

<b>To:</b>	Warden Hicks and Members of Grey County Council
<b>Committee Date:</b>	February 24, 2022
<b>Subject / Report No:</b>	PDR-CW-07-22 / Delegating Planning Approvals and Streamlining the Development Process
<b>Title:</b>	Delegation of Planning Approvals and Process Efficiencies
<b>Prepared by:</b>	Grey County Planning Staff
<b>Reviewed by:</b>	Randy Scherzer
<b>Lower Tier(s) Affected:</b>	All Municipalities in Grey County
<b>Status:</b>	Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution CW37-22;

## Recommendation

1. That Report PDR-CW-07-22 regarding the delegation of planning approvals and process efficiencies, be received; and
2. That staff be directed to share the report with member municipalities in Grey County; and
3. That any municipality seeking delegated planning approvals for subdivisions, condominiums, condominium exemptions, and/or part lot control submit a motion from municipal council indicating their request for additional planning approval responsibilities; and
4. Should a request for delegation of the above-noted planning approvals be received, that County staff be directed to prepare a memorandum of understanding, in consultation with municipal staff, containing criteria discussed in this report, with respect to delegating approval, for consideration by County and Municipal Councils; and
5. That regardless of any delegation requests, that staff be directed to move forward with further improvements to the planning process, to streamline the timing of approvals, and minimize any duplication of efforts.

## Executive Summary

The County currently approves plans of subdivision, condominium, condominium exemption, and part lot control applications for all municipalities except the City of Owen Sound, who

retained this ability when they re-joined the County. Based on a request from the Town of The Blue Mountains, and direction from County Council, staff have prepared this report examining the possibility of delegating subdivision, condominium, condominium exemption, and part lot control approvals to interested member municipalities. To inform this report, staff have surveyed municipal staff, municipal/County Councils, developers, consultants, and neighbouring counties with respect to this topic. Staff have also discussed the matter with staff from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This report provides some background and recommendations for how delegation requests could be considered, as well as improvements that could be considered to the planning process to streamline approvals and minimize opportunities for duplication of efforts. Staff are recommending that any such delegation request for subdivision, condominium, condominium exemption, and part lot control approvals be done by request only on an individual municipal basis, subject to criteria outlined in this report.

## Background and Discussion

On October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the Grey County Committee of the Whole supported the following motion, which was later endorsed by County Council on October 22, 2020.

*“CW178-20 That the correspondence from the Town of the Blue Mountains requesting approval authority from the County of Grey for certain planning matters be received; and*

*That staff bring forward a report on the considerations of Grey County transferring delegated authority to the Town of The Blue Mountains for plans of subdivision, plans of condominium, condominium exemptions and part lot control; and*

*That the staff report also include a review of the current planning processes county-wide and exploration of other options which may identify further efficiencies within the overall planning process and costs associated with those.”*

County planning staff have been delayed in bringing this report forward based on workloads, staff shortages, and some other factors to be explored later in this report. In preparing this report, County staff undertook the following steps:

- researched the legislative authority to delegate planning approvals,
- researched other counties’ approaches to planning services,
- had discussions with Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) staff,
- had discussions with municipal planning staff from across Grey County, and
- surveyed the following groups:
  - municipal staff,
  - neighbouring counties,
  - municipal and County Councillors, and
  - developers, private planners, and consulting engineers.

Planning approval responsibilities have shifted over the years. The County has had certain responsibilities delegated to the County from the Province (e.g. subdivision approval), and the County has delegated some responsibilities to member municipalities (e.g. consent approval). The County only became the approval authority for subdivisions and condominiums in the late 1990’s. When the Province delegated that authority to the County, County staff received hard copy files of all subdivision and condominium applications currently in process or in varying

stages of approval (i.e. some had draft approval and others were still in process pre-draft approval). The ability to grant consents used to be at the County level, with the County Land Division Committee, but that was delegated back to municipalities around the time of amalgamation. Any delegation requests related to subdivision, condominium, condominium exemption, and part lot control applications will need to also consider what happens to existing development applications in varying stages of approval. This matter will be discussed in the Delegation of Planning Approvals section of this report.

Current planning approval responsibilities within the County are outlined in Table 1 below.

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Delegated Planning Approvals</b>
Township of Chatsworth	Consents, minor variances, site plans, zoning by-laws, and zoning by-law amendments (ZBLAs)
Township of Georgian Bluffs	Consents, minor variances, site plans, zoning by-laws, and ZBLAs
Municipality of Grey Highlands	Consents, minor variances, site plans, zoning by-laws, and ZBLAs
Town of Hanover	Consents, minor variances, site plans, zoning by-laws, and ZBLAs
Municipality of Meaford	Consents, minor variances, site plans, zoning by-laws, and ZBLAs
City of Owen Sound	Consents, minor variances, site plans, plans of subdivision / condominium, part lot control, zoning by-laws, ZBLAs, and municipal official plan amendments (OPAs) except five/ten-year reviews or boundary expansions
Township of Southgate	Consents, minor variances, site plans, zoning by-laws, and ZBLAs
Town of The Blue Mountains	Consents, minor variances, site plans, zoning by-laws, and ZBLAs
Municipality of West Grey	Consents, minor variances, site plans, zoning by-laws, and ZBLAs
County of Grey	Plans of subdivision / condominium / part lot control except in the City of Owen Sound, municipal official plans, municipal OPAs except for some in the City of Owen Sound, and County OPAs except five/ten-year reviews

## Table 1: Existing Planning Approval Authorities

Approval authority responsibility is generally standardized across the County, except for the City of Owen Sound. The City used to be a separated municipality and when they re-joined the County they retained the ability to approve plans of subdivision, condominium, and part lot control. The City also had the ability to approve some municipal OPAs delegated to them via regulation from the province.

It is important to further note that aside from approval authority functions, the County also has delegated roles from the province with respect to municipal planning operations. For example, under the province's 'One Window' and 'Municipal Plan Review' functions, the County acts on behalf of the province in reviewing municipal planning policies and development applications (i.e. the County is to be ensuring that documents not only conform to the County Official Plan, but are also consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, and have regard for matters of Provincial interest under the *Planning Act*).

The County is also legislatively required to have a County Official Plan, whereas municipalities may choose to have a municipal official plan but are not required to do so.

Table 2 below summarizes the current planner positions at each municipality and the County (as of February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022). These planning positions do not include other related support staff such as administrative assistants, coordinators, or GIS [geographic information systems] staff. In many cases, the working directors also have a broader role than just planning, including community services, building departments, and/or by-law enforcement, and as such may not be spending as much time on planning matters.

Municipality	Number of Planners On-Staff
Township of Chatsworth	No full-time planners on-staff, one consulting planner approximately one day per week
Township of Georgian Bluffs	Two planners, one planning position is currently vacant
Municipality of Grey Highlands	Two planners, including a working director
Town of Hanover	No full-time planners on-staff, planning is handled by the Director of Development/Chief Building Official (CBO) and consulting planners as needed
Municipality of Meaford	Three – four planners, including a working director, one planning position is currently vacant
City of Owen Sound	Four planners, including a working director
Township of Southgate	One planner
Town of The Blue Mountains	Six planners, including a working director, one planning position is currently vacant
Municipality of West Grey	One planner

County of Grey	Five planners, including the Deputy CAO, one planning position is currently vacant
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## *Table 2: Planning Resources at the Municipal Level*

### What is the Current County Approvals Process?

Currently the main development application types approved by the County are;

1. Draft approvals of plans of subdivision and plans of condominium,
2. County OPAs,
3. Municipal OPAs, and
4. Final approval of plans of subdivision and plans of condominium.

Most typically items 1 – 3 are also accompanied by municipal applications such as zoning amendments, consents, or site plan control. Staff would however note that this is not always the case, such as a subdivision in a pre-zoned area, or a subdivision where the lands are still under development control in the Niagara Escarpment Plan. Item 4 is generally not discussed in this report as it is a staff delegated approval at the County and does not require any public process or agency circulation. County staff are often more ‘hands on’ for items 1 – 2 above. A typical order of events for items 1 – 2 is as follows.

