

<b>TO:</b>	<b>CHAIR AND MEMBERS BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING ON AUGUST 15, 2011</b>
<b>FROM:</b>	<b>JEFF FIELDING CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>UPDATE ON INITIATIVES WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS BUSINESS UNIT (DABU)</b>

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>
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That, on the recommendation of the Chief Administrative Officer, the following report on the progress of various initiatives within the Development Approvals Business Unit **BE RECEIVED** for information.

<b>PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER</b>
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- Planning Committee Report dated February 24, 2010.
- Planning Committee Report dated September 27, 2010.
- Built and Natural Environment Committee Report dated July 18, 2011.

<b>BACKGROUND</b>
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**Context**

The Development Approvals Business Unit (DABU) was created in the fall of 2009 to improve the administration and processing of development approvals. Prior to this time, the development approvals process involved staff from multiple divisions and departments within the Corporation. The DABU concept was to integrate many approval related functions, provide a single point of contact throughout a development application file, foster improved internal coordination and alignment, and build a closer link between development finance and the approvals process.

In February 2010, the Planning Committee received a report which provided an update on the activities of this new business unit. It identified many of the changes that had been put in place including a new organizational structure and the implementation of the File Manager process (a single point of contact role that would steward an application through the process from beginning to end) for subdivision applications. Even with significant improvements made and noting the short transitional time that the new processes had been in place, the report recognized continued industry concerns. Challenges still existed and the industry communicated that the process could be simplified, approval times needed to be adhered to and that staff roles were still not clear.

In March 2011, the Mayor's Economic Prosperity Council expressed similar concerns citing issues including inefficient processes, adversarial approaches to customer service, and a lack of internal coordination. These concerns were not unlike those raised in 2010 and for years prior.

**Discussion**

Over the past several months, Civic Administration has made a concerted effort to address the root causes of these issues in order to make specific improvements to internal processes. The Chief Administrative Officer, Executive Director of Planning, Engineering and Environmental Services and the Managing Director of DABU have all taken steps to address these issues. The Chief Administrative Officer initiated an internal review process of DABU to identify issues within the current processes and support management in making improvements.

This report provides an overview of these recent activities including positive initiatives implemented to date, as well as opportunities for continuous improvement in the future.

## Work Completed

### ***Internal Review Process***

In March 2011, a small internal team was convened to provide additional resources to support a review of the subdivision approval process. As a first step, the team worked with DABU management to review the current status of each file, develop a simplified interim tracking solution, and provide DABU management with the ability to more readily produce data on the status of subdivision application files.

In April 2011, over 25 internal stakeholders involved in the subdivision application process met to review the status of each subdivision application file. The files were ranked according to a triage and the group collectively agreed upon next steps. The team developed an interim tracking tool to produce real-time data on the status of files and provide staff with a tool to monitor workload and the status of each file. A consolidated version of this data was also provided to the Built and Natural Environment Committee (BNEC) in July 2011, and will continue to be provided from DABU on a quarterly basis.

The review team also solicited input from internal and external stakeholders to identify specific issues including requesting feedback from all staff members in DABU and other areas such as Building and Planning, meetings with various staff members were held, and a meeting with the development industry occurred. The input identified a variety of process, procedural, structural, system, organizational, communication and customer service issues through this process.

### ***Recent Activities***

To address these issues, the Chief Administrative Officer together with DABU management and other executive-level positions have made several changes to improve communication and efficiency.

1. Engineering Review was recently transferred to DABU to re-align staff resources with the natural flows of the approvals process. This will improve communication flow and increase the clarity of staff roles. These changes aim to allow for more consistency in the process as well as provide for the necessary flexibility. This integration has started however it is not expected to be fully functional until 2012.
2. A pilot project management approach for a recent subdivision application file is underway. This involves working with the applicant at the beginning of the process to set agreed upon objectives and timelines, and ensure that expectations are managed on both sides. Regular meetings are held to monitor progress and ensure that all necessary parties are informed of any changes. This approach is more forward looking and proactive than what has been in place in the past and also has a primary goal to improve communication. DABU intends to proceed with this approach in future applications.
3. As noted above, a simplified interim tracking tool was developed and is now being used by DABU staff to track subdivision files. Management is responsible to ensure that the data is current and complete, and is now able to produce simple reports on progress at any time.
4. The File Manager process is being applied to the site plan process. This will streamline the application process, improve quality and set service standards for approvals. The policy work is now complete and training has taken place. There is great industry support for this transition. The amended Site Plan By-law to address these improvements is before Council.
5. There has been progress in the Development Charge (DC) Monitoring work with significant project delivery expected in 2011. This will set an established repeatable procedure for reporting out on development charge activity.

