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Report Title: **Natural Heritage System - Amendment No. 1 to the Northumberland County Official Plan**

Committee Name: Economic Development, Tourism and Planning

Committee Meeting Date: December 1, 2021

Prepared by: Dwayne Campbell
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Economic Development, Tourism and Land Use Planning

Reviewed by: Dan Borowec
Director
Economic Development, Tourism and Land Use Planning

Approved by: Jennifer Moore, CAO

Council Meeting Date: December 15, 2021

Strategic Plan Priorities: Economic Prosperity and Innovation
 Sustainable Growth
 Thriving and Inclusive Communities
 Leadership in Change

Recommendation

“That the Economic Development, Tourism and Land Use Planning Committee, having considered Report 2021-204 ‘Natural Heritage System –Amendment No. 1 to the Northumberland County Official Plan’, as well as the presentation, recommend that County Council adopt Amendment No. 1; and

Further That the Committee recommend that County Council enact a by-law to adopt Amendment No. 1 to the Northumberland County Official Plan at the December 15, 2021 County Council Meeting; and

Further That the Committee recommend that County Council direct staff to issue a notice of adoption and forward Amendment No. 1 to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval; and

Further That the Committee recommend that County Council direct staff to send a copy of report 2021-204 and the attachments to the seven member municipalities for information.”

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek adoption of an amendment to the Northumberland County Official Plan to incorporate natural heritage system policies and mapping into the Official Plan.

The recommended amendment implements the Natural Heritage System Plan endorsed by County Council on July 22, 2020 and responds to input received on the draft amendment presented on March 29, 2021.

Background

In 2017, the County retained North-South Environmental Incorporated to undertake a Natural Heritage System Plan for Northumberland.

In 2020 the final Natural Heritage System report was endorsed, and Council directed staff to initiate an official plan amendment as part of the Official Plan update, Northumberland Next.

The County retained Meridian Planning Consultants to prepare an amendment to the Official Plan. A report, Final Recommendations – OPA 1, prepared by Meridian Planning Consultants, details the process and requirements, as well as responds to the public and provincial submissions that were received about to the amendment. A copy of the report and the final recommended official plan amendment are attached (refer to attachment 1).

Consultations

The Natural Heritage System plan and subsequent amendment included a public engagement campaign that spanned the length of the project. From 2018 to 2021 there were multiple opportunities for public consultation including various open houses, meetings, surveys and questionnaires, online engagement, a statutory public meeting, and emails, and phone calls with County staff. There was also detailed consultation with the local municipalities, conservation authorities, provincial staff, and various community and environmental organizations. The details of the community, review agencies and stakeholder consultations are described in the attached Final Recommendations report. The official plan amendment has been revised to address public input where appropriate.

Legislative Authority / Risk Considerations

The Provincial Policy Statement (2020) requires all municipalities to protect natural features and areas over the long term and for Southern Ontario municipalities to identify a natural heritage system.

A Place to Grow [Provincial] Growth Plan also requires municipalities to incorporate the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan in the County Official Plan and to apply applicable policies.

The attached Official Plan Amendment No. 1 has been prepared in accordance with Provincial requirements.

Northumberland County By-Law 2016-57 establishes procedure for amendments to the Northumberland County Official Plan.

Discussion / Options

Official Plan Amendment No. 1 implements the Council endorsed Natural Heritage System plan for Northumberland County. The amendment provides updates to policy and mapping in the County Official Plan. The details of the policy and mapping changes to be applied are described in the attached final recommendations report.

Financial Impact

Funding to prepare the amendment and update the County's Official Plan in accordance with the Natural Heritage System Plan was approved as part of the 2020 budget process.

Member Municipality Impacts

Provincial policies require every municipality in Southern Ontario to identify a natural heritage system. Once implemented in the County's Official Plan, the Natural Heritage System policies and mapping would apply to all member municipalities. The policies and mapping will assist member municipalities in making development decisions that are consistent with natural heritage requirements as well as provide a uniform approach to preparing natural heritage systems in local municipal official plans.

Conclusion / Outcomes

Meridian Planning Consultants was retained by the County to update the Northumberland County Official Plan. A report prepared by Meridian Planning includes the first amendment to update policies and mapping in accordance with the Council endorsed Natural Heritage System for Northumberland. It is recommended that Council adopt Amendment No. 1 to the County Official Plan; and authorize staff to issue a notice of adoption and send the amendment to the Province for approval.

Attachments

1. Report: Final Recommendations – OPA 1, Meridian Planning
2. By-Law 35-2021 'A By-Law to Adopt Amendment No. 1 to the Northumberland County Official Plan'
3. Schedule "A" to By-law 35-2021 'Amendment No. 1 to the Official Plan for Northumberland County'