### Subdivisions, Condominiums and County Official Plan Amendments

- a) **Pre-submission Consultation** – Joint pre-submission consultation meeting or development review meeting between the County, municipality, and developer. Often parties such as conservation authorities or the Niagara Escarpment Commission are also at these meetings. This would typically be followed by a letter or email back to the developer indicating what studies will be needed to support their development applications.
- b) **Application Submission and Deeming Complete** – Applications are submitted to both levels of government simultaneously. Staff at the municipal and County levels confer with one another to determine if the applications are complete or not. If complete, a joint notice between the County/municipality is issued. If incomplete, an email/letter is sent to the developer indicating any missing items for the application to be complete. These joint notices are coordinated between County and municipal staff. In some cases, the mailings are done from the County, and in other cases mailings are done by the municipality. A sign is also ordered for the property advising neighbours of the application. In more recent years it is often the County ordering and installing this sign from the County’s sign shop, but sometimes that is done at the municipal level. Some municipalities also place advertisements in local newspapers.
- c) **Development Review Phase** – In the development review phase, one of the key elements is determining whether peer reviews are needed for any of the technical studies. Where such a peer review is needed, it’s only done at one level of government, either the County or the municipality, but the results of the peer review serve the needs of both parties. Staff between the two levels of government discuss who should issue the

peer review. Some municipalities have consultants on retainer that they use for all their peer reviews, whereas others proceed on a case-by-case basis through a competitive bidding process. Where municipalities already have a consultant retained, County staff would defer to the municipal peer reviewer. Where a competitive bidding process is required, either the County or the municipality would issue a request for quotations (RFQ), to collect bids on the peer review, with the lowest compliant bidder being awarded the project. The RFQ process typically takes 2 – 3 weeks to award.

- d) **Public Meetings** – If a notice of public meeting was not sent in tandem with the notice of complete application, a public meeting notice would be sent. If there are municipal and County applications proceeding in concert with one another, all planning applications would be addressed at one public meeting. The only notable exception to this rule is where there's an accompanying consent or minor variance application. These applications go to the Committee of Adjustment versus having a public meeting in front of municipal council or a planning committee. The public meetings between a plan of subdivision or condominium and a County official plan amendment also have one key procedural difference as follows:
- i) Plans of subdivision/condominium – the County has delegated the hosting of such public meetings to municipalities to help streamline the process, such that it's solely a municipal meeting and County Council representation is not required at such meetings. County Planning staff would still attend the public meeting and assist with answering any questions that may arise. Minutes for these meetings are taken by municipal staff and shared with the County after the meeting.
  - ii) County OPAs – these are joint public meetings if there is a related municipal application. At least one representative from County Council is required at these meetings. Most typically this would be the mayor or deputy mayor from the host municipality who would act on behalf of both the County and the municipality at the meeting. Where both the mayor or deputy mayor are absent, it defaults to the Warden, and/or his/her designate. County Planning staff attend these meetings and also take minutes at the meetings. Notice for these meetings could either be given by the municipality or the County.

Public meetings for development applications, whether for a plan of subdivision, condominium, or County OPA, are always held at a local council, committee of the whole, or local planning committee meeting, depending on the preference of the host municipality, unless the County OPA is a County initiated amendment such as a housekeeping County OPA. In person meetings, in the host municipality, make it easier for local residents to attend. Even with virtual meetings being held throughout the pandemic, these meetings have continued to be held in concert with local meetings to help streamline the process.

County staff coordinate the mailings, updating the development sign on the property, summarizing public comments, and presentation materials at the meeting with municipal staff. In some cases, this is led by the County and in other cases it's led by the municipality. Often times the decision on who will take the lead in these instances is based on current workloads and staffing levels (i.e., either party volunteering to help the other if they are short staff or overloaded with work).

- e) **Comment Review and Response** – Responding to public or agency comments, or booking further meetings with the developer, ahead of any final recommendations is typically done by either County or municipal staff. For municipalities that have a regimented development review committee this may be done through those committees, or for municipalities that operate on a more ad hoc basis, this could be done by either the County or municipality depending on the nature of the comments.
- f) **Staff Recommendations** – Final recommendations to the County Committee of the Whole are never made without first having input from the member municipality. Some municipalities have delegated this ‘input’ to staff, whereas others require a report through their local council, committee of the whole, or local planning committee meeting to endorse the staff recommendation ahead of sharing it with the County. In the case of a County official plan amendment, it’s typically either support or non-support for the amendment. In the case of plans of subdivision/condominium this ‘input’ takes the form of recommended draft plan conditions, which most typically require the endorsement from their local council, committee of the whole, or local planning committee.
- g) **Notice of Decision** – Final notice of decision is given by whichever body made the decision i.e., for a zoning amendment municipal staff would issue that notice, whereas for a subdivision (outside of the City of Owen Sound), County staff would issue that notice.
- h) **Appeals** – Should a development be appealed, County and municipal staff would be guided by their respective appeal protocols. Some municipalities, including the County, do not participate in a tribunal hearing where an approval decision has been appealed by a neighbour. However, there are some municipalities who choose to participate in any tribunal hearing where a local decision has been appealed. County and municipal staff both tend to participate where there is the appeal of a non-decision of Council. There are instances where County and municipal staff have shared legal resources at such hearings, and there are other instances where our respective legal counsels have advised against it, based on the possibility for divergent opinions.

County staff would however note that with the changes to the *Planning Act* that no longer permit a member of the public to appeal a plan or subdivision or condominium, there is less likelihood of appeals being submitted on County applications. Members of the public can still participate in the appeal of a non-decision on a plan or subdivision or condominium. Members of the public can also appeal the decision relating to a County OPA (with some exceptions as per the *Planning Act*), or related applications to a plan or subdivision or condominium, such as a ZBLA.

## **Municipal Official Plan Amendments**

Municipal OPAs under item 3 above, are generally treated the same as a County OPA or plan or subdivision or condominium, only if they run in tandem with one of those applications. However, where a municipal OPA does not also require the processing of a County OPA or plan or subdivision or condominium, it can take a different process to the above. For example, if a

municipal OPA were processed in tandem with a zoning amendment only, municipal staff would take the lead on processing the application. At the end of that process, should municipal council adopt the OPA, it would be sent onto the County for approval. Should the OPA not be adopted by the local municipality, it would never come to the County for a decision. Once adopted municipal OPAs are received by the County, this can be a staff delegated approval where it's a straight-forward application; or require the approval of the County Committee of the Whole on a more complex municipal OPA. Should County staff recommend refusal on a municipal OPA adopted by local council, that would go to Committee of the Whole for a decision.

## **Coordinated Communications**

Throughout the above-listed approvals there is regular dialogue and coordination between County and municipal planning staff to avoid any potential duplication and to collaborate. As part of this process, each County and municipal planning staff member also acts as the conduit to other departments in their organization i.e., County Planning staff would involve Transportation Services where the matter impacts a County Road, and municipal staff would involve their public works, operations, or parks and recreation staff as needed. County staff are primarily reviewing for County Official Plan conformity and PPS consistency, whereas municipal staff are reviewing for local official plan and/or zoning conformity.

With respect to the 9 member municipalities and the planning approvals process, not all 9 are equal. In some cases, municipalities have sizable planning departments and significant other staff resources (e.g., engineers). Whereas in other cases there may be no planners on staff, or a single planner, and less support of other technical staff. The role played by County staff is flexible depending on the application or municipality the application is in. In a municipality with more staff, the County role may be less 'hands on' versus in a municipality with less staff, County staff often take more of a leadership role.

County and municipal staff work hard to streamline processes to avoid duplication in processing applications or in dealing with development inquiries. As noted above, there are different circumstances where either the County planner or the municipal planner may 'take the lead' on a given development application. There is regular communication between staff at both levels on an on-going basis, as well as local planner meetings approximately twice a year to talk about bigger matters such as; legislative changes, new County or municipal projects, and roundtable discussions on local trends or issues. In many of these instances, the County acts as a conduit for information sharing between municipalities or between the province and municipalities.

County staff have tremendous respect for municipal staff across Grey. In many instances local staff have great insights and local knowledge that would not otherwise be easily accessible to the County. In other instances, local staff use the County as a resource based on our experiences with other applications outside of their own municipalities. County staff also offer mentoring or 'second opinion' options to municipal staff who are working in smaller departments or circumstances where they are the only planner on staff.

## **Redline Revision and Draft Plan Extension Approvals**

Redline revision applications are currently also approved by the County Committee of the Whole. The steps for a redline revision application may mimic some of the above, but in other cases are simplified if the redline is minor in nature and if no municipal planning applications are



required. County staff do not make a recommendation to Committee of the Whole, without first having obtained the municipal position on the application.

Extension for draft plan approval is a staff delegated approval at the County if;

- a) the extension is 3 years or less in length, and
- b) the extension has been supported by the host member municipality.

Should either (a) or (b) not be met, then it would trigger a report to, and decision by, the County Committee of the Whole.

## **Other County Staff Delegated Approvals**

Part lot control by-laws, condominium exemptions, and final registration of plans of subdivision/condominium are also approved by the County, but are procedurally very different, often involving no public process and a staff delegated approval, following clearance and/or by-laws from a member municipality.

## **Municipal Official Plans and Plan Reviews**

The approval of municipal official plans and five/ten-year reviews are also done by the County but are very different from development applications. Staff would work collaboratively with member municipal staff (e.g., sit on an official plan review steering committee or task force at the municipal level, or meet with municipal staff throughout the process for planning advice prior to adoption of the plan), and become more actively involved in the approvals process following the adoption of the plan or amendment by municipal council. These approvals are ultimately given by the County Committee of the Whole.

