

Staff Report

Report To: City Council

Report From: Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services

Meeting Date: November 18, 2024

Report Code: CS-24-098

Subject: Agreement between the City of Owen Sound and the Township of Georgian Bluffs Relating to the Provision of Building Services

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-24-098 respecting an Agreement between the City of Owen Sound and the Township of Georgian Bluffs relating to the provision of Building Services, City Council directs staff to bring forward a by-law to authorize the Mayor and Clerk to execute the agreement.

Highlights:

- Since May of 2024, the City has provided Building Services to the Township of Georgian Bluffs, including permit review, issuance and inspections. The pilot has been successful, providing seamless service to Georgian Bluffs residents while continuing to meet the requirements of the City's development community;
- The pilot has resulted in consistent service, excellent customer support, and additional revenue for Owen Sound. Both municipalities benefited from shared use of the online Cloudpermit system, and feedback from Georgian Bluffs residents praised the City staff for being approachable and helpful.
- A proposed agreement outlines a five-year arrangement where City staff would handle building services under the Ontario Building Code and Georgian Bluffs' Building Bylaw, with administrative

support from Georgian Bluffs staff. City staff would be provided necessary resources (e.g., cell phones, office space, vehicles) and work on-site in Georgian Bluffs one half-day per week.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: Collaborative City.

Climate and Environmental Implications:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

Previous Report/Authority:

CM-24-013 – (Closed) Building Services Department – Shared Pilot with Georgian Bluffs

Background:

Under the authority of the Municipal Act, municipalities are enabled to work together to provide models for shared services. Recent examples include the Agreement for Leaf and Yard Waste, Hazardous Waste and Fire Prevention. One of the themes from Service Review was to examine cost-sharing opportunities with other municipalities.

The Building Code Act mandates that the Council of a Municipality is responsible for the enforcement of the Act and must appoint a Chief Building Official (CBO) and such inspectors as are necessary for the enforcement of the Act.

Building services represent an excellent opportunity for shared service provision as the rules and regulations relating to building are uniform across the Province, with all CBO's and Inspectors enforcing the Ontario Building Code Act and Regulations thereto.

In April of 2024, Council directed the City Manager to sign an administrative Memorandum of Understanding with the Township of Georgian Bluffs to provide for a pilot relating to the City providing Building Services for the Township of Georgian Bluffs.

Traditionally, the staff structure in Georgian Bluffs has included Full time staff (including CBO and Inspectors) as well as the use of consultants. The

Township also has a Building Technician. It is acknowledged that the Township has had issues with recruitment and retention of qualified staff; there is a shortage of Building Inspectors provincially.

Since the approval of the Pilot, City staff have supported the Township in providing Building Services. The following chart summarizes the number of applications received and the costs invoiced for providing review, issuance and inspection services in each month, May to September and the amount that has been invoiced to the Township by the City.

	May	June	July	August	September
Number of Applications	18	30	24	23	32
Amount Invoiced to Georgian Bluffs	\$3897.00	\$3897.00	5366.20	\$4517.22	\$5392.90

During the past six-month pilot, the Owen Sound team have reviewed and issued 156 building permits averaging approximately 26 permits per month.

During the first 10 months of 2024, the City has issued a total of 416 permits, or on average 42 per month.

The pilot of the provision of services has demonstrated:

- City staff have been able to provide this service without a negative impact on the provision of Building Services in the City of Owen Sound;
- The City has benefited from additional revenue over the period of the trial;
- The service has been seamless for Georgian Bluffs residents and builders with staff providing customer service, such as responding to inquiries along with building permit plans review, issuance and inspection. Staff have cell phones and email issued by Georgian Bluffs and can respond directly to inquiries;
- It has been a benefit that both the City and Georgian Bluffs to be utilizing the online Cloudpermit system;

- The timelines for plan review and permit issuance has been aligned with the requirements of the Building Code;
- Staff have attended in person in the Township office as required to support meetings with residents and other matters;
- Based on information from Georgian Bluffs, the City's staff have been described as "local, approachable and helpful";
- City staff are able to deal effectively with complex building permit matters.

Based on the experience of the Pilot, the Director of Infrastructure and Development for Georgian Bluffs met with the City's CBO and Director of Community Services to discuss extending pilot to a more permanent arrangement.

Analysis:

The Pilot project for shared building services has demonstrated that this alternative service delivery has provided consistent service, excellent customer service and supports flexibility to address workload for both City and Georgian Bluffs residents and developers.

Based on initial discussions, a five-year agreement is proposed that would provide generally as follows:

- City staff would be appointed by Bylaw with authority under the Ontario Building Code and Township of Georgian Bluffs Building Bylaw;
- City staff would undertake plans review, permit issuance and inspection;
- Administrative function and coordination would remain with the Building Technician for Georgian Bluffs who would, among other matters, coordinate inspections, meetings etc.;
- City staff would have regular office hours in Georgian Bluffs one half day each week with additional times as required;
- City staff, while undertaking work in Georgian Bluffs would be covered by their WSIB and Insurance and would be required to adhere to the Code of Conduct for Building Officials (required by the Building Code Act);
- City staff to be provided with the items required to undertake this work including IT (cell phone, tablet, email), office space, branded clothing, identification, access to Township vehicle;

- While working for the Township, staff would be accountable and report to the Township of Georgian Bluffs Director of Development and Infrastructure;
- The agreement also provides that City staff would support Bylaw Enforcement if required and, in the future, if Short Term Rental Licensing is approved for Georgian Bluffs, support the inspection and licensing of such premises;
- Planning and engineering (grading and stormwater review) is out of scope for this agreement and would be the responsibility of the Township;
- Should additionally staff, either part or full-time be required to support the City in undertaking the responsibilities under the agreement, this would be paid for by the fees billed to the Township.

Financial Implications:

Under the Agreement, the Township would be invoiced on a monthly basis.

The invoice would include:

- An hourly rate for the time of the City's Deputy Chief Building Inspector or Plans Examiner/Building Inspector at a rate of \$88.83 per hour (includes wages and benefits);
- Staff will track their time spent on matters under the partnership;
- One-half the total salary and benefits each month for the CBO (approximately \$81,729 for 2024);
- A contribution to support staff professional development and training.
- Total revenue will be based on actual time worked plus the flat rate for the CBO. This revenue will reduce the cost of Building Services for the City taxpayer.

Communication Strategy:

Georgian Bluffs will have considered a report on this proposed partnership at a meeting on November 13, 2024. Any agreement is based on the agreement and support of both Councils.

The Director of Development and Infrastructure will be responsible for overall communication of this initiative to Township residents and developers.

Residents of the Township will continue, as under the pilot, to receive customer service directly from the City's staff group.

Consultation:

City Manager, Township CAO and Director of Development and Infrastructure.

Attachments:

None.

Recommended by:

Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services, at pcoulter@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 Ext. 1252.