind, Community Planning is proposing additional staff resources in the 2024 budget, the details of which are included in Report FTE 2024-01 (as contained in the 2024 budget package). In addition to providing details regarding the above-noted staffing increase, FTE 2024-01 noted that from a funding perspective, the added salary, benefits and other resource costs required to facilitate the added FTEs would be offset to some extent via increases to County development application fees, including an initial increase that would take effect in January 2024, followed by a full review and further fee adjustments in Q1 2024.

For Council's information, the FTE increases noted above and detailed in Report FTE 2024-01 result in costs totalling approximately \$289,000 in 2024.

Comments

Council approved an update to the County Fees and Charges By-law for 2024 on September 13, 2023. The revised planning application fees contained in the by-law reflected a 3% increase in-keeping with Community Planning's policy of annual fee increases in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

With a view to the proposed staff increases outlined in the 'Background' section of this report, staff are of the opinion that increasing the County's fees for various planning applications (i.e. Official Plan amendments, subdivisions and consents) beyond the 3% approved in September 2023 is warranted.

Based on a scan of development application fees of neighbouring municipalities (including upper-tier, single-tier and local municipalities) staff have determined that Oxford's fees are very competitive and an initial increase of 25% (over 2023 fees) would continue to place Oxford's application fees well below those of neighbouring communities.

As indicated in Report FTE 2024-01, staff are committed to undertaking a full review of application fees in early 2024 to determine appropriate fee levels for County applications. Further, as the Community Planning service in Oxford is provided to the Area Municipal partners by way of service agreements and is funded largely via the tax levy, staff will be reaching out to Area Municipalities to investigate the consideration of fee increases for local municipal applications (e.g. zoning amendments, minor variances, site plan approval).

CONCLUSIONS

The proposed fees and charges outlined in this report represents a reasonable increase that will be charged directly to users/applicants in 2024 and will serve to reduce the levy for Community Planning services in Oxford.

SIGNATURES

Report author:

Original signed by _____

Gordon K Hough, RPP
Director of Community Planning

Approved for submission:

Original signed by _____

Benjamin R. Addley
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Schedule “A” to By-law No. 4889-2007, as amended (Planning).