## **Survey Results Summary and Analysis**

The full results of the four surveys have been included in Appendix 1 to this report. A general summary and analysis has been provided below. One caveat to the survey results, is that it was a relatively small sample size of people who completed the surveys, despite staffs' best efforts to get as many responses as possible. Surveys were originally completed in 2020 and a follow-up opportunity to participate was sent out in 2021 to try to boost the number of survey responses. In the municipal staff survey, County staff heard from 5 of the 9 member municipalities, while the survey for County and Municipal Councillors garnered at least one response from all 9 member municipalities. The developer and consultant survey saw 12 responses, with representation from people who had worked in all 9 member municipalities. With respect to the neighbouring counties, staff heard from 3 of our 5 neighbouring counties. Additional research was also completed regarding Wellington and Bruce counties, who did not directly participate in the survey.

The results from the surveys were varied. Staff believe that there is valuable information from the survey that can assist either planning approval delegations and/or planning process improvements moving forward. What is clear through the surveys is that a 'one size fits all' approach is unlikely to work.

There were some respondents that supported delegation of approval authorities and others who did not. Some supported delegating approvals in individual municipalities but not in others.

Others questioned whether municipal staff resources were in place to handle the additional responsibility, or if this would trigger the need for additional municipal staff. The need for consistency across the County was raised as an issue that could arise from delegating approvals. In some instances, it was not a firm 'yes' or 'no' but rather uncertainty as to whether or not delegation should be considered. Finally, some supported delegating some approvals, e.g., part lot control, but not all approvals e.g., approval of subdivisions and condominiums. Both in the survey results, and in phone calls received from people who had questions about the survey, staff heard two generally conflicting messages regarding the delegation of planning approvals.

1. Municipal Council and staff are the most directly connected to residents and interests in their communities and are therefore best equipped to be making decisions and recommendations on planning applications. The ability for County Council to be 'at odds' with a Municipal Council can be challenging.
2. County Council can often take a big picture more strategic view, which eliminates some of the uncertainty that can be found at the local level based on site specific concerns or hyper-localized politics.

In looking at neighbouring counties, these survey findings would appear consistent with many of their experiences i.e., some of the respective county councils had delegated further planning approvals to some municipalities and not others. More detail on the neighbouring county processes can be found in the Other County Approaches and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing section of this report.

Some common concerns about the planning process, not specific to either the County or the municipal processes, were:

- the length of time to receive approvals,
- the cost of the development process,
- lack of staff resources to efficiently process applications,
- uncertainty of roles, whether at the council or staff levels, and
- duplication in some processes.

There were further comments with respect to additional roles or staff that could complement the County's existing staff resources. Some saw delegating planning approvals as being beneficial to allowing County staff to work on larger strategic initiatives that would benefit the entire County. Others saw a need for additional staff resources related to natural heritage review and biology or hydrology, as a valuable resource to have at the County level to benefit both County and Municipal staff.

Finally, there were also a number of compliments paid to County staff with respect to their knowledge, customer service, and dedication.

## Other County Approaches and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Information

As noted earlier in this report, staff conducted research with respect to how other counties provide planning services. The answers ranged from those that provide all planning services at the County level, to hybrid approaches with a mixture of county and local planning services, to

counties that provide most planning services, with limited services at the local level. In looking at Grey's neighbours there are the following models of planning services:

- Bruce County has their planning services at the County level. The County maintains 3 planning offices throughout the County which are generally staffed with a senior planner, planner, and technician in each office. Other County planning staff are based out of the County administration building and provide general service or policy planning to the whole County. Although the County maintains planning services, local municipalities are still the approval authority on some applications such as zoning amendments, site plans, and minor variances and County staff support the local municipal approvals with staff reports, recommendations, and technical guidance.
- Simcoe County has planning services at the County and local levels. The County has delegated subdivision and condominium approval authority to 14 of its 16 member municipalities which has allowed Simcoe to focus on more county-wide strategic projects/initiatives. Simcoe staff shared a memorandum of understanding (MOU) used to delegate subdivision and condominium approval authority to a municipality which can be found here: [MOU between Simcoe and Springwater](#). Aside from subdivisions and condominiums, municipalities in Simcoe are also the approval authority for many other planning application types.
- Wellington County has a hybrid structure between the Grey County model and the Bruce County model in that County Planning staff provide local planning services to some local municipalities similar to Bruce County, whereas some local municipalities have their own planning staff to process and administer local planning applications such as zoning amendments, site plans, and minor variances. The County continues to approve subdivisions, condominiums, part lot control, as well as County/municipal OPAs. The one notable difference to Wellington County is that the County also approves consent applications, through a County land division committee, whereas Grey County does not (i.e. Grey County has delegated the ability to approve consents to its member municipalities). The City of Guelph is a separated city and therefore is the approval authority for all their planning applications.
- Huron County has a similar model to Bruce County, except that the consent granting authority has been delegated to the Town of Goderich. There have been no further delegations beyond this Goderich example. It is noteworthy in Huron that except for Goderich, undisputed consent applications are a staff delegated approval (delegated to the County's Director of Planning) and it is only disputed consent applications that would be made by Huron County Council. Similar to Bruce County, other applications such as site plans and zoning amendments are still decided upon by municipal councils with Huron County staff providing staff reports, recommendations, and technical guidance to local municipal councils.
- Dufferin County is relatively new to planning, in that the County has not always had a planning department. Dufferin County had their first official plan approved by the Province in 2015. The County approves local OPAs with the exception of some in Orangeville and Mono. Most other applications are approved at the local level. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) is the approval authority for County OPAs.

County staff also had the ability to chat with MMAH staff about delegation of planning approvals, based on their experience across the province. Similar to what has been shared above, MMAH

staff noted that there are a variety of approaches that could be utilized. With respect to the delegation of subdivision and condominium approvals, they noted that the County has the ability to delegate such approvals without the need for provincial approval, or ministerial approval. Other planning approvals, such as the ability to pass official plan amendments cannot be delegated by the County, and those requests would need to be approved by the province.

Similar to what was shared by Simcoe County, provincial staff noted that it may be useful to set criteria that would need to be met in order for the County to consider delegating subdivision or condominium approvals.

## Delegation of Planning Approvals

County staff see some merit in delegating some planning approvals, such as those listed in the Town of The Blue Mountains request i.e., subdivisions, condominiums, part lot control and condominium exemptions. Other application types such as municipal OPAs or County OPAs, the County does not have the ability to delegate.

County staff would not recommend delegating subdivisions, condominiums, part lot control and condominium exemptions approvals to all 9 member municipalities, rather this would be done on an individual basis per municipality, by request only. If a municipal council were to request delegation of approvals, then County Council could consider entering into a MOU with that municipality to delegate approvals. Along with the MOU, County Council would be required to pass a by-law to enable the delegation of these approvals. Staff propose that certain criteria be applied to guide municipalities as to what needs to be in place prior to delegation of approvals.

Should County Council authorize staff to further pursue delegating subdivisions, condominiums, part lot control and condominium exemptions approvals, staff could develop a MOU template for Council's consideration. It would likely be very similar to the MOU shared by the County of Simcoe and linked to above in the Other County Approaches and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Information section of this report. One further matter to be considered, not previously contemplated by staff, would be delegation of only some of the above-noted approvals, but not all. For example, one municipal staff person that filled out the survey noted that they would be interested in having part lot control delegated, but not the approval of subdivisions, condominiums, and condominium exemptions. If this was the case, staff could investigate a limited MOU specific to just part lot control delegation.

Some sample criteria for considering delegating approvals could include, but is not limited to:

1. That a public meeting be held within the host municipality to get feedback on delegation (based on the feedback received from the surveys it appears some may be in favour and others may not),
2. Does the municipality operate a full-time planning department with registered professional planning staff,
3. Are the municipal official plans and zoning by-laws up-to-date and in conformity to the County Official Plan and consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement,
4. Does the municipality have the capacity to keep municipal official plans and zoning by-laws up to date to address policy changes made by the Province or the County,
5. Does the municipality have an application and fee structure to accept such applications,

6. The municipality agrees to ensure full consultation regarding subdivision and condominium applications with the County at all stages and specifically at the time of pre-submission consultation, the receipt of complete application, and leading up to draft approval in order for the County to continue to address the Municipal Plan Review obligations delegated by the Province (i.e. ensure applications are consistent with PPS, conform to the County OP, and to review for other County interests),
7. The municipality agrees to provide training to staff with respect to provincial policies, operational practices and regulatory requirements which relate to the County's responsibilities for certain plan review functions,
8. The municipality has and maintains a lawyer on-staff or an external lawyer on retainer with extensive knowledge of the *Planning Act*, which would be needed for the processing and approval of plans of subdivision or condominium,
9. The municipality agrees to provide annual or semi-annual reports, with details concerning the status, address/location, unit types, unit yield and municipal servicing capacity related to each application, for plans of subdivision or condominium that are currently being processed by the municipality,
10. The municipality shall ensure that lands are designated with an appropriate official plan designation (County OP and Municipal OP) in effect prior to making a draft approval decision concerning said lands,
11. That subdivision and condominium application(s) be processed in accordance with all Provincial and County processing requirements as established from time to time,
12. That the municipality shall keep the County Planning department apprised of any change in status of a plan of subdivision or plan of condominium file including: refusal of an incomplete application; notice and circulation of the application for comment; substantial revision of the plan and/or applications; appeal(s) to the Ontario Land Tribunal; phasing of final approvals; and, any such matter required by the County Planning Director.

