



To: **Planning Advisory Committee**

Agenda Section: Corporate Services
Division: Engineering, Planning and Environment
Department: Planning Department

Item Number: PAC - 2021-076

Meeting Date: February 25, 2021

Subject: Update on the County's Municipal Comprehensive Review Project

Recommendation

That Item PAC 2021-076, dated February 25, 2021, regarding an update on the County of Simcoe Municipal Comprehensive Review project, be received.

Executive Summary

A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2020 (Growth Plan) that took effect on August 28, 2020 continues to require that the County undertake a Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR). The responsibility for upper-tier municipalities to complete an MCR was introduced in the 2017 Growth Plan. An MCR is an integrated planning tool which results in a process to comprehensively bring Official Plans into conformity with the Growth Plan. Various policy matters are impacted and require updating in both the County and lower-tier official plans as a result of the MCR. One key component of the MCR relates to the population and employment forecasts contained in Schedule 3 to the Growth Plan which will be used in the planning and management of growth in the County to the 2051 planning horizon.

Since the last update was provided to the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) on April 14, 2020, the County has now retained Hemson Consulting (Hemson) for the completion of the Municipal Comprehensive Review project. Hemson has assembled a consortium of subject matter experts in order to address the multiple components of the MCR. A detailed work plan is now being laid out by this project team in order to achieve the required outcome of this project, which is to bring the County Official Plan into conformity with the Provincial Growth Plan.

Notwithstanding the project delays as a result of provincial updates and initiatives, the MCR is still targeted to be completed by July 1, 2022. With respect to lower-tier

municipalities, their Official Plans are to be brought into conformity within one year of the County's update.

This report is intended to provide an overview of project progress to date.

Background/Analysis/Options

On August 28, 2020, the Province released *A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Office Consolidation 2020* (Growth Plan), and the associated *Land Needs Assessment Methodology for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020)*. This new Growth Plan continues to require that the County undertake a MCR.

Schedule 7 (Distribution of Population and Employment for the City of Barrie, City of Orillia and County of Simcoe to 2031) to the previous 2019 version of the Growth Plan has been removed, and the planning horizon within Schedule 3 (Distribution of Population and Employment for the Greater Golden Horseshoe) was increased from 2041 to 2051. The County is now required by the Province to plan for a population of 555,000 and 198,000 jobs by 2051. Through the MCR, the County will utilize the Province's new Land Needs Assessment (LNA) Methodology to assess the quantity of land required to accommodate forecasted population and employment in each lower-tier municipality in accordance with Schedule 3, or a higher forecast as established by the County through its MCR. These population and employment allocation numbers will be incorporated in an updated County Official Plan to be approved by the Province.

With the approval of the new Growth Plan and LNA methodology in 2020 it has provided certainty with respect to the MCR work to be completed. This certainty has enabled the County to finalize the MCR project Request for Proposal (RFP) and Terms of Reference. On September 30, 2020 the County posted RFP 2020-054 for the County's MCR project to its bids & tenders website, and the RFP posting closed on November 11, 2020. Following the evaluation process, the County awarded the MCR contract to Hemson.

Hemson as the lead consultant has put together a multi-disciplinary team of professionals to address the various components of the MCR as follows:

1. Provincial Natural Heritage System Review and Refinement – North South Environmental Inc.
2. Provincial Agricultural System Review and Refinement – DBH Soil Services Inc.
3. Employment Strategy – Hemson Consulting and Cushman Wakefield
4. Climate Change Strategy – Hemson Consulting and Laura Taylor Designs
5. Watershed Management Strategy – Wood Environmental & Infrastructure Solutions Inc.
6. Growth Management – Hemson Consulting
7. County Official Plan Amendment(s) - Meridian Planning
8. Communications Strategy – The Planning Partnership, Meridian Planning, and Nbsiing Consulting

Since retaining Hemson, County Staff has participated in several meetings with the MCR project team and local area municipalities, as follows:

- December 16, 2020 – Initial project kick-off meeting, monthly check-in meetings scheduled for the first Tuesday of each month for the duration of the project
- January 5, 2021 – Consultation Strategy kick-off meeting
- January 27, 2021 – Provincial Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System Review and Refinement kick-off meetings
- January 28, 2021 – Land Needs Assessment kick-off meeting
- February 2, 2021 – Indigenous communities engagement plan meeting with Nbisiing Consulting
- February 8, 2021 – MCR kick-off meeting with the local area municipalities
- February 17, 2021 – Data Sharing meeting
- February 26, 2021 – Climate Change Strategy kick-off meeting to be held

The PowerPoint presentation from the December 16, 2020 MCR project kick-off meeting is included as Schedule 1 to this Report.

The PowerPoint presentation from the February 8, 2021 MCR project kick-off meeting with the local area municipalities is included as Schedule 2 to this Report.

Next Steps and Immediate Priorities for Project

The MCR is a multi-stepped process involving several independent but interrelated components. As a result, many of the project tasks are occurring simultaneously however, certain tasks are proceeding with priority, as they are fundamental to establishing a foundation for the project. The tasks that form the next steps and represent the immediate priorities are as follows:

- Complete process of data sharing from County and local municipalities in order to continue with technical work and background research to support these components;
- Finalize communication strategy and uploading content for the MCR project webpage will provide interested parties and stakeholders a formal opportunity to obtain information and provide a forum to contribute input and comments;
- Provincially mapped Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System will be evaluated for refinement prior to implementation. These provincial maps have already been created by the Province, and it is the role of the MCR process to implement them with a one-time opportunity to “refine” the maps based on local information. It is important to understand however, that this is not intended to produce an alternative natural heritage or agricultural system, but rather adjust and “clean up” discrepancies primarily along the boundary of these provincial systems;

- Commencing the growth management and Land Needs Assessment is also underway. The Province has provided population and employment forecast numbers for the County of Simcoe to 2051, and these forecasts must be evaluated, and specific population and employment numbers allocated to each individual local municipality in the County. This process will require growth management direction to be provided from the lower tier municipalities to the County. Commencing this component of the MCR as early in the process as possible to identify for each municipality how much allocation they must plan for is critical; and
- Re-engage local municipal staff to provide more specific details on requirements for background information, input and direction. This will be an opportunity to verify what local information is already available and whether or not there are gaps of information which will need to be addressed, and if so how and by whom.

Financial and Resource Implications

Funds for this project have been allocated in the 2021 Operating Budget.

Relationship to Corporate Strategic Plan

This Item may support the following strategic initiatives from the County of Simcoe's 2015-2025 Strategic Plan: A) Growth Related Service Delivery, B) Strengthened Social, Health and Educational Opportunities, D) Environmental Sustainability and F) Responsive and Effective Governance.

Reference Documents

- **PAC 2020-127** (April 14, 2020) Update on the County's Municipal Comprehensive Review
- **CCW 17-269** (September 12, 2017) Overview of Growth Plan, 2017 and the Potential Impacts on County and Local Municipal Planning Matters

Attachments

Schedule 1 - PowerPoint presentation from the December 16, 2020 MCR project initial kick-off meeting

Schedule 2 - PowerPoint presentation from the February 8, 2021 MCR project kick-off meeting with the local area municipalities

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