6. A corporate-level decision making committee has been established and meets on a weekly basis to resolve significant issues where there are multiple competing interests. The applicant is often a participant in this process. These meetings have more structure including minute taking to ensure accountability and a common understanding of decisions by all parties. Significant gains in productivity in solving complex multi-party issues with senior management and technical representation at the table.
7. There is a potential further gain in processing improvement that is available between Council approval and the provision of building permits. Staff are currently investigating this issue and will be reporting shortly to Council as several developers have raised the issue from their perspective.

At this time a relatively small number of files have been initiated through the File Manager process while the majority transitioned from the pre-DABU process. Lessons learned drive the need for further process changes and improved template information for environmental review, transportation works etc. which will be undertaken in the short term.

### ***Related Initiatives***

There are other initiatives which have significant impacts on the development application process such as:

1. Urban Design and Placemaking practices - In the absence of detailed Council-approved guidelines, new applications have been considered on a case-by-case basis. The production of detailed Urban Design Guidelines for BNEC's consideration is anticipated to be completed in December of this year, and to come before Council for its consideration early in 2012.
2. Model Financing Agreement - Project lead City Treasurer, in co-operation with CN Watson and a team of stakeholders comprising of the London Homebuilders Association, London St. Thomas Real Estate Board, London Development Institute, Urban League, and City staff from Legal, Finance, Planning, CAO, and DABU. A report anticipated for Finance and Administration Committee the Fall of 2011.
3. Capital Project Delivery - Report from 2011 DC Monitoring reported to BNEC 2011/07/18. A concerted effort is being made to avoid delays that may in turn delay construction starts. There are several large projects underway – Foxhollow drainage projects, Tributary "C" Environmental Assessment, and Sunningdale Storm Water Management Pond (SWM 4).
4. Growth Management Implementation System (GMIS) Update – from time to time the City adjusts its long-range population, employment and housing growth targets usually in alignment with Official Plan updates. The GMIS considers this information in conjunction with individual land development interests and master servicing plans in the development of an implementation plan for growth-related infrastructure works. For 2011, staff plan to bring the second full update of the plan to Council in anticipation of alignment with the 2012 Capital Budget submission. This report should be expected in September 2011.

### **Next Steps**

There is additional work to be done to address the issues within the development approvals process. The ongoing reorganization work, particularly within the newly established Planning, Engineering and Environmental Services, aims to address the structural and role clarity issues cited above. It will also provide an opportunity to optimize the relationship between the development approvals group with the other internal stakeholders.

A review of the File Manager Subdivision Application procedure manual will need to be undertaken and revised in accordance with new roles and responsibilities. This process will be a transformation that should add clarity and transparency. The development industry and staff will understand their relationship accountability to ensure efficient communication and lead to one-stop shopping.

Interim reporting of the status of all files will continue and monitoring of the files' progress will be carried out which should further identify any bottlenecks or hurdles either on the City's end or on the developer's side.

The Corporation recently embarked on a new Service London initiative aimed to improve the delivery of customer service across the organization. A part of this strategy is the implementation of service standards and the development of new customer service tools to support employees. When this work is commenced it will address some of the issues noted above.

The current interim tracking solution is not intended to be a long term tool. A long term technology solution is required to assist with workload management, internal and external communications and progress monitoring. Significant Corporate resources have been and continue to be invested in the AMANDA Data base system. DABU will be working with Technology Services and other internal groups such as Planning and Building Controls to ensure the long term needs are met. One long term goal is to provide access to the City's data base to allow applicants to follow the progress of their application.

### CONCLUSIONS

The administration of development approvals is a complex, high-stakes process involving multiple stakeholders. Staff are responsible to uphold the long term interests of the City and ensure compliance with numerous legislative and other regulatory requirements. This is balanced with a desire to provide quality customer service and meet the process expectations of the applicants.

Building a vibrant community requires a committed partnership and ongoing cooperation between the City and the development industry. Civic Administration is committed to a process of continuous improvement to support this partnership. This work takes time; however together these and other initiatives are beginning to address some of the major issues that have faced DABU and the development approvals process in the past.

Regular reporting will be provided as this work continues.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared with assistance from K. Graham, A. Drost, M. Hughes, D. Ailles, J. Hobbs, and P. McNally.

#### RECOMMENDED BY:

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