One of the other key points to be discussed, prior to entering into a MOU, would be what happens to existing applications already in process, including subdivisions or condominiums for which there has been no decision rendered yet, and those which have been draft approved and are awaiting clearance of draft plan conditions. Final approved and registered plans of subdivision or condominium would not require any further delegation, as those files are already complete.

## Delegation Options

Some options that could be considered with respect to delegation of planning approvals are:

1. Delegate only new subdivision or condominium files on a go-forward basis, and all existing applications in process would continue to be the responsibility of the County,
2. Delegate all subdivision or condominium files on a go-forward and retroactive basis to the member municipality, or
3. Establish a date for which any subdivision or condominium files received after this date are delegated and any files received before this date will remain with the County. This date could be a retroactive back to a certain time (e.g., it could be the date of approval of the current municipal official plan).

County staff would note that when the province delegated subdivision and condominium approvals to the County, it was done using method # 2 above. Should County Council seek to

delegate approvals, County staff would recommend using method # 2. Additional discussions and details may be required prior to entering into a MOU with respect to method # 2 regarding statutory timeframes under the *Planning Act* for any applications that are currently in process (i.e. if the County were to delegate a file that was in process, would a municipality be able to meet the required timeframes where those timeframes had already commenced under the County's application process). County staff would however caveat these comments by noting that the one exception to the above may be where a file is currently under appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) and the County has existing party status. In cases where the County has party status to the appeal, the County would maintain that status until the OLT renders their final decision on the matter. Should the County seek to withdraw from party status, it would require additional legal advice and discussion with the municipality.

Method # 1 may appear favourable in that it sets a current effective date whereby any new applications received after that date become the responsibility of the member municipality. However, based on the long-term nature and phasing of many developments, staff have concerns that this could cause issues with respect to a portion of the development still being under the old system (i.e., where the County is the approval authority) and other portions being under the new system (i.e., the member municipality is the approval authority). Staff also believe that this system could cause confusion with both developers and the public with respect to who is deciding on what.

With respect to method # 3, County staff have similar concerns to method #1 discussed above.

One other matter to sort out with option # 2 and potentially option # 3 would be existing fees and deposits paid to the County for development applications. If these monies are to be paid to the host municipality, should the deposits be returned to the developer, and/or should the County keep all or a portion of the application fees for services rendered. County staff would recommend returning any peer review deposits to the developer which are unused. With respect to application fees, it may depend on where the file is at in the process i.e., if a subdivision is already at the draft approval stage, then the money and time processing the file have already been spent. However, if an application has not yet been approved or been to a public meeting, it may be appropriate to consider transferring some of those fees to the member municipality, unless they have already collected a fee for this service. This financial element could be investigated further at the MOU stage.

Another consideration for options # 2 and # 3, would relate to existing draft approvals, where the County is listed as the final approval agency. Should existing draft approvals be delegated it may require updating these approvals to reference the municipality as the approval authority, rather than the County. Staff would note that this same matter has applied to past draft approvals that still referenced the province as the approval authority.

### ***Inactive Applications***

County staff do however acknowledge that method # 2 could add significant initial workload to the member municipality involved. In some cases, the County is still processing subdivision and condominium applications that were delegated to the County by the province in the late 1990's. For a number of these files the draft approvals have no lapse date, and others have simply 'stalled' prior to receiving draft approval. Shortly prior to the pandemic, County staff had completed a detailed review of all subdivisions and condominiums that were not yet final

registered and currently in the County's files. Note this did not include City of Owen Sound subdivisions and condominiums where the City is the approval authority. The purpose of this exercise was to (a) accurately detail exactly what was in the County's files, and (b) to provide strategies for what to do with some of the older files that have sat inactive for long periods of time. As noted earlier, some of those older files have draft approval and others do not. Some of these files date back to the 1970s and were applied for under completely different planning policy regimes. County planning staff had completed the initial phase of this exercise to detail what we had. Staff had also met with municipal planning staff to compare notes with respect to any municipal files. The next step was to propose strategies for what to do with these old files. Those strategies could include;

- i) contacting the developer to ask for a status update on the development, and/or encourage the developer to move forward with their development,
- ii) amending the draft plan conditions (if draft approved) to add a lapse date and/or bring the conditions up to modern standards,
- iii) to recommend refusal of the application and/or withdraw draft approval.

There is no 'one size fits all' approach for these older files. Staff need to further investigate the legal ramifications of potentially changing and/or refusing some of those older files (e.g. appeal potential). The pandemic has however put a hold on this project based on the workloads of planning and legal services staff. Initially County staff had been 'delaying' this staff report on delegating approvals, in hopes of having a more concrete strategy in place for these older files. However, given staff workloads and the desire by County Council and member municipal councils to see this report move forward, County staff have proceeded in advance of that strategy and legal advice being in place. County staff are happy to discuss this matter further with any potential municipality that may be looking at requesting delegation of planning services.

## Potential Time Savings

When processing an application at the County level, there are the following types of staff resources allocated to the application.

- 1) Planning administrative support – opening the file, sending out notices, taking meeting minutes, preparing appeal packages (if appealed), etc.
- 2) Finance staff support – processing fees, invoices, and peer review deposits,
- 3) Planning staff – pre-submission consultation, reviewing documents, writing reports, attending public or developer meetings, answering questions from the public, agencies, developers, reviewing agreements, processing appeals, etc.
- 4) Mapping support – support from the planning technician or GIS staff on preparing maps,
- 5) Application review by other County staff – engaging departments such as Transportation Services or Legal Services in pre-submission consultation, reviewing documents, responding to public, agency, or developer comments, reviewing agreements, appeals, etc.
- 6) Other County staff incidental review – reviewing reports, minutes, and council agenda packages.

Should subdivision and condominium planning approvals be delegated there would be some time savings in the above areas. Items 1, 2, 4, and 6 above would have reduced or no time demands on many applications that would be circulated to the County, where the County is no

longer the approval authority. For those 6 municipalities where the County provides GIS services on a fee for service basis, County staff would continue to provide those services under the existing agreements. The reduction in staff time would instead come from those services provided to County planning staff by the planning technician or GIS staff (e.g., making a keymap for a County subdivision application notice), rather than the GIS services provided to the municipality under agreement. Staff would note that the files would still get opened at the County by the Planning Administrative Assistant, however there would be less other duties, such as mailouts, associated with these files.

Staff still see a need for items 3 and 5 above, even if approvals were delegated. There would be less staff time needed, but particularly Planning and Transportation Services staff would still need to be involved in reviewing and commenting on subdivision and condominium applications to ensure consistency with the PPS, conformity with the County OP, and to review for other County interests. With respect to how much time would be saved, it is difficult to estimate. As a 'ballpark estimate', Planning staff would suggest that planners would save approximately 1/3 of the time normally spent processing a subdivision or condominium application (or possibly slightly more on certain files). Staff would estimate that Transportation Services staff time would be nearly identical regardless of the approval authority.

Staff would however note that County Planning staff are involved in many other roles, which would not be directly impacted by less subdivision or condominium development file review and processing time. These roles include updates to the County Official Plan, responding to inquiries, special project such as the Climate Change Action Plan or the Age-Friendly Community Action Plan, forestry and trails initiatives, and supporting other departments in land acquisition or other needs. Should time be saved here, staff would propose allocating that time to strategic projects such as policy updates, special projects, forestry, trails, and continuing to support other County initiatives. This may also assist with helping to reduce staff overtime.

## Potential for Conflict between the County and Member Municipalities

One of the reasons cited in the past for exploring this topic, by County or municipal politicians, or residents, has been the potential for conflict between the County and a member municipality on planning applications. In some cases, residents have questioned whether the County would approve or refuse a development against the will of a local council. While there certainly is potential for this to happen in the current approvals system, it happens very infrequently. County staff and Council always seek input or endorsement from the host municipality before approving a subdivision or condominium. In nearly all cases, County and municipal staff process the County and municipal applications simultaneously and are of 'like-minds' on the applications. Where there are disagreements, these would normally be discussed and sorted out ahead of the matter proceeding to local or County Council. There have been cases where staff support was given at the local level, but municipal council did not agree with the staff recommendation and took an opposing viewpoint. If the County Committee of the Whole were to approve a subdivision or condominium, the municipality would have the option to appeal the approval to the OLT. In the past 15 years, staff cannot recall one instance of a municipality appealing the County's approval of a subdivision or condominium in their own municipality.



