

## Staff Report

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**Report To:** Corporate Services Committee  
**Report From:** Mark Giberson, Manager of Information Technology  
**Meeting Date:** October 9, 2025  
**Report Code:** CR-25-129  
**Subject:** Electronic Signature Policy (AF011)

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### **Recommendations:**

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CR-25-129 respecting Electronic Signature Policy (AF011), the Corporate Services Committee recommends that City Council direct staff to bring forward a by-law to adopt Electronic Signatures Policy AF011 as presented in the report.

### **Highlights:**

- Improves efficiency, reduces paper use, enhances customer service, and ensures compliance.
- Supports the use of electronic signatures in place of handwritten signatures when legally appropriate.
- Advances modernization of municipal services and aligns with best practices across Ontario municipalities.

### **Strategic Plan Alignment:**

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: This report supports the delivery of Core Service by improving accessibility and effectiveness in service delivery for residents, businesses and staff as well as advancing modernization of municipal services by reducing paper-based processes.

### **Climate and Environmental Implications:**

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

## **Previous Report/Authority:**

[Information Technology Needs Assessment Project Update – CR-22-009](#)

## **Background:**

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent remote work requirements highlighted the inefficiencies of paper-based approvals. Documents often required printing, wet signing, scanning, and uploading to SharePoint, creating delays and administrative burden. An electronic signature (e-signature) is a digital method of indicating consent or approval on a document, comparable to a handwritten signature but completed through secure electronic means. By eliminating the need for printing and scanning, e-signatures streamline workflows, reduce administrative overhead, and accelerate approval processes while maintaining legal validity. Municipalities across Ontario (e.g., Clearview, Windsor, Waterloo) have adopted digital signature policies since 2020, aligning with the Electronic Commerce Act, 2000. Owen Sound's adoption of AF011 follows this best practice and addresses identified IT policy gaps.

## **Analysis:**

The approval of an electronic signature policy will directly improve the City's ability to provide timely, efficient, and accessible services. By streamlining document approvals and reducing delays associated with paper-based processes, staff will be able to focus more on service delivery rather than administrative tasks. Faster processing times, enhanced support for remote work, and reduced reliance on physical paperwork will not only benefit internal operations but also result in more responsive and citizen-focused municipal services. While the City currently makes use of electronic signatures, their adoption has been hampered by the absence of a formal policy. The approval of this policy will not only formalize their use but also provide clear direction on how and when electronic signatures should be applied, ensuring consistency, compliance, and accountability across all departments.

## **Industry Adoption**

- Between 60% and 80% of organizations have implemented e-signature capabilities, with 95% either already using or planning adoption.

- Financial services and human resources are leading adopters, reducing turnaround times and using e-signatures for contracts, onboarding, and compliance.

### **Efficiency and Productivity Gains**

- Up to 80% reduction in document turnaround time, with agreements finalized in hours rather than days.
- Estimated savings of CAD \$38 per document when moving away from paper-based workflows.
- During the pandemic, adoption grew by 50%, and 69% of users intend to continue using e-signatures post-pandemic.

### **Implications for Owen Sound**

Formalizing Policy AF011 enables the City to:

- Align with industry and municipal best practices.
- Leverage existing platforms such as Xplor Recreation, CloudPermit, and SharePoint.
- Provide staff and residents with modernized, efficient, and accessible service delivery.

### **Financial Implications:**

No significant direct costs are anticipated, as the City will leverage existing software platforms. If additional signature software is required, costs will be reviewed and brought forward in future budgets.

### **Communication Strategy:**

Following Policy approval, the policy will be circulated to all staff, Council, and volunteers.

The IT Division will develop user guidance and FAQs clarifying when to use electronic signatures versus wet signatures.

Department managers will ensure that employees receive training and understand their responsibilities.

### **Consultation:**

- Kate Allan, Director of Corporate Services
- Briana Bloomfield, City Clerk
- Kristen Van Alphen, Manager of Legislative Services

- City staff across departments participated in review to ensure clarity, practicality, and ease of use.

## **Attachments:**

Policy AF011 – Electronic Signatures

## **Recommended by:**

Mark Giberson, Manager of Information Technology

## **Submission approved by:**

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Mark Giberson, Manager of Information Technology at [mgiberson@owensound.ca](mailto:mgiberson@owensound.ca) or 519-376-4440 ext. 1284.