

June 10, 2020

Dear Mayor Harding and Councillors,

Re: Delegation to Staff of Authority to Approve Certain Planning Applications

We are writing in connection with a recommendation from the Manager of Planning dated June 11, 2020 that certain planning applications for Consent (rights of way, easements, lot additions, lot creations and lot re-configurations) be delegated to the Director of Development Services and Environmental Sustainability rather than sent to the Committee of Adjustment (CofA) if no concerns are raised by the public and/or Staff concerns can be satisfactorily addressed.

This proposal was already made to Council in February 2019 and was defeated. At the time, Friends of Muskoka submitted a letter disagreeing with the proposed delegation.

Friends of Muskoka and the Muskoka Lakes Association continue to disagree with this proposed delegation, for these reasons:

1. A key advantage of CofA reviewing applications for Consent, including straightforward ones, is that the public will have the right to be in attendance. This has the very important result of providing transparency to planning decisions that impact property rights.
2. Having the CofA decide applications for Consent will avoid the risk of pressure and influence being exerted on Staff behind closed doors to make certain planning decisions.
3. An alternative exists for dealing with a backlog at CofA, which is to increase the cap on the number of items that may be considered at each CofA meeting. We understand from members of the CofA that their meetings typically finish by lunch hour, so there is additional time in the day for CofA to deal with additional items, recognizing that many of these applications for Consent are often straightforward. In addition, CofA could hold an additional meeting at peak application times, if needed.

If Council determines, especially due to COVID-19, to approve this recommendation, we urge Council to set a time limit with a report to be provided to Council of the applications that were approved under this delegation and their disposition.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our comments with you.

Sincerely,

Friends of Muskoka



Donald Lang, Chair

Muskoka Lakes Association



Lawton Osler, President

cc: David Pink, Director of Development Services and Environmental Sustainability