There was one incident recently where the County Committee of the Whole supported the draft plan extension of a plan of condominium which the municipal council did not support. That extension request was however supported by municipal staff. In this case, the development was already mostly constructed and there were complex legal ramifications for the County if the extension was not granted. In this past 15 years, this is the only instance County staff are aware of where an extension was granted against the desires of a municipal council.

There have been instances where municipal and County Councils took opposite positions on policy approvals or on other planning applications, such as OPAs, ZBLAs, or consent applications. Even these situations have been quite rare, but there has been the occasional instance of either a municipality appealing the County's approval or vice versa. Staff would however note that these other approvals such as OPAs, ZBLAs, and consent applications are not the subject of this report or of the delegation request before Council.

Delegating approval authority may not necessarily change the potential for conflict, it may just reverse the roles, e.g., a municipality approving a subdivision application, which the County could then appeal. Staff do not anticipate that this would happen very frequently, however cannot rule out the possibility that it could happen in the future. This 'possibility' could happen regardless of who the approval authority is for the approval of subdivisions or condominiums.

## Planning Process Efficiencies

Over the years, improvements have been made at the County and municipal levels to increase efficiency in the planning process. Some examples of such improvements include;

- municipal development review committees,
- the County's 'one window' internal commenting and circulation process,
- moving to more paperless application processes,
- more information, including development applications and related technical studies being posted on County and municipal websites,
- the County offers abbreviated comments for more standard or minor applications which are generally limited to commenting on County interests or infrastructure,
- improvements in planning application tracking software,
- streamlining peer review needs at the County and municipal levels,
- the creation of technical guides outlining what is needed for each study or background report,
- delegating some approvals to staff, and
- delegating the hosting of public meetings for subdivisions and condominiums to municipalities.

Recent changes to the *Planning Act* through Bill 13, have also given municipalities additional authority to delegate some planning approvals to committees or to staff. Staff would note that none of the Bill 13 changes directly impact County approvals, or any of the approvals being considered for delegation to member municipalities in this report (e.g. subdivisions, condominiums, etc.). That said, should municipalities consider implementing the Bill 13 changes, it may create additional process efficiencies at the municipal level such as allowing staff the ability to lift a holding symbol or approve a temporary use by-law.

Additional consideration for further planning efficiencies at the County and local levels could include;

- streamlining the development inquiry process, regardless of whether the inquiry is first received at the County or local level,
- streamlining the pre-submission consultation process into a formalized development review committee type approach,
- ensuring memorandums of understanding are in place with conservation authorities with respect to their role in the development application process,
- ensuring municipal and County staffing levels are sufficient to meet demand,
- maintaining up-to-date official plans and zoning by-laws which provide suitable densities, protections, and as-of-right permitted uses (pre-zoning),
- ensuring County and municipal official plans are streamlined so as not to duplicate policy efforts, including continuing to encourage local municipalities to defer to the County's Official Plan for areas outside of settlement/growth areas and to have local official plans focus on policies for settlement/growth areas,
- explore options for streamlining the payment process for application fees (e.g. online payment options),
- ensuring all involved in the development process, including staff (in planning and in other departments) and council are properly informed and educated on their role,
- coordinating public meeting minutes, such that if it is a joint public meeting, only one set of minutes is required,
- increasing the use of online meetings, even following the pandemic, to limit the travel time needed by County or municipal staff,
- retaining consultant(s) for regular peer review services, this could come through either having a list of pre-qualified bidders, or having a multi-year contract with a given consulting firm to use them for peer review during that timeframe,
- considering further delegation to staff of procedural approvals, such as those now listed in Bill 13, or undisputed consent applications, as per the Huron County model,
- reducing the scope of the comments the County provides on municipal planning applications, as per the demands of the municipality i.e. those that want full planning comments could still receive them, versus those that only want comments related to County services or infrastructure could see the planning comments reduced in scope,
- continuing improvements to planning application tracking and GIS software to (a) create efficiencies for staff, and (b) provide better customer service to developers and the public,
- exploring opportunities for common planning application tracking software, including possibly sharing the County's GIN [Grey Information Network] 2.0 with municipalities interested in using it for their own tracking purposes,
- investigating greater opportunity for shared legal services where planning decisions are appealed and the County and member municipality are of like-minds, or
- conducting follow-up interviews or surveys with developers to get their impressions on the process, including any bottlenecks, or areas for improvement.

## Legal and Legislated Requirements

Planning matters are governed by the *Planning Act*. Any delegation or planning approval will

need to meet the requirements of the *Act* as would the processing of future development applications. Staff are satisfied that should County and individual member municipalities wish to enter into a MOU for the delegation approvals of subdivisions, condominiums, condominium exemptions, and part lot control, that County Council would have the legislated authority to delegate by by-law and MOU.

As noted in this report, additional delegations cannot be considered at this time, and would require approvals from the province.

## Financial and Resource Implications

A fulsome review of the financial and resource implications has not been conducted yet. In order to answer these questions staff will need to know;

- a) how many municipalities are requesting delegation of approvals,
- b) the extent of the delegations i.e. is it subdivisions, condominiums, condominium exemptions, and part lot control, and
- c) the method and timeframe for delegation i.e. is it on a go-forward basis only, or would it be go-forward and retroactive.

Depending on the answers to (a) – (c) above, it will have an impact on financial and resource needs at both the County and municipal levels. Staff have tried to provide some analysis on this topic in the Time Savings section of this report, but would note that a more fulsome analysis could come forward as part of future discussions on a MOU, should Council opt to proceed with that route. Should staff be directed to first determine a strategy for older subdivision and condominium approvals, prior to delegating any approvals to municipalities, it may require additional planning or legal staff resources.

With respect to item (c) above, another difficult matter to sort out would be fees and deposits paid on existing applications, should Council opt for a retroactive delegation as per the staff recommendation.

Staff would further note that should there be multiple requests for delegation, staff may not have the ability to act on each of those requests immediately. It will take some time from a physical and digital records transfer perspective. Staff would suggest that it may be best just to handle one such municipal request initially, before moving onto any others.

Depending on the level of delegation contemplated, there would be less revenue coming into the County. An exact figure is not known at this stage and would depend on the number of municipalities seeking delegation of approvals. County staff would note that County application fees are not a profit generator, but rather are meant to recover the cost of staff's review and processing of the applications. If staff were still reviewing the applications, but no longer collecting a fee (the County has not charged fees for reviewing municipal applications in the past), then it could mean some staff time still being allocated to such applications with no opportunity for cost recovery (unless County Council directed staff to collect fees for that service).

## Relevant Consultation

- ☒ Internal: Legal Services, CAO, Economic Development, Transportation Services, Clerks
- ☒ External: Municipalities, Developers, Planners, Engineers, Neighbouring Counties, and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

## Appendices and Attachments

[Correspondence from Town of The Blue Mountains](#)

[Sample Simcoe County Delegation Memorandum of Understanding](#).

## Appendix 1: Survey Result Summary

As noted in the background section to this report, in late 2020 and early 2021 County staff issued four separate surveys with questions about planning services and possible delegation of planning approval authority responsibilities. Surveys were originally completed in 2020 and a follow-up opportunity to participate was sent out in 2021 to try to boost the number of survey responses. Survey results were varied and a summary of each of the four surveys has been included below.

### 1. Municipal Staff Survey

Survey responses were received from five of the nine member municipalities in Grey. One municipality had two staff respond, while each of the others had one staff response. Four of the six responses were from planners, while two of the six were from non-planners who regularly interact with planning. County staff did not expect a response from City of Owen Sound staff who already have delegated approval authority for the responsibilities in question. A summary of the responses has been provided below.

All of the survey respondents rated themselves as ‘very familiar’ with the County planning department.

**Is your Council seeking delegation of approval authority for plans of subdivision, condominium, condominium exemption, and part lot control?**

- Yes – 1 respondent
- No – 2 respondents
- Unsure – 3 respondents

**Do staff want to see the delegation of approval authority for plans of subdivision, condominium, condominium exemption, and part lot control?**

- Yes – 1 respondent
- No – 4 respondents
- Unsure – 1 respondents

**For municipalities that have both a County and Municipal official plan in effect, do you think both plans should cover the entire municipality, or should municipal official plans focus on growth and settlement areas, while deferring to the County plan for rural/agricultural areas?**

- Both County and Municipal Official Plans should cover the entire municipality – 3 respondents
- Municipal official plans should focus on growth and settlement areas, while deferring to the County plan for rural/agricultural areas – 3 respondents

**In your opinion how timely and pleasant (or difficult) to deal with is the current County planning process for processing plans of subdivision, condominium, condominium exemptions, and part lot control?**

- Very timely and pleasant – no issues – 3 respondents
- Somewhat timely and pleasant – some improvements could be made – 2 respondents
- Somewhat untimely and unpleasant – 1 respondent

Other survey questions were short answer rather than multiple choice. The questions and responses have been included below. The answers have been provided verbatim, except where an identifying detail may have been included.

