



## STAFF REPORT

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG

# Public Works, Planning, and Development Standing Committee

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Report to: Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillors  
From: Andrea Short, Manager, Human Resources  
Standing Committee Date: June 5, 2024  
Report Number: DS-2024-014  
Council Meeting Date: June 26, 2024  
Subject: **Request for Quotation – Planning Recruitment**

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### 1. Recommendation:

THAT Council approve Human Resources to proceed with a Request for Quotation (RFQ) to contract out the services of a recruitment agency in order to recruit for a qualified Principal Planner.

### 2. Executive Summary:

Professional land use planners are on staff to review, process, and provide professional land use planning opinions on development and land use policies that guide and shape the Town of Cobourg. The statutory obligations are provided in the Planning Act.

The Town's development activity has remained relatively consistent over the past decade, the level of anticipated development is expected to create additional demands on the Town's planning and building services functions, with the likely outcome being a need for additional resources to meet the requirements and service level standards of legislation and the development community.

### **3. Background**

The approval for this position was originally done on August 3, 2023 by Council. Once the approval to move forward with this position was given, it was posted on January 3, 2024. This position has remained posted since and is still active. Not only has this position been active since January on our internal/external websites, it has also been posted several times on the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) website and Municipal World.

To date, there have been no qualified candidates that have applied and therefore no interviews held. This, coupled with the other current vacancies in the department, has put an extreme stress on the other staff within the Planning Department as well as the public in order to approve current files.

### **4. Discussion:**

The volume of new applications within the Planning Department continue to remain high and staff continue to experience a significant volume increase since the departure of many of its staff in 2023 and 2024. The number of open files that are inevitably carried forward from year to year are a strain to staff resources.

Planner positions are difficult to both recruit for and retain. This is a concern across the province. Over the past number of years, the Town of Cobourg has advertised multiple times for planner positions and numerous interviews have been held. The Town has had difficulty recruiting planners with multiple years of complex development review experience.

The Planning Department is still in the middle of recruiting for the following positions:

- Director, Planning and Development
- Manager, Long Range Planning (temporary full-time)
- Principal Planner
- Planner I/II/Intermediate

The Town will continue to actively recruit the Director, Planning and Development, Manager, Long Range Planning and Planner positions in the interim. A new Principal Planner with at least 4 years professional planning experience would enable them to work independently on complex planning development files (Tribute, New Amherst, East Village) and allow the Director and Manager to focus on their leadership and management roles without getting involved in the details of file management and processing, and will enable more training and attention on more junior staff, and other legislated tasks that have been put aside.

A priority of the Department is to provide a high level of quality and timely customer service. The Department serves clients in the development industry with ambitious timeframes and high expectations while at the same time assisting residents with little to no experience navigating the processes. They also support business owners looking to relocate and/or expand who may only interact with Planning Staff a singular time for a project and need extra support navigating the approval process as well. With the increased number of building permit applications to review and development files, planning staff are finding it increasingly difficult to return calls/enquiries within 2-3 business days. This is also exaggerated by the complexities and history of sites which takes time to research and to deliver a quality reply. The Principal Planner would assist in providing timely and quality customer service, which is a key priority within the Division.

The recruitment of the Principal Planner position will also assist with succession planning and staff retention by ensuring there is a continuum of planning positions offering a wider range of responsibilities and compensation. A Principal Planner would create a continuum of planning positions that could support the complete career of a planner within the Town of Cobourg and would have a positive impact from a successional planning and staff retention perspective.

## **5. Financial Impact and Budget**

Given the current recruitment and retention challenges that the Town is experiencing, specifically within the Planning Division, we would like to put out an RFQ to recruitment agencies in order to be able to use a specialized service to attract new planners to the Town of Cobourg.

Staff will utilize existing gapping dollars from the current vacant position within the Planning Department from 2023 and 2024 to fund this recruitment. The estimated cost for these services should be approximately \$25,000 - \$40,000.

## **6. Relationship to Council's Strategic Plan Priorities 2023 to 2027 and beyond:**

Thriving Community

This recruitment will help the Town to better support our current Planning and Development Division. Being able to fill this position will also help the community as it will assist in approval outstanding planning files.

Service Excellence

A characteristic of service excellence is ensuring that the Town of Cobourg is an employer of choice. This will help to attract and retain the best talent. The use of an agency for the recruitment of this position will allow us to find the best suited candidate and therefore help to bring our Planning Department forward.

**7. Public Engagement:**

Not applicable.

**8. Attachments:**

Not applicable.

**Report Approval Details**

Document Title:	Request For Quotation - Planning Recruitment.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	May 27, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

**Tracey Vaughan, Chief Administrative Officer - May 27, 2024 - 12:44 PM**