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Overview:

Council requested that the CAO complete a review of the Town's planning and building inspection services and to evaluate possible alternative options for providing that service to the community. This report outlines the research that has been completed on this topic. The report provides Council with the following:

- An overview of the service arrangement the Town has in place today;
- Comparison of other municipalities' service models; and
- An assessment of the pros, cons and potential costs of 1) maintaining the current arrangement; 2) acquiring the service from the Regional Service Commission; and 3) establishing the Town's own planning and building inspection department.

Urban Planning and Building Inspection Services in Riverview today

The Urban Planning & Building Inspection Departments at the City of Moncton provide planning and building inspection services to the Town. The Town entered into a formal agreement with the City of Moncton in 2012 for these services. Prior to that, the Town received planning and building inspection services from the Greater Moncton Planning Commission. For a short period of time before this agreement, the Town did provide its own building inspection services. However, that service was difficult to keep in operation as it was a challenge for the Town to attract and retain the trained professionals required to provide this service effectively.

The **Planning Services** the Town of Riverview receives from Moncton include:

- a) Administration of Planning By-Laws - Preparing and administering planning by-laws such as Municipal Plan, Zoning By-Law, Subdivision By-Law, and Controlled Access By-Law, and any other By-Law passed under the authority of *Community Planning Act*, including the review and update of by-laws as required by Council;
- b) Development Control - this involves the following:
 - i) Managing the Development Counter (e.g. one stop shop) for applications for Building Permits; Development Permits, Subdivision, Zoning Compliance and Confirmation Letters, Rezoning and Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) Applications;

- ii) Assisting with the 3-stage permitting system for foundation location, foundation elevation, lot grading and drainage plans for single and two-unit dwellings;
 - iii) Responding to public planning, development and zoning inquiries;
 - iv) Monitoring terms and conditions and conditional zoning agreements to ensure compliance with approved development plans; and
 - v) Providing support with by-law enforcement on zoning matters;
- c) Discretionary Planning Approvals - Assisting Riverview's Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) to make decisions on Development Applications that involve a Variance, Terms and Conditions, Non-Conforming Use, Temporary Use, and Rulings of Compatibility.
- d) Subdivision Approval - Process subdivision applications for Riverview;
- e) Rezoning Applications - Process Municipal Plan and Zoning By-Law amendments which involve Public Presentations, Public Hearings, and providing Riverview's Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) with written views and recommendations on these matters to Council;
- f) Community Planning Assistance - Assist Council with the By-Law enactment and adoption process, including legislative drafting of same;
- g) Coordinate Development Review Meetings in Town of Riverview - Coordinate inter-departmental reviews with Riverview on all planning and development applications to ensure that application meets with Municipal Plan, Zoning By-Law, Subdivision By-Law and other municipal requirements;
- h) Certification of Planning Documents - Certifying instruments and documents that transfers interest from land for registry office.

It is also agreed that planning staff will be appointed to serve as a resource to Council and the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) and will attend their meetings to provide advice on planning matters that are before them.

The ***Building Inspection Service*** delivered by the City consist of:

- a) Receiving and processing all building permit applications;
- b) Collecting all building and development fees and remitting these fees to Riverview on a monthly basis;
- c) Providing monthly building inspection reports;

- d) Maintaining and providing access, to the building permit tracking system and inspection reports, including the provision of remote access when available;
- e) The levels of mandatory inspection for residential - single, two unit and semi-detached dwellings, shall consist of:
 - i. Pre-Backfill - Foundation inspection prior to back-filling;
 - ii. Framing inspection before insulation and sheet rocking;
 - iii. Pre-Drywall Inspection - Vapour barrier and insulation inspection; and
 - iv. Pre-Occupancy Inspection - Final inspection(s) related to ensuring full compliance with the National Building Code requirements.
- f) Inspections will also be carried out on commercial, industrial and institutional buildings, as required.

The Town pays for its planning and building inspection services based on an agreed upon formula that is established in the contract. The formula is as follows:

The percentage of property assessment x the annual planning department budget for the City + the percentage of property assessment x the annual building inspection department budget for the City.