**Do you have any suggested improvements to the subdivision, condominium, condominium exemptions, or part lot control processes?**

- It should be a bottom-up regulatory process for policies on the development, and the Province should allow for this in the PPS, needs some discussion.
- Some lower tiers may wish to process part lot control applications only.
- No improvements. Staff do a great job.
- It is not related to poor County staff performance, more related to process efficiency/reduction of duplication. I also believe there is an overall policy leadership role the County can take on, particularly in areas that cross municipal boundaries such as natural heritage planning, agricultural / rural issues, etc.
- Yes - A more coordinated initial approach that involves the provision of notice and the discussion of timing and deadlines for the project.
- Keep it with the County Planners for consistency

**Are there any 'bottlenecks' in the subdivision, condominium, condominium exemption, or part lot control process at the County level?**

- No – four respondents
- Local Municipal Council does not understand their role in the process nor does the public.
- The double engineering requirements for certain standards. One example would be storm water management, once a professional engineer has designed and sealed the system to good engineering standards, why are we requesting further engineering on the system? This could happen once in a while but why all the time. There needs to be a better systematic process for evaluating endangered species, woodland, etc. and it should be developed by the Province so that subdivisions are not held up for many years.

**Are there any 'bottlenecks' in the subdivision, condominium, condominium exemption, or part lot control process at the Municipal level?**

- Municipal council and/or staff lack knowledge of process – two respondents
- Lack of qualified staff
- Any bottlenecks are only related to volume of applications
- The coordinated approach is not always clear from Municipality to Municipality. Circulation and provision of comments is confusing to the Public, the Developer and local Council.
- The only bottle neck is staff availability. Right now, the County of Grey Planning staff provide good advice with regard to the above items. If the Municipal level took it on it would likely require the provision of additional staff to accommodate the increased workload.

**Are there any processes or approvals that currently require a report to council or committees at either the County or Municipal level that you think should instead be delegated to staff?**

- None – 2 respondents
- Except for official plan and zoning amendments, all other approvals should be delegated to staff

- Part lot control
- Site plans and agreements
- Reports at the County level should be provided for correspondence and information at the local level to avoid local Council requiring a duplicate report.

**Are there any planning approvals that should be reassigned from the Municipality to the County?**

- No – two respondents
- Consents in agriculturally designated lands
- Approval of tree-cutting permits outside of growth and settlement areas
- This is a question for the lower tier municipal Councils and staff, certainly could be a hybrid system within the County that could work.

**Are there any planning services the County does not currently offer that should be offered by the County?**

- No – four respondents
- Daily planning operations for under-resourced municipalities (for a fee). Similar to Bruce County.
- Broad policy documents from the Province should always come from the County and not require duplication from local staff. Local staff should be consulted as part of the County Report preparation.

**Are there any planning services the County currently offers that should be discontinued by the County?**

- No – three respondents
- Part lot control
- Commenting on site plans
- Approval authority for draft plan of subdivision/condominium, condo exemptions, and part lot controls in municipalities that have adequate staff resources/expertise where official plans and zoning by-laws that are reasonably up to date

**Are there any skillsets or areas of expertise that the County should consider adding to their planning departmental roster?**

- Biologists / natural heritage – 3 respondents
- No – 2 respondents
- Provincial policy liaison officer
- Growth management / data analysis

**Is there anything further you would like to tell us about the County planning department or its processes?**

- No – 1 respondent
- Always a pleasure to work with.
- Staff are very friendly and easy to work with. Policy refinement from a process perspective would be beneficial, particularly to local Council.
- The interactions and division of responsibilities between the County and the municipality is functioning very well.
- County staff do a fantastic job. Delegation of approval authority would allow the existing staff compliment to devote more of their skills to inter-municipal, County-level policy issues and growth management analysis.

- You come a long way baby, and we're loving it!

## 2. Municipal and County Councillors Survey

Survey responses were received from all nine member municipalities in Grey. The number of survey respondents from each municipality has been summarized in the below table.

Municipality	Number of Councillor Respondents
Township of Chatsworth	3
Township of Georgian Bluffs	1
Municipality of Grey Highlands	1
Town of Hanover	1
Municipality of Meaford	3
City of Owen Sound	1
Township of Southgate	2
Town of The Blue Mountains	2
Municipality of West Grey	2

Of the 16 responses received, 6 people identified as a County/Municipal Councillor, while 10 people identified as a Municipal Councillor.

### How would you rate your familiarity with the County planning department?

- Very familiar – 1 respondent
- Somewhat familiar – 12 respondents
- Not familiar – 3 respondents

### What do you hear from the public about planning processes in the County?

- Not much, no complaints, or rarely hear about the County – 7 respondents
- The process is lengthy – 3 respondents, including one who expanded on their comments (see below)
  - Generally good at the County level, although overall a slow process, having multiple approving agencies (County / Municipal) could be a contributor, but not the entire reason
- Staff are approachable / generally positive – 3 respondents
- It's transparent
- Not a lot, but as development ramps up ratepayers are taking a greater interest including concerns that, in some cases, our notifications are inadequate and many people affected by a development do not learn of it in time to make their views known.
- General public is not overly aware of planning processes till immersed in it or reasoned to.
- It is unnecessary duplication with the lower tier. Most County councillors aren't aware enough of planning issues, particularly outside their own municipality to have an informed opinion about projects.



- Planning issues are dealt with thoroughly and in a brisk manner, ensuring the official plan(s) involved are followed

**What do you hear from businesses or developers about planning processes in the County?**

- Process is lengthy and/or costly – 7 respondents, including two who expanded on their comments (see below)
  - A few say the process is too slow, but usually this is due to developers not following the rules, or not supplying pertinent info, or disliking any requirements that are deemed necessary for them to fulfill
  - When it takes almost 6 years to get approvals to proceed, and the developer / builder is the one pushing (delivering promptly) this has to be unacceptable, except in the rarest of circumstances. Also, as somewhat expected, they indicate fees are too high and / or inconsistent in the County, between municipalities.
- Very little – 3 respondents
- Transparent
- I hear developers are very pleased working with Don Tedford
- Unnecessary duplication
- Staff are helpful and professional
- They seem fairly satisfied
- Too much red tape

**Who do you feel should be the appropriate approval authority for plans of subdivision, condominium, condominium exemption, and part lot control?**

- Municipal Council – 8 respondents
- County Council – 7 respondents
- Skipped Question – 1 respondent

**Do you have any suggested improvements to the subdivision, condominium, condominium exemption, or part lot control processes?**

- No – 8 respondents
- Don't develop on farmland and green space
- I don't know the rationale for and therefore the merit of the proposed change. If cost and length of process are factors, I believe that efficiencies can be found and streamlining is possible. Conservation Ontario and conservation authorities have done this very effectively.
- Typically the county and first tier processes mirror each other so that it seems like a total duplication of expense and resources.
- There should be follow-up. Condominiums are approved, but who follows up to make sure they comply with the rules and regulations re: Reserve funds etc.
- Try to cut down chances of short term or Air BnB rentals. More fully accessible units in all residential construction
- I do not know these processes in enough detail to make suggestions. However, if the County had a similar role as a commenting agency for single or lot control, this would allow the municipality to confirm adherence to the County Official Plan or other County controls or guidelines. My hope is it would lead to less time and cost to the County. In addition, the County could also serve as an "appeal avenue" if a municipality was "misbehaving".
- Somehow to speed up the process

- Delegated to the authority closest to the public impacted
- Skipped question – 1 respondent

**Are there any processes or approvals that currently require a report to council or committees at either the County or Municipal level that you think should instead be delegated to staff?**

- No / Unsure – 12 respondents
- If it were appropriate to have policies for some specific situations, approvals could be fast-tracked in this way.
- Yes, for each Asset Management Type I'd suggest a process should be in place that allows the Budget by Asset Type to be approved by Council, and staff determines which assets get managed, when so risk is managed to support the municipality's fiduciary responsibility, and there's no "political" aspect to the decision-making process. Reports to Council would then be Status Reports only, to keep Council informed.
- Should delegation occur, the public/agency requirements of the act are to be followed
- Skipped question – 1 respondent

**Are there any further planning responsibilities that should be delegated from the County to the Municipality? Please note that the County is required to have a County Official Plan, and certain matters such as the approval of County Official Plan Amendments cannot be delegated.**

