

## Elisha Hewgill

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**Subject:** FW: GRCA Resource Planning Program - COVID-19 update  
**Attachments:** GRCA Planning-Permit Program - COVID-19 Service Update May 2020.pdf

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**From:** Nancy Davy <ndavy@grandriver.ca>  
**Sent:** May 25, 2020 6:04 PM  
**Subject:** GRCA Resource Planning Program - COVID-19 update

Municipal Planning and Building department staff,

Good afternoon. We would like to provide you with an update on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) Resource Planning program.

The GRCA has been taking a phased approach in its response to COVID-19 and details are included in the attached summary. This approach includes a focus on critical services and a reduction in operations and scaling back our workforce. Some planning and natural heritage staff are affected by a temporary reduction in staffing that came into effect on May 11, 2020. We plan to continue to provide coverage for the majority of our resource planning services, with a focus on most Planning Act applications and GRCA permits at this time. Please note there may be some delays in responses to inquiries and we appreciate your patience.

Resource planning staff and technical staff in engineering and natural heritage are working remotely and appreciate the electronic circulation of applications where these services are available through the municipal circulation process. For members of the public, the GRCA website [COVID-19 FAQs](#) includes general information on planning and permits (please go to the section on Programs and Services - Planning and Permits). There are a number of resources available on the GRCA website for watershed residents to access such as the GRCA regulation mapping and policy resources. Please feel free to share the links to these resources (in the attachment) with your residents.

We request that you share this email and the attached notice with staff in your municipality that are responsible for municipal planning matters and building approvals.

If you have any questions related to the GRCA Resource Planning program or permits, please contact Fred Natolochny [fnatolochny@grandriver.ca](mailto:fnatolochny@grandriver.ca) ext. 2229, Melissa Larion [mlarion@grandriver.ca](mailto:mlarion@grandriver.ca) ext. 2247 or myself [ndavy@grandriver.ca](mailto:ndavy@grandriver.ca) (519) 621-2763 ext. 2235.

Best regards, stay safe.

Nancy

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**May 2020**

**Municipal Planning Contacts, Chief Building Officials:**

Further to the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) correspondence that was provided to your municipality from Samantha Lawson, CAO dated May 4, we would like to provide you with an update regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the GRCA Resource Planning program.

As with all of our municipal partners, our top priority has been to ensure the health and safety of our staff, while meeting the priorities of public safety, our legal responsibilities, and maintaining our flood operations.

Based on legislation put in place by the provincial government in response to the pandemic, the GRCA has determined the following services are considered critical during the pandemic:

- 1) Flood operations and management
- 2) Land management and property/asset security
- 3) Planning and Permits (Section 28 of the Conservation Authorities Act)
- 4) Source Water Protection (reduced services)
- 5) Programs that support business operations

The GRCA has been taking a phased approach in its response to COVID-19, which includes a reduction in operations and scaling back our workforce. Some planning and natural heritage staff are affected by a temporary reduction in staffing. This reduction came into effect on May 11, 2020. We continue to provide coverage for the majority of service delivery areas, with a focus on planning responses and permit processing.

Resource planning staff and technical staff in engineering and natural heritage are working remotely at this time. Their priorities include:

- providing input on municipal policy initiatives including: Official Plan comprehensive reviews, comprehensive zoning By-law reviews, and community, secondary plans, subwatershed studies and Master Plans etc.
- providing responses to *Planning Act* applications with some disruption to minor variance application reviews (see below)
- providing input to municipal pre-consultation meetings for planning applications
- processing GRCA permit applications – An online application process is available for GRCA permits [online application form](#)
- providing responses to legal inquiries for property transactions
- other general inquiries or requests for comments or information may be deferred until the full program resumes or there will be delays in response times
- on-site visits by GRCA staff have been suspended at this time. Where possible or appropriate, municipal staff or landowners have provided some information electronically to receive GRCA comments
- priorities may be modified in accordance with Provincial direction or as required

Where possible, the GRCA planners you usually work with will remain the primary contact for questions from municipal staff. Please note that staff contacts may be modified to address workload distribution. The GRCA website identifies GRCA planning contacts by municipality [Contact a GRCA Planner](#)

The GRCA website [COVID-19 FAQs](#) includes general information on planning and permits. Please go to the section on Programs and Services - Planning and Permits.

Many municipal staff have been providing applications and supporting documents electronically which is appreciated. Receiving information through the mail will result in delays to responses due to limited access to the GRCA office.


GRCA staff do not have the capacity to review all minor variance applications at this time. If municipal staff are able to screen applications using GRCA's online regulation mapping tool [Map Your Property](#) and identify a specific application that is within a regulated area, we will respond only to these specific requests for review. Otherwise, minor variance circulations received by GRCA will not be reviewed at this time and comments will not be issued.

We request that you distribute this email and notice to staff in your municipality that may be affected by these changes.

If you have any questions related to planning or permit matters, please contact Fred Natolochny [fnatolochny@grandriver.ca](mailto:fnatolochny@grandriver.ca) ext. 2229, Melissa Larion [mlarion@grandriver.ca](mailto:mlarion@grandriver.ca) ext. 2247 or myself [ndavy@grandriver.ca](mailto:ndavy@grandriver.ca) (519) 621-2763 ext. 2235.

Any questions regarding other GRCA critical services may be directed to Samantha Lawson, CAO [slawson@grandriver.ca](mailto:slawson@grandriver.ca). (519) 621-2763 ext. 2210.

Best regards, stay safe.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Davy".

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