- The percentage of property assessment is calculated as that proportion of assessment within the Town of Riverview as a portion of the total property assessment within the boundaries of both municipalities.

The contract stipulates that the Town must provide the City (and vice versa) two years notice to terminate the agreement. If we don't give Moncton notice, we are still required to compensate them for the value of two years.

	Actual	Actual	Actual	BUDGET	BUDGET	BUDGET
Planning and Inspection	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Revenue	283,432	169,058	134,841	180,000	180,000	180,000
Expenses						
Planning Services	115,156	104,868	97,493	102,828	104,932	105,575
Building Inspection Services	229,002	205,801	233,359	236,489	232,287	245,829
Total	344,158	310,669	330,852	339,317	337,219	351,404
Net Costs	60,726	141,611	196,011	159,317	157,219	171,404

Statistics

- On average 170 to 190 building permits are processed a year.
- The value of building permits range between \$12 million to \$29 million.
- Active subdivisions a year – 2 to 5
- Rezoning – 1 to 2 a year
- Planning Advisory Committee approvals 12 to 15 active items.

Review of Other Municipalities' Services

To provide Council with more information on this particular topic, research was completed on how planning and inspection services are delivered in other communities. For comparative purposes, the research involved interview with Dieppe, Quispamsis, and Sackville (who receives services from the Southeast Regional Service Commission).

Dieppe – Urban Planning and Building Inspection

The City of Dieppe has had its own Building Inspection Services for a number of years. That is a service it has controlled and provided directly to its residents and businesses for over 20 years. In 2012 Dieppe made the decision to establish its own Urban Planning Department. The rationale at the time was that it would provide the municipality more control over that service and it was their belief it was going to be a better service for businesses and residents. Having direct control over urban planning services was clearly the number one driving factor in the decision for Dieppe. There were concerns previously that when they received services from the Greater Moncton Planning Commission, that other municipal representatives on the Commission may influence or impact future development in their own community.

Dieppe has 8 employees within its Urban Planning and Building Inspection Department. The structure of the department is as follows:

- Director
- 1 Senior Planner
- 2 Development Officers
- 1 GIS technician
- 3 Building Inspectors

The Department has a salary and benefits budget in the range of \$575,000 and a general expense budget of around \$44,000. These figures do not represent the IT systems cost such as GIS; support systems, etc.

Statistics:

- In the last five years, Dieppe has on average approved over 200 building permits a year in the range of \$60 to \$80 million.
- On average, 68 subdivision applications a year.
- Time period for building permit approvals – within 8 days
- Number of inspections completed on
 - New homes – 4 to 5
 - Commercial developments – 8 to 10
 - New apartment buildings – 15 to 20

Dieppe provides the same services to its residents that the Town of Riverview receives from the City of Moncton. They implemented the three-step building permit process as we have in place. They have an internal development review team that reviews all development applications and proposals. They have a Planning Advisory Committee that reviews and evaluates all subdivision approvals: rezoning, variances, terms and conditions, etc.

Their IT systems are basic. They use excel and multiple databases to manage and monitor the work that they do and provide to the community. They did explore the idea of getting an integrated planning and building inspection IT system back in 2013 (and are looking at it again) and the estimates they received were from between \$50,000 to \$200,000 to implement.

Quispamsis

Quispamsis operates its own Planning and Building Inspection Services. As a municipality, it provides all the services to its community that would be expected by the *Community Planning Act* and the National Building Code. It has its own citizens led Planning Advisory Committee that is responsible for making recommendations to Town Council on planning matters including municipal plan amendments, re-zoning of property, zone amendments, and subdivision developments. In addition, the Committee acts as the approving authority for variances such as construction setbacks for property owners, temporary use variances, and home occupations.

What is interesting and somewhat unique with regards to the operation of Quispamsis is how these functions are organized within the structure of Town departments. The Planning and Inspection Services report to the Director of Engineering & Public Works. There is 1 Municipal Planning Officer, 2 Assistant Building Inspectors, and 1 GIS/Planning Technician. It is not often you see the Planning function report to the Town Engineer. Engineering and Planning Departments look at a potential development proposal from different lenses that may not always be aligned. While, the Director in Quispamsis indicates the relationship works very well and the planner and engineer are always on the same page in their community it is not an operational model the CAO would recommend for Riverview.

