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## **Planning Administrative Streamlining Staff Report to Council**

Report Number: 2026-23

Department(s): Building and Planning Services

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Meeting Date: May 4, 2026

### **Recommendations**

1. That the report entitled Planning Administrative Streamlining dated May 4, 2026, be received; and,
2. That Council approve proposed amendments to the Planning Act Processing Fees By-law 2025-93; and,
3. That Council approve proposed amendments to the Delegation By-law 2016-17; and, and,
4. That Council approve the proposed policy governing the administrative closure and reactivation of planning applications; and,
5. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to recommend various measures to streamline and improve administrative planning processes.

### **Background**

The Town of Newmarket's Development Approvals Process (DAP) was initiated in response to significant provincial legislative changes between 2019 and 2022, which intended to increase the pace and volume of housing construction in the Province. Council endorsed the DAP initiative in June 2023.

The DAP initiative is guided by the principle that development review should be right-sized to the scale and complexity of an application, ensuring appropriate municipal oversight while avoiding unnecessary process or delay. An important part of the DAP framework is continuous improvement; processes will be adapted in response to changing legislation, development patterns, and operational experience.

Through ongoing implementation and review, Planning Services staff have identified targeted opportunities to further improve and streamline current practices:

- 1) Authorize the Chief Planner and Director of Planning and Building Services to reduce or waive planning application fees in defined circumstances in accordance with Section 69(2) of the Planning Act;
- 2) Introduce a new lower site plan application fee for daycares and parking lots, reflecting a condensed site plan process in these two specific instances;
- 3) Amend the Planning Act Processing Fees and Charges By-law to introduce a new fee for site plan exemption requests;
- 4) Establish a new corporate policy outlining the process for the administrative closure and reactivation of development applications made under the Planning Act, and introduce a new fee to reactivate an inactive planning application.

## **Discussion**

### **Delegated Authority to Reduce or Waive Application Fees**

The proposed amendment to the Delegation By-law would authorize the Chief Planner and Director of Planning and Building Services to reduce or waive planning application fees in specific circumstances where it would be unreasonable to require full payment. The intent is to provide the Director with limited discretion to reduce fees for minor Official Plan Amendments (OPA) or minor Zoning By-law Amendments (ZBA) where the scope of the review is modest or largely administrative in nature.

This authority would apply where the OPA and/or ZBA would result in limited or no physical alteration to the property, such as adding a new use within an existing building, where the new use is related to an existing permitted use and is in keeping with the intent of the designation, or making minor revisions the zoning by-law, that are slightly beyond the scope of a minor variance.

Recent opportunities where this approach may have been appropriate include applications to permit additional restaurant uses where applicable development and parking standards are met, but site-specific zoning limits a property to a single restaurant. Another example includes applications proposing a narrowly defined new use that is closely related to existing permitted uses but cannot reasonably be interpreted as such under the Official Plan or Zoning By-law.

In these circumstances, while a planning application would still be required for Council approval, the limited scope and complexity of the amendment warrant a reduced application fee, reflecting the relatively minor nature of the request and the lesser amount of staff time required to process it.

Currently, any reduction in planning application fees requires Council approval since Council's authority under Section 69(2) of the Planning Act has not been delegated. Delegating this authority in defined circumstances would streamline administration and support timely decisions on fee reductions or waivers in those defined circumstances. It

is anticipated that the use of this authority would be infrequent. All instances of fee reductions will be reported annually through the Town's reporting on delegated authorities.

## **Condensed Site Plan Application Process for Daycares and Parking Lot Expansions**

Planning Services staff regularly receive site plan applications for parking lot expansions and outdoor play areas associated with new daycare facilities. These proposals are small in scale and impact; however, they are currently subject to the same full site plan review process and fee as more complex developments, resulting in unnecessary costs for applicants and disproportionate demands on staff resources.

A condensed site plan application review process is proposed for these two development types. This streamlined review process recognizes that such proposals require less time and fewer supporting materials and technical studies, while still meeting all applicable Town standards. The objective is to scale the level of review and application fee to the complexity of the proposal, thereby reducing review timelines and associated costs for applicants.

