

DATE: September 13, 2021

REPORT NO: PD-107-2021

SUBJECT: Information Report – Regional Official Plan Work and Township led Rural Hamlet/Rural Employment Considerations

CONTACT: Brian Treble, Director of Planning & Building
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OVERVIEW:

- In June of 2021, two staff reports were presented to Township Planning Committee. Report PD-70-2021 reported on hamlet boundary review requests; while report PD-77-2021 reported on the hiring of Dan Currie of MHBC Planning to assist with the rural employment component of the review of hamlet boundaries.
- The Region's land needs assessment report as part of the Regional new Official Plan Project, which includes the municipal comprehensive review, has identified the need for an additional 370 hectares of land in West Lincoln to accommodate growth along with the need for an additional 45 hectares of land for employment growth.
- This land need is across the Township and includes an additional 24 hectares of rural/estate residential growth and approximately 26 hectares of rural employment growth.
- For the benefit of agriculture, it is better if estate residential and rural employment is clustered into settlement areas and not scattered across the Township.
- Further, due to recent pressures on businesses from Hamilton who have been operating illegally and being forced to relocate by Hamilton by-law enforcement, West Lincoln has seen an increase in scattered non-agricultural uses throughout the West Lincoln area and especially the north west area of West Lincoln. A rural employment "park" and planning for some, to accommodate these non-agricultural uses would be ideal.
- This report identifies preliminary assessments that have occurred in addition to the requests that have been made by property owners and includes the SABR (Settlement Area Boundary Review) criteria that the Region has identified for such a review. Preliminary Draft mapping can be found attached to this report.
- Dan Currie will be in attendance and will present his preliminary employment park findings in advance of a recommendation report at the October Planning/Building/Environmental Committee Meeting.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That, Report PD-107-2021, regarding “Recommendation Report Regional Official Plan Work and Township led Rural Hamlet/Rural Employment Considerations”, dated September 13th, 2021, be RECEIVED for INFORMATION PURPOSES; and,
2. That, a final report for endorsement of proposed boundary adjustments and requirements to be provided to the Region, be presented in the fall of 2021 once further consultant, Regional and agency input has been received.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

Theme ##2 and #3

- **Support for Business and Employment Opportunities for Residents**
- **Strategic, Responsible Growth**

BACKGROUND:

The Region of Niagara has been working on a new Regional Official Plan for a number of years. The new Regional Official Plan is expected to be completed in early 2022. As a part of the new Regional Official Plan, the Region is currently undertaking a Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) which includes the review of existing settlement area boundaries across the Region, including unserviced rural settlement area boundaries.

West Lincoln has 15 rural settlement areas (also referred to as hamlets), which are not serviced by municipal sewer or water. These rural settlement areas provide an important role in supporting the surrounding agricultural areas by providing residential and commercial opportunities.

As the Region is getting closer to preparing and presenting a draft Official Plan to Regional Council and the public. Township staff want to ensure that the private landowner rural settlement area boundary adjustment requests and Township adjustment considerations (see staff report PD-070-2021) be presented to Committee for endorsement (October) before being formally submitted to the Region for their consideration. As such, staff are recommending that this report and its attachments are circulated to the Region and that a follow up meeting with Regional staff occur before October 12, 2021.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Attachment 1 to this report is Appendix 18.1 and 18.3 of the Regional Planning staff report PDS-017-2021 from May of 2021. The criteria contained in attachment 1 of this report must be addressed by the Township in our recommendation report and ultimately our work must be supported by Regional staff, Regional Planning Committee and Regional Council for incorporation into the Regional Official Plan.

Criteria used to evaluate growth in urban settlement areas on full services (such as Smithville) include:

- a) Documentation on need
- b) Existing and planned infrastructure and transportation capacity and proximity

- c) Environmental constraints
- d) The agricultural area (MDS and soil class)
- e) Potential impacts to agri-food sectors
- f) How additional lands contribute to a complete community

For rural hamlet, the criteria, as outline in Appendix 18.3 include:

- a) Contribute to the rural character
- b) Purpose of rural settlement to support agricultural community
- c) Hydrogeological considerations
- d) Impacts to the natural environment systems
- e) Impacts to surrounding agricultural area
- f) Site specific context

Staff have been undertaking various internal discussions and analysis to consider the rural hamlet requirements. The Region has also identified the Requests in their report PDS-017-2021 and will receive input from the Township up until the Planning staff report anticipated for the October 12, 2021 Committee Meeting.

Consulting Teams are assisting Township staff on both the urban analysis (Smithville Master Community Plan) and rural analysis (rural hamlet and rural employment).

Both Dan Currie and Steve Wever will be making presentations to Committee on September 13, 2021 with respect to their work, in advance of the final boundary analysis recommendation reports that will be presented in October of 2021. October's reports will not be the end of either process, but support of boundary change is required before further work is completed.

Attachment 3 to this report provides some preliminary rural settlement area considerations that the Township is currently reviewing to accommodate both the rural employment and rural residential needs. This mapping shows private landowner requests that the Township is aware of and provides some preliminary mapping on what the Township is considering and reviewing. This mapping is in draft form and may be modified by ongoing review by staff, including review of potential agricultural and natural environment impacts.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This work is covered by the land owners group and a financial allocation from a Rural Employment Capital budget account.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTS:

Input and comment has been received from numerous agencies and especially the Region as part of this review.

Current analysis has reduced our preliminary focus to the hamlets shown in the attached maps as possibly addressing the SABR criteria. This mapping work will be further refined over the next month in advance of a final recommendation report at the October Planning/Building/Environmental Committee meeting.

CONCLUSION:

This report is written to brief Committee on the issue and the work being completed and to introduce the work of Steve Wever and Dan Currie and their presentations to the September 13, 2021 Planning/Building/Environmental Committee Meeting.

Recommendation reports for endorsement of urban boundary work will be presented in October, 2021.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. SABR
2. Regional SABR requests
3. Preliminary mapping by Township staff

Prepared & Submitted by:



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