- No / content with the current system – 6 respondents
- I would like to have subdivision approval at the local level, but I'm not sure we have the staff expertise that county does.
- The municipalities don't have the finances or expertise to handle any more.
- Making turn around time faster. Yet make sure the rules are the same though out the county
- Is there a difference between municipal needs? Municipalities with actual Planning Departments have the resources to assume more responsibility; smaller municipalities do not and benefit from County Planning expertise.
- The second sentence is certainly acknowledged. I was disappointed, however, when the County Planning Department expressed such enthusiasm for the TCE Pumped Storage project...a project over which the first-tier municipality has no control and which flies in the face of its Official Plan.
- The county commenting on Owen Sound developments is nonsensical. Either our planning is qualified to overlay the county framework on a submission or they are not in which case the county would assess the matter. I cannot find any argument to make sense to have both. It is just unnecessary bureaucracy.
- The County should step back from everything except its legislated requirements, and become a commenting agency much like the Conservation Authorities.
- Special agriculture designations can be a hindrance for certain development....i.e, severances, residential when the lands are no longer used for ag purposes but still have special agriculture zoning
- Since planning is a complex matter, governed by Provincial legislation as well as other Agencies, I'd suggest this question is best answered by the Planning folks throughout Grey County (all levels) directly.
- The local municipality is best suited to circulate to and obtain public comments being closest to the public. This does not limit the County on County matters but may actually enhance the public comment returns on a County matter

- Skipped question – 1 respondent

**Are there any planning approvals that should be reassigned from the Municipality to the County?**

- No or unsure – 13 respondents
- I don't think one size fits all
- The City was better able to reduce duplication and bureaucracy by having one tier of planning.
- Since planning is a complex matter, governed by Provincial legislation as well as other Agencies, I'd suggest this question is best answered by the Planning folks throughout Grey County (all levels) directly.
- Skipped question – 1 respondent

**Is there anything further you would like to tell us about the County planning department or its processes?**

- No – 6 respondents
- We have excellent employees handling the process
- Personally, I have great respect for the professionalism of County Planning Staff and I value the work they do. It is important that there be the overarching planning framework that the County provides.
- I am one of very few local politicians who sees merit in a single (unified tier) system. But I am not holding my breath and am therefore in favour of first tier municipalities having authority over plans of subdivision, condominium, condominium exemption, and part lot control?
- Having a two-level approval process provides additional checks and balances to ensure oversight where development in one municipality could impact another.
- It is highly professional and does a good job, but its needless duplication. Our lower tier is capable of taking over all functions. There are some that aren't, but these should be merged with others until there is enough capability and good governance at the Council level that they can do their jobs properly.
- County Planners do a good job. Always fair and thorough with their studies. Perhaps more actual 'on site' visitations could be practiced.
- Just one comment. When dealing with planning issues requiring County input or support, I find the County planning staff open, friendly, very experienced and more than ready to provide excellent, timely support and level of support in the areas and activities our municipality needs it! Thank you!
- Current processes are in compliance with legislation and even with delegation, are expected to remain. Clearer understanding of proposed processes, along with better explanation of the intent and direction/impact of the various changes associated with various applications would be helpful.
- I have a lot of faith in our planning dept. They depict a lot of knowledge
- Skipped question – 1 respondent

### **3. Developers, Private Planners, and Consulting Engineers Survey**

There were 12 respondents to this survey with the make-up of respondents being as follows:

- Developer / landowner – 5 respondents
- Planner – 5 respondents
- Engineer – 1 respondent
- Other – 1 respondent (land development consultant)

When asked where the respondents work within, the following answers were shared. Respondents were allowed to select all municipalities that they work within.

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Township of Chatsworth	3
Township of Georgian Bluffs	4
Municipality of Grey Highlands	5
Town of Hanover	1
Municipality of Meaford	8
City of Owen Sound	3
Township of Southgate	5
Town of The Blue Mountains	9
Municipality of West Grey	3
Work outside of Grey County too	6

The respondents rated their familiarity with the Grey County planning department as follows:

- Familiar – 11 respondents
- Somewhat familiar – 1 respondent

**Who do you feel should be the appropriate approval authority for plans of subdivision, condominium, condominium exemptions, and part lot control?**

- Municipal Council – 2 respondents
- County Council – 9 respondents

**In your opinion how timely and pleasant (or difficult) to deal with is the current County planning process for processing plans of subdivision, condominium, condominium exemptions, and part lot control?**

- Very timely and pleasant – no issues – 8 respondents
- Somewhat timely and pleasant – some improvements could be made – 3 respondents
- Uncertain – prefer not to answer – 1 respondent

**Do you have any suggested improvements to the subdivision, condominium, condominium exemption, or part lot control processes?**

- No – 5 respondents
- Lower tier is very difficult / impossible
- We have not completed any process which would result in us having suggestions.
- The County Planners, and all planners within the Province of Ontario, are restricted by the Provincial Policy Statement. Those planners operating under the Greater Golden Horseshoe planning policies and the Provincial Growth Plan are further restricted in the timing of draft plan of subdivision approvals. The MMAH must remove the restrictions on planning approvals to expedite the planning process.

- Delegate to municipalities (with no further qualifying comments) – 2 respondents. Two others had delegation comments with caveats or additional comments (further comments included below).
  - I would support the downward delegation to the Municipality of Meaford immediately however the Town of The Blue Mountains MUST get their act together prior to the downward delegation occurring. The delays and cost of approvals at The Blue Mountains are totally out of whack with other jurisdictions.
  - It will be more efficient if the local municipality can approve the draft plans of subdivisions, condominium plans and part lot control. This will also provide more time to the County to work on the big picture / plan for the County.
- Less duplication – 2 respondents (further comments included below)
  - Duplication could be reduced, especially in fees such as peer reviews
  - Minimize duplication when multiple approval authorities are at play- often competing comments and different objectives

**Are there any ‘bottlenecks’ in the subdivision, condominium, condominium exemption, or part lot control process at the County level?**

- No – 7 respondents
- Lower tier is very difficult / impossible
- Bottlenecks seem to be at the local level
- Comment turnaround time can sometimes take a while
- One winder approach with MOE on developments on private services
- The bottlenecks at the County level are caused by the MMAH policies, not by the County Planners who have to follow the MMAH policies.
- The County's staff is very knowledgeable and efficient.
- we have not completed any process which would result in this occurrence

**Are there any ‘bottlenecks’ in the subdivision, condominium, condominium exemption, or part lot control process at the Municipal level?**

- No / no comment – 6 respondents with three providing additional comments (see further responses below)
  - No the municipal staff is very knowledgeable and efficient.
  - No, other than the lack of available staff time to deal with the process.
  - Other than some delays in responses on the engineering side, no others to date.
- Yes, almost every subdivision in Town of Blue Mountains ends up at the OMB to get approval because of the difficulties with the Municipality. An OMB case cited is the precedent used to award cost for damages for bad faith at the OMB.
- Delays as they try to duplicate the county role
- Council lack of decision Engineering review GSCA clearance Subdivision agreement preparation
- Yes, The Blue Mountains delays in terms of scheduling the pre-consultation, determining completeness, scheduling a public meeting, writing reports and Committee and Council consideration are not at all acceptable nor in keeping with the direction of the Planning Act and related Regulations. Further, the fees charged by The Blue Mountains are in many instances 300 - 500% greater than other similar jurisdictions (Collingwood, Wasaga Beach, Innisfil) with a significantly lower level of service.
- Yes in certain municipalities. TBM being notoriously the longest in terms of timing and often lack of decision or voting against staff recommendations.

- Always. Town of Blue Mountains take the longest of any municipality I work in to provide review comments and make decisions. I often feel like we are going in circular motions addressing comments only to have a change of heart reverting back to initial designs. Staff are also very unresponsive and disconnected on critical information regarding servicing and regulations.

**Are there any processes or approvals that currently require a report to council or committees at either the County or Municipal level that you think should instead be delegated to staff?**

- No / no comment / unknown – 5 respondents with one providing additional comments (see further response below)
  - No, municipal review should be further limits and turn around times should be mandated to avoid games.
- We would hope the lifting of H symbols should be delegated to staff.
- Part Lot Control should be delegated to staff and should be a very simple and fast process
- If consents were at the County level approval (not refusal) should be delegated to staff. Site plan approval should be at the staff level and council involved only as an arbitrator when there is a disagreement. Any approval delegated needs a safeguard as per the suggestion on consents
- Grey County has a relatively uncomplicated process. The quality of staff knowledge and ambition is the key to moving a development project forward.
- Draft plan approval should be local Site plan should be delegated to local director of planning Draft plan extensions should be delegated to director up to 3 years
- County - no Municipal - The Blue Mountains require that operational matters/decisions be referred to Council for determination. In addition, over the past number of years I have witnessed the removal of delegated approvals from Town staff (versus greater delegated approvals).
- Reports required to move to a public meeting stage should be staff approved. If the applications are deemed complete that should be brought to move to a public meeting. I understand that keeping councils up to speed is important, but this could be completed by an update.

