



Report to Committee of the Whole

From: Mat Vaughan, Director of Planning and Development

Date: May 13, 2025

Subject: Consent application delegated authority

Recommendation(s):

THAT the report titled “Report Consent application delegated authority” from the Director of Planning and Development dated May 13, 2025 be received and filed; and

THAT County Council repeal By-law No. 24-25 Planning Delegation of Authority and adopt an updated by-law as presented in this report.

Introduction:

Elgin County Land Division committee processes approximately 100 consent applications per year. Due to the County’s pre-consultation process, only roughly 1% of those applications are recommended for refusal. Many of these applications only require a short, standard list of conditions of approval and are considered by planning staff to be non-contentious. There is an opportunity to accelerate the processing time of these non-contentious consent applications by delegating approval authority from the county’s land division committee to senior planning staff. If delegated authority were granted to senior planning staff for non-contentious consent applications, it is estimated that the planning process would be reduced from 2-3 months to 1 month, and potentially even three weeks in certain circumstances.

Background and Discussion:

Consent applications (the division or modification of property lines), are under the approval authority of Elgin County. Currently, all consent applications are heard before the county’s land division committee. The committee meets once a month and considers 6-10 consent applications each meeting.

Consent applications start with the county’s pre-consultation process, where an applicant connects with a county planner to explain their intentions, and direction is provided by staff to the applicant to help them through the process. The applicant then makes a formal application submission, and the application is circulated to the relevant local municipal partner (LMP), other external review agencies (such as a conservation

authority) and to the surrounding neighbours for review and comment. In most cases, the planners and technical staff at the local level prepare a list of conditions of approval and present a short information report to the local council. This report, along with any technical considerations and a council resolution is forwarded to the County to be considered as part of the overall application review process. If there are no issues, the application is scheduled for the next available land division committee meeting. This process can take approximately 1 to 3 months depending on the complexity of the application, and whether any additional planning applications are required because of the nature of the proposed consent application.

To accelerate this process, planning staff are requesting delegated authority to approve non-contentious consent applications. If granted, this would remove the need to schedule non-contentious consent applications to a land division committee and save the applicant approximately 1-2 months of time.

To qualify as a non-contentious application, it must meet the following criteria:

- It is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement (s. 3(5) Planning Act);
- It doesn't require a plan of subdivision for the proper and orderly development of the municipality (s. 53(1) Planning Act);
- It conforms with section 51(24) of the Planning Act;
- It conforms with the Elgin County Official Plan;
- It conforms with the local municipal Official Plan or Secondary Plan;
- It complies and conforms with the local municipal Zoning By-law (unless subject to a standard condition of rezoning or minor variance); and
- There are no unresolved objections/concerns raised from agencies or the public.

If the criteria above are met, the application would be deemed non-contentious.

Through the delegated authority consent process, LMPs, external agencies, and neighbours would continue to be circulated, and given notice of the application as required by the Planning Act.

What are others doing?

Out of a review of ten two-tier municipalities, (including Northumberland, Frontenac, Renfrew, Bruce, Huron, Lanark, Peterborough counties, and the and the united counties of Prescott and Russell, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, and Leeds and Grenville), nine are currently implementing delegated authority to senior planning staff to review non-contentious consent applications. Of those nine two-tier municipalities, approximately 90% of their consent applications now flow through their delegated approval process, which many explain has resulted in significant time savings for their applicants.

Financial Implications:

No financial implications are anticipated because of this change.

Advancement of the Strategic Plan:

Strategy 3: Service Excellence and Efficiency

Through delegated authority, consent application processing time can be reduced to provide a more streamlined, rapid process to the public and our development community.

Local Municipal Partner Impact:

Minimal impacts to our LMPs are anticipated because of this change.

Communication Requirements:

This process change has been discussed with our LMP planning departments, as well as with the county's development community through the most recent Development Information Group (DIG) meeting. Both staff, and stakeholders were pleased and offered to support to the proposed change.

A copy of this report was circulated to the land division committee on May 1, 2025.

Conclusion:

Planning staff are requesting delegated authority to approve non-contentious consent applications. This change would help to accelerate the consent application process and save applicants' valuable time. Should these changes result in resource savings for the County, planning staff will revisit the consent application fees to determine if consent fees can be adjusted to reflect those savings in the future.

In review of best practices across rural Ontario, this process change is in line with what other rural two-tier municipalities are doing to provide better customer service. The process change is in line with the county's new strategic plan as it promotes service excellence and improved efficiency. Through consultation, local technical staff and the development community are in favour of the proposed change.

Planning staff are of the opinion that this request will improve the planning process and recommend that the request for delegated authority for non-contentious consent applications be approved.

All of which is Respectfully Submitted

Approved for Submission

Mat Vaughan
Director of Planning and Development

Blaine Parkin
Chief Administrative Officer/Clerk

Attachment(s)

By-Law 25-XX Planning Delegation Authority