Quispamsis did have some unique challenges when trying to establish its planning and inspection services as a Town, and we may face similar issues. For example, they recruited for a full year to find a qualified Chief Building Inspector and they were unsuccessful. They had to hire two Assistant Building Inspectors and the Director of the Engineering had to be appointed as the Chief Building Inspector. On the planning side, they were unable to recruit a senior planner to the Town as well, so their solution in that situation was to hire a Municipal Planning Officer (less qualifications). Therefore, for any major documentation that needs the signature of a senior planner with the right qualifications (per the *Community Planning Act*), they have Consultants review and sign off on the work of the internal staff.

Stats

- 50 family dwelling units a year
- 150 accessory building permits
- 8 to 10 subdivision plans
- 5 required inspections for new homes
- Non salary budget \$100,000 range – biggest expenses IT systems (CAD/GIS) and training.

Southeast Regional Service Commission

The Southeast Regional Service Commission provides planning and building inspection services to the communities and Local Service Districts in southeast New Brunswick. The Commission is responsible for the development of a Regional Plan focusing on the strategies that foster sustainable development practices, encourage coordinated development between communities, influence and guide the location of significant infrastructure and enhance coordination of commercial/industrial development.

There are three offices to serve the community including: Beaubassin in Shediac, Tantramar in Sackville and Westmorland-Albert in Moncton. These offices manage the development of land, approving and administering development and construction, within their territory. This process includes, but is not limited to, the issuance of building permits, processing variance applications, providing recommendations on municipal plans and zoning by-law amendment requests and providing the public with information on zoning and permitted land uses and requirements within these zones.

The Planning Advisory Committee for the Commission, includes representatives from the various communities that it represents. From a staff perspective in the Westmorland/Albert office in Moncton there is 1 Director; 2 Planners; 1 GIS technician and 3 Building Inspectors/ Development Officers.

In completing this analysis, I did contact one of the municipalities that receives services from the Planning Commission to get their perspective on the service that they receive from that organization. Sackville is one of the larger communities that receives services from the Planning Commission, but they don't experience significant development activity on an annual basis. Sackville comments, focused mainly on Planning Services and the general feedback provided during the interview, was that Sackville has similar challenges with the Commission that we face in receiving our services from Moncton. Challenges noted with the service include: lack of control of resources; residents/developers look to the Town for planning services first not the planning commission (lack of knowledge of their role); complaints/issues still come to Town staff and Council not the commission; planning staff not responsive to the priorities/objectives of the Town; etc.

However, the Commission does have a staff presence in Sackville and that individual attends Council meetings to provide that level of services to that community. These comments are similar to feedback I would receive from Town staff and some Councillors on their views of our planning services. Sackville provided little feedback/comments on the Building Inspection services that the Town receives.

[Perspective of the Planning Commission on ability to meet our requirements](#)

I met with the Executive Director of the Regional Service Commission to discuss that organization and their potential to deliver planning and building inspection services to the Town of Riverview. The Regional Commission would be willing and is interested in providing this service to the Town of Riverview. The Commission's legislation does allow Commissions to enter into separate agreements with individual municipalities to provide services, and that is what we would do in this situation if we were going to consider purchasing services from the Commission. The individual agreement would be to the Town's benefit as it defines the specific services we would receive and our costs would be clearly outlined in the agreement.

While I did not ask for a proposal from the Executive Director, he did provide me an overview of how he would see the services provided in Riverview. He would recommend that the Commission hire two positions (one a senior planner and one building inspector) that would work exclusively for Riverview. Those positions would be located in Riverview if that is our preference. Those staff would still have access to consult with the other employees within the commission for their expertise and advice. The ED provided me a preliminary estimate that the services we received from the Commission would cost around \$315,000 (both planning and building inspection).

