

DATE: November 13, 2023

REPORT NO: PD-59-2023

SUBJECT: **Legion Villa Affordable Housing Development – Request to Waive Planning Fees**

CONTACT: Brian Treble, Director of Planning & Building

OVERVIEW:

- On September 11th, 2023, Gordon Szaszi and Nancy Neville presented to Township of West Lincoln Committee and Council about their request to waive planning fees, building permit fees and development charges in order to show support for their project and to help “keep it viable and truly affordable”.
- Their request (PowerPoint attached to this report) was referred to staff.
- Generally, Committee/Council appeared favorable to their request.
- Staff have reviewed the request and have contemplated the best and most transparent way in which to consider such requests in the concept of affordability.
- Staff have concluded that the best and most transparent way for Council to consider moving forward is by means of a Community Improvement Plan (CIP). Currently the Township has two CIPs, one for development and redevelopment within the core area of Smithville and a second for Brownfield redevelopment sites. This proposal does not qualify under either current CIP.
- In order to have proper tools by which to consider such requests, an Affordable Housing CIP is recommended. Recently, the City of Welland has completed such a CIP (see Attachment 2) as have numerous other municipalities across the Province; while others, including Fort Erie, are considering such an approach at present.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That, Recommendation Report PD-59-2023, regarding “Legion Villa Affordable Housing Development – Request to Waive Planning Fees”, dated November 13, 2023 be received; and,
2. That, Council direct staff to include an Affordable Housing Community Improvement

- Plan in the 2024 budget; and,
3. That, the pre-consultation fee, which has not been paid, be and is hereby waived while the remainder of this request should await the outcome of the CIP process.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

- **BUILD** a safe, connected, caring and active community.
- **CHAMPION** strategic and responsible growth.

BACKGROUND:

At the September 11th, 2023 Committee and Council meeting, representatives of Legion Villa made a request for consideration of waiving Planning, Building, and Development Charge fees to help keep their new Legion Villa building “viable and truly affordable”. The Planning fee waiver request alone amounts to nearly \$20,000. Such a request was not considered as part of 2023 budget deliberations, therefore affects the Planning Department budget. To consider such requests, proper budgeting should be considered as part of the CIP. The appropriate way to consider such requests is to establish a project funding CIP account whereby such requests are considered fairly and equitably across all applications within West Lincoln. To do so requires the preparation of an Affordable Housing CIP.

CURRENT SITUATION:

On September 11th, 2023, Gordon Szaszi and Nancy Neville presented to Township of West Lincoln Committee and Council about their request to waive planning fees, building permit fees and development charges in order to show support for their project and to help “keep it viable and truly affordable”. Their request (PowerPoint attached to this report) was referred to staff. Generally, Committee/Council appeared favorable to their request.

Staff have reviewed the request and contemplated the best and most transparent way in which to consider such requests with a goal to helping achieve more affordability. Staff have concluded that the best and most transparent way for Council to consider moving forward is by means of a Community Improvement Plan (CIP). Currently the Township has two CIPs, one for development and redevelopment within the core area of Smithville and a second for Brownfield redevelopment sites. This proposal does not qualify under either plans.

In order to have proper tools by which to consider such requests, an Affordable Housing CIP is recommended. Recently, the City of Welland has completed such a CIP (see Attachment 2) as have numerous other municipalities across the Province; while others, including Fort Erie, are considering such an approach presently.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Staff recognize that there is a desire to support such a request as the one presented on September 11th, 2023 and as presented in the materials at Attachment 2 to this report. Legion Villa and Villa 3 is extremely important to the future growth and development of Smithville, particularly for affordable housing geared towards senior living. However, if

support is to be considered possible, it should be evaluated through the lens of a CIP, which helps with progress and support for all potential Affordable Housing projects. If Council direct staff to include this project, should support be granted, it should be put to the 2024 Budget.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTS:

Staff have had discussions with other lower-tier municipalities such as Fort Erie and Welland, as well as the Region and Township Legal Counsel about such work.

CONCLUSION:

Staff realize the importance of supporting such proposals and refunding of fees if it helps with affordability but caution Council to ensure that such a request is considered fairly and equitably in the context of a policy and procedure. Therefore, an Affordable Housing CIP should be completed before supporting this current request and/or any other subsequent requests should they come forward in the future. Staff advise that upon completion of a CIP, if supported and funded, then this request could then be considered.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Request for Financial Support (PowerPoint)
2. Affordable Housing CIP Press Release from Welland

Prepared & Submitted by:



Brian Treble
Director of Planning & Building

Approved by:



Bev Hendry
CAO