**For municipalities that have both a County and Municipal official plan in effect, do you think both plans should cover the entire municipality, or should municipal official plans focus on growth and settlement areas, while deferring to the County plan for rural/agricultural areas?**

- Both County and Municipal Official Plans should cover the entire municipality – 4 respondents
- Municipal official plans should focus on growth and settlement areas, while deferring to the County plan for rural/agricultural areas – 7 respondents
- Skipped question – 1 respondent

**Are there any further planning responsibilities that should be delegated from the County to the Municipality? Please note that the County is required to have a County Official Plan, and certain matters, such as the approval of County Official Plan Amendments, cannot be delegated.**

- No / No comment – 8 respondents with three providing additional comments (see further responses below)

- No, remove more municipal authority and default to the county.
- Not at this time. The Town has 7 full time planners for a population of under 7,000 people.
- None to date as we have not completed any process which would result in us suggesting same
- Draft plan of subdivision Draft plan of condominium Part lot control
- I would certainly support the delegation of all local planning matters to the local municipality where the municipality has the capacity and service level commitment (i.e. sense of urgency) that the County has and has demonstrated that they have mitigated their costs and have established fair and reasonable fees.
- Settlement Boundary expansion should be decided and approved by the local municipality.
- Delegation leads to inconsistency. Local governments are too small to have the range of expertise required to be an approval authority. The county should add a biologist and a hydrologist to its staff and rely less on peer reviews

**Are there any planning approvals that should be reassigned from the Municipality to the County?**

- No / No comment – 9 respondents with one providing additional comments (see further response below)
  - None to date as we have not completed any process which would result in us suggesting same
- Urban Boundary Expansion should be delegated to the local municipality.
- All plans of subdivision, consents etc. should be at the county level including Owen Sound
- Yes, this municipality has proven to be difficult to work with, ineffective at making any decisions and often causes more issues in simple development projects. If basic standards are met all approvals should be reassigned to the county to eliminate the duplication that currently exists.

**Are there any planning services the County does not currently offer that should be offered by the County?**

- No / No comment – 8 respondents with one providing additional comments (see further response below)
  - None to date as we have not completed any process which would result in us suggesting same
- Natural heritage expertise / biologist – 4 respondents with three providing additional comments (see further responses below)
  - Natural heritage review should be done by county not CA
  - The County should consider what the new changes to the Conservation Authority Act will mean to planning process. 1) Natural Heritage Planning - should this be in house? 2) GSCA Floodplain Decisions are now appealable through LPAT. What does this mean for the County?
  - Natural heritage peer review services
- Hydrologist

**Are there any planning services the County currently offers that should be discontinued by the County?**

- No / No comment – 10 respondents with one providing additional comments (see further response below)
  - None to date as we have not completed any process which would result in us suggesting same
- Tree Clearing is duplicative with the lower tier municipalities.
- Draft Plan approval Final draft approval Condo as well Part lot control

**Are there any skillsets or areas of expertise that the County should consider adding to their planning departmental roster?**

- No / No comment / see above – 5 respondents with one providing additional comments (see further response below)
  - None to date as we have not completed any process which would result in us suggesting same
- Heritage
- Economic Development Department should be there and transportation services like bus service should be provided for the residents.
- See item 11. The biologist is a good fit with planning and the hydrologist with the engineering department. Upgrade "Highways " to an Engineering Department.
- The Grey County Planning staff are well organized compared with other jurisdictions.
- Natural heritage consultant
- A further planner would be of assistance so that the Director could focus on his leadership role in County Government and within the Department.
- Developer driven Environmental assessments that follow the planning act parallel process.

**Is there anything further you would like to tell us about the County planning department or its processes?**

- No – 3 respondents
- For many years I have worked with the staff of the Grey County planning department on official plans and county by-laws. The staff have been pleasant and timely with responses to our issues. It is my opinion that if any responsibility for planning approvals mentioned in the survey were downloaded to a member municipality their planning department staff would need to be well qualified. Overall I think the status quo is working very well, however the county planning department may need extra staff to meet the surging desire for the urban residents to move to the county.
- The County Department is excellent to deal with. Our experiences have been positive.
- County Planning staff are excellent to deal with. They are helpful, friendly, informed and get things done in a time manner. Much better to deal with than most municipalities.
- The process has been very good to date, but we would like to update our thoughts once we have registered the first phase of a plan of subdivision in either municipality we are working in.
- County is doing a great job and the above comments should be considered to make Grey County even more better.
- There should be less emphasis on the position of local councils and more on a consistent regional approach to planning policy
- The municipality that has requested the transfer of approval authority from Grey County Planning staff to the municipal staff will regret their decision.
- Friendly, professional, relaxed staff!
- County staff are helpful, considerate, appreciate the cost of time and professional.



## 4. Neighbouring Counties Survey

Three neighbouring counties responded to the survey, which were Simcoe, Dufferin and Huron counties. One County had two staff members respond.

**What services is your County (including Council, Planning Committee, Committees of Adjustment, or staff) currently the approval authority for (either whole or in part)? For example, if your County has delegated subdivision approvals to some municipalities, but not all municipalities, please check this off as a County approval still being offered. Check all that apply.**

- Consents / Minor Variances – 1 respondent
- Zoning By-laws and Amendments – 0 respondents
- Site Plan Control – 0 respondents
- Municipal Official Plans and Amendments – 3 respondents
- County Official Plan Amendments – 2 respondents
- Plans of Subdivision and Condominium (including red-line revisions and condominium exemptions) – 3 respondents
- Part Lot Control – 3 respondents

All four respondents noted that some of the above approvals had been delegated to some municipalities and not others.

**If you have delegated approvals to member municipalities, does the County have criteria that must be met before delegation could be granted?**

- Yes – 3 respondents
- No – 1 respondent

All four respondents noted that all delegation requests have supported by County Council, and therefore none were denied delegation.

**Does your County have any process for measuring efficiency or customer satisfaction? If yes, please explain.**

- Nothing formal
- N/A
- Follow up Planning Satisfaction survey to all applicants that have completed a planning application using Survey Monkey
- One respondent skipped this question

**Have any of the below approvals been delegated to staff (either whole or in part)? Check all that apply.**

- Consents / Minor Variances – 1 respondent
- Site Plan Control – 0 respondents
- Municipal Official Plans and Amendments – 1 respondent
- County Official Plan Amendments – 0 respondents
- Plans of Subdivision and Condominium (including red-line revisions and condominium exemptions) – 2 respondents
- Part Lot Control – 3 respondents
- One respondent skipped this question

**For those delegated municipal approvals, does the County still provide detailed review and comments on each application?**

- Yes – 2 respondents
- Only where it impacts a County service, interest, or infrastructure – 2 respondents

**Where there are delegated municipal approvals, does the County still participate in pre-submission consultation meetings or discussions for the following?  
Check all that apply**

- Consents / Minor Variances – 1 respondent
- Zoning By-laws and Amendments – 1 respondent
- Site Plan Control – 0 respondents
- Municipal Official Plans and Amendments – 3 respondents
- Plans of Subdivision and Condominium (including red-line revisions and condominium exemptions) – 2 respondents
- Part Lot Control – 0 respondents

**How many planners (not including technicians or administrative staff) do you currently have on staff at the County?**

- 1 or 2 – 1 respondent
- 3 or 4 – 0 respondents
- 5 or 6 – 0 respondents
- 7 or 8 – 1 respondent
- 9 or more – 2 respondents

**Do all of your member municipalities have at least one full-time planner on staff?**

- Yes – 3 respondents
- No – 1 respondent

**Do all of your member municipalities have a municipal official plan in force and effect?**

- Yes – 4 respondents
- No – 0 respondents

**Where there are county and municipal official plans in place, do they both cover the entire municipality, or do municipal plans only cover certain areas (e.g. settlement areas)?**

- Yes, both cover the entire municipality – 4 respondents
- No, municipal official plans only cover certain portions of the municipality – 0 respondents

**Is there anything further you would like to tell us about your planning processes at the county or municipal levels?**

- There is only one delegation from the County to a local municipality and that is for Consent applications in the Town of Goderich. This delegation happened many years ago and continues. We have had no recent delegations of approval authority to local municipalities.
- County of Simcoe has delegated subdivision and condominium approval authority to 14 of its 16 lower-tier municipalities. The County is a commenting agency for ZBA, Site Plan

Control, Consent and Minor Variance applications for which the lower-tier municipalities are the approval authority.

- County is looking into ways to improve the service delivery of planning in the County. We will be releasing an RFP [Request for Proposal] for this review to be completed by late spring
- One respondent skipped this question