Some of the benefits of receiving services from the Commission include:

- All building inspectors hired by the Commission are Civil Engineers, not technicians. That is a higher skill level than today.
- The Commission has GIS services that may be included as part of this service agreement.
- With the Commission, the Town would have access to a GIS Engineer, which is a skill set we do not have access to today. This is something the Director of Engineering has been looking for. We have been unsuccessful in recruiting GIS person in the past. The addition of GIS would be a benefit to the engineering department and a great addition to the Town.
- That the Commission would be prepared to locate two staff in Riverview permanently. The Town would have space available in the Operations Centre to locate them.

Options for the Town of Riverview

For Planning and Building Inspection Services, there are three options that the Town could consider:

1. Continue to receive services from Moncton (potentially address any service deficiencies in an updated agreement)
2. Acquire services from the Southeast Regional Service Commission
3. Establish its own Planning & Inspection Department.

The table below will summarize pros, cons, and potential cost analysis for each option.

Categories	1) Service from Moncton	2) Service from Planning Commission	3) Provide our own Service
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to multiple resources with diverse skills and experience • Historical knowledge of development and development community in Riverview • Established relationships and processes • No overhead costs/staff for the Town • Developers who develop throughout Moncton dealing with consistent staff • By-laws are aligned – consistency of service to residents • Cost control/containment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We would become the planning commission's largest client. Town would receive a greater focus. • Organization that has the experienced planning and inspection staff in place • No overhead costs/staff for the Town • Participating in a regional planning service • Access to other regional services/ expertise that the Town can't afford on its own (GIS, etc.) • Certified Engineers as inspectors • More ability for Town to influence policy direction. • First point of contact with Dev Community is within Riverview; • Expectation that providing internal service within same building would increase alignment between Planning and Town staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control of services. 100% Town focused. • More direct relationship with development community • Expectation that internal service would increase alignment between Planning and Town staff • Real/perceived view that the Town would be more responsive to development opportunities • Internal alignment/synergies with other internal departments • Increased awareness of development plans in the early planning stages

Categories	1) Service from Moncton	2) Service from Planning Commission	3) Provide our own Service
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Real/perceived view that the Town would be more responsive to development opportunities 	
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeling of lack of control over services Real/perceived concern Moncton staff push development opportunities to Moncton from Riverview No incentive to promote Riverview over Moncton Riverview has no influence over first point of contact with development community Disconnect in support to developers as Town staff and Planning staff not in regular contact/not aligned in service deliver to developers/home builders Little accountability for errors or omissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Riverview developers/builders will need to deal with new staff Does not integrate internal resources any better than acquiring services from Moncton Potential view/belief that Riverview is subsidizing services in other municipalities New entity, unsure of long term viability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited flexibility - addition of permanent staff (no lay-off clause for bargaining employees) Difficult for Town to recruit right staff with necessary skills and experience Internal comparability problems (i.e. pay a premium to get a planner other staff will seek same) Time necessary to build up internal staff and appropriate knowledge Administrative overhead requirements Costs of services will increase Increase impact on other departments (i.e. more work for Finance; HR; etc.) Two year opt out clause in current contract.
Net Cost	\$180,000 a year	\$145,000 to \$165,000.	\$250,000 to \$290,000.
Staffing Requirements	None	None	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Planner/Director Building Inspectors/Development Officers 1 GIS Technician Administrative support

Conclusion

There is no clear cut answer that will tell Council what is the best option to select. It truly depends on what are the most critical factors that influence what Council sees as the Town's priority. For example, if continuity for our current developers is the most important factor, the best option for the Town is to continue to receive this service from the City of Moncton. If control of the service and seeing planning service, in particular, as an extension of economic development the best option for the Town would be to establish its own Planning and Building Inspection Department or at least its own Planning Department. That option does have a number of challenges and risks that the Town would need to address which may make it more challenging to implement, but at least we are fully aware of what those issues may be.

If we establish a fair and balanced contract arrangement at the beginning, the Regional Services Commission does appear to be able to deliver on some of our goals and priorities for improving these services. Those objectives include having staff presence in Riverview and integrated with our team; access to GIS and other services; and this model would limit our risk in the recruitment and retention of staff.

If Council's priority is to have the services delivered by its own department or the Commission, the Town will need to provide Moncton formal notice per our existing contract (Two year opt out clause), and begin the process of building on our organizational structure and recruitment plan for they key staff positions.