



<b>Report To:</b>	Township of Southgate Council
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	2025-05-21
<b>Report Number:</b>	PL2025-040
<b>Title:</b>	Township Official Plan Amendments – Process improvements
<b>Open/Closed Session:</b>	Open Session
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<b>Reviewed By:</b>	Kevin Green Recreation Manager
<b>Approved By:</b>	Jim Ellis Chief Administrative Officer

#### **Executive Summary:**

Staff have been identified several Process Improvement initiatives that require amendments to the Township Official Plan. This report also recommends Council direct these amendments be initiated and brought forward for consideration through the amendment process where resources are available.

#### **Recommendation:**

**Be it resolved that** Staff Report PL2025-040 be received for information; and  
**That** Council direct Staff to bring forward the recommended amendments through the planning process as resourcing allows.

#### **Reasons for Recommendation:**

The recommended changes cannot be actioned without a corresponding Official Plan Amendment being completed.

#### **Background – Potential Official Plan Amendments:**

The Planning Team has identified several opportunities for process improvement through strategic Township Official Plan amendments. These amendments include:

- Managing files that have 'paused' or 'stalled' and seen no activity.
- Creating the opportunity for Conditional Zoning, activating the provisions of section 34 (16) of the *Planning Act*.
- Providing future growth policies for the location/co-location of school sites in Township Settlement Areas.
- Adopting policy on new parks providing general guidance on the future location of parks in Township Settlement Areas.
- Adding Renewable Energy Policies given recent legislation changes.

### **Analysis – Stalled/paused applications:**

In most cases, applicants strive to submit complete applications allowing their proposals to be processed in a timely manner, allowing decisions to be made as quickly as possible.

However, there are times that an application may “pause” due to a variety of reasons before reaching the decision point. While Staff recognize that these pauses may be necessary – keeping these applications on record does use administrative resources and may expose the Township to the potential of a non-decision appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT).

Staff are suggesting adopting policy that would enable the Township to cancel applications following no activity for an extended time. Several lower, single and upper tier municipalities have similar policies. These municipalities may also apply a “maintenance fee” (per year/month) and then after a period, cancel the application.

Given the level of planning activity in the Township continues to increase – staff recommend proceeding with an amendment to institute a maintenance fee and cancelation policy.

### **Analysis – Conditional Zoning (section 34 (16) of the *Planning Act*):**

The *Planning Act* allows a municipality to use Conditional Zoning provided the Official Plan has policies to allow this tool and the limits of what conditions can be applied. Conditional Zoning would allow Council to apply conditions to any rezoning – provided that the Official Plan policies enable these conditions. For example: if an un-opened road allowance for a rural residential development needed to be constructed, any proposed rezoning could require a condition for an agreement to facilitate this road construction. There is a pending Ontario Regulation that will prescribe terms for initiating Conditional Zoning.

This is another tool to ensure that agreements and actions required to occur to enable development are captured prior to a development proceeding to construction. Any conditions must be reasonable and cannot require an applicant to complete a task/action that is outside the scope of the *Planning Act*. For instance, Council could not require a Site Plan be undertaken for a development if a specific class of development is exempted from Site Plan via the Act.

Staff recommend proceeding with an amendment to activate Conditional Zoning provisions in the Official Plan – expanding the tool kit for effective decision-making can help further improve planning processes.

### **Analysis – Future school locations in Southgate Settlement Areas:**

As the Township continues to grow, ensuring sufficient land is provided for future school locations is important and has become a Provincial Priority through recent legislative changes. These changes require collaboration with school board(s) as planning processes for new communities occur. Focus of new school sites is mainly focused in the Dundalk area.

To improve the process, an Official Plan Amendment can be done that would help the discussion by creating policies that:

1. Provided general locations of future school sites in “directions of growth” out from the existing Settlement Area – recognizing that as the Settlement Area expands, more schools will be needed. These locations would not be pre-set, but pre-identified in general terms to be determined through the Plan of Subdivision/Condominium process.
2. Examine policies that speak to co-locating of school sites to share space and infrastructure where possible.

3. Examine opportunities to co-locate schools with municipal park sites to look at sharing infrastructure, if cost sharing of the construction of these parks occurs.
4. Provide general policies on school site design and integration into new communities.

Any amendments would be made in consultation with the applicable school boards within the County. Staff expect this approach to help enable better discussion with landowners as the Dundalk Settlement Area continues to expand.

### **Analysis – Planning for future park sites:**

Public Park spaces are an important component of healthy communities. Recent changes in the *Planning Act* have changed the types of lands can be dedicated for new parks. Some of these lands may not be ideal from a Township perspective. While the Planning Act defaults with a land dedication of new parks, understanding future park needs will also help to facilitate these discussions.

A proposed Official Plan amendment would create policies that:

- Provide general location of future park spaces and types in the “directions of growth” out from the existing Settlement Area. These locations would not be pre-set, but pre-identified in general terms to be determined through Plans of Subdivision.
- Provide a tie back to the Township Park Development Policy and set expectations when park spaces are required and what level of construction is acceptable.
- Require any park space designs, if needed, be included in any applicable agreements along with cost sharing arrangements (if needed).
- Policies referring to co-location with school board sites and cost sharing of park developments.

As part of developing these policies – local school boards will be consulted and engaged to help understand the nature and intent of these policies. Staff believe this approach will help achieve provincial goals of better engagement for school spaces with developers of new communities.

### **Analysis – Renewable Energy Projects:**

In April 2024, Council considered report [PL2024-026 - Renewable Energy Projects](#). At the public meeting on [August 28, 2024](#) at Planning Committee, no public objections were received. [County comments dated August 26, 2024](#) suggested some changes to the draft policy to make the Township approach more consistent with the County Climate Change Action Plan.

Coincidentally on August 28, 2024, a [Provincial media release regarding renewable energy](#) officially launched the next procurement for projects in Ontario. In October 2024, the new [Provincial Planning Statement \(2024\)](#) was approved and added policy stating “electricity generating facilities and transmissions systems and energy storage systems” to the definition of On-farm diversified uses (OFDUs) provided they are “secondary to the principal agricultural use of the property”.

The Planning team are in the process of updating the Official Plan Amendment and the corresponding zoning changes to address County comments and new Provincial initiatives. The entire process still leaves the final approval on any applications with Council and there is still no appeal of Council’s decision. The changes to the Official Plan will be directed toward clarity and intent and will allow rezoning applications for renewable energy projects requiring approval from the Province (Renewable Energy Approval) only on lands designated Rural. Lands in Prime Agriculture would require both an Official Plan and Zoning amendment.

The Official Plan and Zoning Amendments for renewable energy are proceeding and are noted for information. No additional direction for staff is required.

**Conclusion:**

The proposed amendments will help improve the planning process and provide additional tools to achieve quality outcomes. Any amendments would proceed through the amendment process, which would include engagement with stakeholders and residents. Green Energy amendments have received direction to proceed and are noted for information.

Staff recognize that recent proposed changes to the Planning Act announced on May 12, 2025 will likely necessitate additional Official Plan amendments. These have not been included in this report until such time that the “Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act, 2025” is adopted and the extent of *Planning Act* changes from those amendments are known.

**Link to Township of Southgate Strategic Plan:**

Priority: Operational Excellence

Goal: Goal 13: Advance Strategic Priorities and Improve Community Engagement

Action Item: 13 a). Develop a Communications and Engagement Strategy to Increase the Quality of Communication with the Public for Transparent Government/Operation and to Enhance Citizen Participation

**Attachment(s):**

None