### **Site Plan Approval Fee for Outdoor Elements of Daycare Facilities and Parking Lot Expansions**

A proposed fee of \$2,318.28 is recommended for site plan applications related to outdoor elements of daycare facilities and parking lot expansions. This fee is intended to recover the Town's costs associated with reviewing these specific small-scale, low-impact proposals.

While these applications continue to require coordinated review by Planning, Engineering, Transportation, Parks, and external agencies where applicable, they are narrower in scope, processed under delegated authority, and typically involve fewer technical studies, reduced circulation, and simplified or no site plan agreements.

Comparable York Region municipalities have established reduced, staff-delegated site plan approval categories - often referred to as minor or basic site alteration approvals - with fees generally ranging from \$450 to \$6,000, compared to \$8,000 to \$12,000 for full site plan applications. The proposed fee falls within the low-to-mid range of these comparable fees and strikes an appropriate balance between cost recovery, efficient service delivery, and support for small-scale development. The fee is also consistent with charges for other development review fees, which involve a similar level of staff review.

### **Site Plan Exemption Fee**

The Chief Planner and Director of Planning and Building Services currently has authority to exempt proposals from site plan approval where changes are limited in scope and are

not expected to result in significant impacts related to site design, circulation, built form, or servicing.

Typical exemptions include small-scale alterations such as the installation of accessibility ramps or the addition of outdoor patios. While proposals do not require the same level of review associated with a full site plan application, staff time is still required to review submissions, assess eligibility, and confirm zoning compliance. These requests are documented and kept on file.

The proposed \$250 site plan exemption fee is proposed to recover the administrative costs associated with processing and reviewing exemption requests.

## **Planning Application Administrative Reactivation and Closure Policy**

From time to time, planning applications remain open for extended periods of time without receiving updated submissions from applicants. During these periods, planning policies, regulations, and technical standards may change, and previously submitted information may become outdated.

To address this issue, staff recommend adopting a new corporate policy entitled “The Planning Application Administrative Reactivation and Closure Policy”. The proposed policy is Attachment 3 to this report. This policy establishes clear timelines for application inactivity, closure, and reactivation.

Under this Policy, an application is deemed inactive if the applicant fails to provide a complete response to staff and agency comments within six months of written notice. After six months of inactivity, staff issue a written notice advising that the file may be closed if a complete resubmission is not received. If no resubmission is provided within 6 months, the Director may close the application. Written notice of closure will be provided, advising that a complete resubmission and payment of the reactivation fee are required to reopen the application.

Closed applications are not processed further and may require a new planning application with updated studies and reports, if the proposal is brought forward again in the future.

Overall, the Policy improves transparency, supports effective file management, ensures applications remain current, and provides applicants with clear expectations and timelines.

### **Reactivation Fee of 10% of the original application fee**

The proposed reactivation fee equal to 10% of the original application fee is intended to recover the Town’s costs associated with resuming review of inactive planning applications. The fee encourages applicants to remain actively engaged in the approval process, while ensuring that the cost of reactivating dormant applications is borne by the applicant. Similar approaches are used by other municipalities within York Region to support efficient file management and responsible cost recovery.

## **Consultation**

Financial Services, Legal Services, Legislative Services

## **Conclusion**

The proposed actions described in this report would delegate limited authority to the Chief Planner and Director of Planning and Building Services to reduce or waive planning application fees in defined circumstances; would introduce lower fees for the condensed site plan applications related to daycares and parking lots; would create a new fee for site plan exemption requests; and establish a policy for administrative closure and reactivation of inactive planning applications.

These actions implement the recommendations arising from the Town's Development Application Process (DAP) review, which emphasized aligning fee structures with the level of staff effort required and promoting timely, efficient application processing. Accordingly, it is recommended that Council approve the recommendations in this report.

## **Council Priority Association**

This report aligns with the following Council Priority: Customer-First Way of Life

## **Human Resource Considerations**

Not applicable.

## **Budget Impact**

Amendments to the Planning Act Processing Fees & Charges By-law are proposed to ensure that application fees more accurately reflect the Town's costs associated with reviewing and processing applications.

## **Attachments**

**Attachment 1** – Amendment to Delegation By-law 2016-17

**Attachment 2** – Amendment to Planning Act Processing Fees By-law 2025-93

**Attachment 3** – Planning Application Administrative Reactivation and Closure Policy

## **Submitted By**

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## **Approval for Submission**

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## **Report Contact**

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