



Subject: *Municipal Fee Policy Update*
To: Corporate & Residential Services Committee
Date Prepared: July 3, 2024
Related Motions: n/a
Prepared by: Nathan Hoffmann, Policy Analyst
Lee-Ann Martin, Development Officer/Planner
Approved by: Adam Clarkson, Director of Corporate Services
John Woodford, Director of Planning & Development

Summary

The Municipal Fee Policy is being updated as part of the Policy Review Program, Planning & Development's regular fee review cycle, and as a requirement of the Housing Accelerator Fund Agreement. As a result of these reviews, staff are proposing the change in planning and development fees, the integration of current Municipal fees into the Municipal Fee Policy, the removal of defunct fees, and the creation of an Information Access fee.

Financial Impact Statement

Based on the recommended changes to the Municipal Fee Policy, the value of planning application fees, building permit fees, and other development related revenue is expected to increase. A small amount of compensation for staff time will be generated from the proposed new Information Access fees.

Recommendation

Staff recommend that Committee recommend to Council to adopt the updated Municipal Fee Policy.

Recommended Motion

Regular Meeting of Council (Policy & In-Camera) - July 16, 2024

Move that the Corporate & Residential Services Committee recommends to Council that Council give notice of intent to approve the Municipal Fee Policy as attached to the Executive Committee agenda dated July 16, 2024.

Regular Meeting of Council - July 24, 2024

Move that the Corporate & Residential Services Committee recommends to Council that Council approve the Municipal Fee Policy as attached to the Executive Committee agenda dated July 16, 2024.

Background

The Municipal Fee Policy (the 'Policy') is scheduled for review as part of the Policy Review Program. This review aligned with the Planning & Development Department's review of planning and development fees as well as requirements to consult Developers on Municipal Planning fees as part of the Housing Accelerator Fund. Both types of updates are being brought together in one package.

The current version of the Policy outlines the fees and rates charged by the Planning & Development and Finance departments for various services. As part of this update, it was decided to bring all the Municipal fees determined by Council, across various Bylaws and Policies, into one (1) document. The current and proposed

version of the Policy both state that the fees outlined in the Policy supersede the fees found in other documents in the event the documents do not align.

The Policy was created in 2017 and has not been updated since that time. Planning & Development staff conducted a fee review in 2018 of departmental fees and Council chose not to amend the Policy with these draft fees.

To conduct this review, staff completed a jurisdictional scan of planning and development fees for six (6) other municipal units in Nova Scotia. This review is attached as Appendix A. From this review, the Municipality's current fees are higher in certain categories of both planning fees and building permit fees when comparing to other rural municipalities such as Cumberland County and Colchester County, and lower in comparison to fees collected in Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). The following staff were also consulted as this Policy was reviewed:

- Chief Administrative Officer (the 'CAO');
- Director of Planning & Development;
- Director of Finance;
- Director of Parks, Recreation & Culture;
- Manager of Finance;
- Manager of Accounting;
- Accounts Payable-Accounting Administrator;
- Manager of Recreation & Aquatics; and
- Communications Officer.

To satisfy requirements of the Housing Accelerator Fund, in addition to the jurisdictional scan, Planning staff conducted an internal review of the planning and development fee schedule and completed a consultation with the development community seeking comments on the proposed amendments to the policy. After review, staff are proposing amendments to both planning and building permit fees. In some cases, fees are proposed to be increased slightly and in other cases fees are proposed to be reduced.

Discussion

As part of this update, staff are proposing five (5) types of changes:

TEMPLATE AND WORDING CHANGES

The draft version of the Policy has been updated with some template changes to more closely align it with current Municipal policy expectations.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

A number of planning and development fees are proposed to increase to keep pace with inflation and increased costs of construction, while correcting some discrepancies and unfairness being eliminated through the fees review. The significant changes are proposed for the building permit fees. In most cases, the permit fee costs are proposed to slightly increase except permit fees for smaller sheds, which will be reduced, and fees for the cost of commercial renovations. Under the current fee schedule some permit fees for commercial renovations can cost a developer more than the cost of a building permit for new construction of a commercial building.

The fee for a typical building permit is proposed to increase by five cents (\$0.05) a square foot. Sheds and garages are proposed to change by lowering the administration fee from \$75 to \$50 and increasing the square footage fee by six cents (\$0.06). This change slightly decreases the permit fee for property owners wanting to construct smaller accessory buildings but increases for larger accessory buildings. In addition, the current fee policy groups sheds, shell warehouses, garages, barns and other farm buildings

together. Staff are proposing that barns and other farm buildings become their own separate item and have a separate fee associated with their construction.

For commercial, industrial alterations or repairs in many instances, the permit cost associated with commercial or industrial alterations or repairs costs more than the permit fee for a new commercial construction. Therefore, staff are proposing to change the administration fee from \$100 to \$150 and to change the method of calculating the building permit from \$10 for every \$1000's worth of construction value, to using a square foot calculation method of \$0.20 ft². This change will reduce the building permit fees for commercial, industrial alterations or repairs so they are less than the cost for new commercial construction. This change not only keeps the cost of commercial renovation permits in line with the cost of new commercial permits, it can also be simpler to administer as it eliminates any dispute over the cost of the renovation.

Building permit fees are outlined in Appendix B showing the actual permit fees collected versus the proposed fees, with a sample of some of these calculations included in Table 1 of this document.

Table 1 Proposed change in cost for building permits by building type

Building Type	Permit Number	Current Charge	New Charge with Proposed Changes	Difference
Accessory Building (ie Garage)	C2023-334	\$113.08	Admin Fee \$50 + (1064ft ² * \$0.10) = \$156.40	\$43.32
Single Unit Dwelling	C2023-264	\$410	Admin Fee \$125 + (2352ft ² * \$0.15) + \$50 Occupancy = \$527.80	\$117.80
Farm Buildings	B2023-171	\$543	Admin Fee \$75 + (11700ft ² * \$0.05) = \$660	\$117
New Commercial/Industrial	C2023-143	\$4398	Admin Fee \$2500 + (13200ft ² * \$0.20) + \$50 Occupancy = \$5190	\$792
Commercial/Industrial Renovation	C2024-067	\$1700	Admin Fee \$150 + (3540ft ² * \$0.20) = \$858	(\$842)
Commercial/Industrial Renovation	C2024-126	\$5956	Admin Fee \$150 + (3240ft ² * \$0.20) = \$798	(\$5158)

ADDITION OF EXISTING FEES

As part of this update, existing fees that the Municipality already charges are recommended to be combined into this Policy. Examples of the fees to be included are: Blasting Permit Fees, Sportsplex Rental Fees, and the interest rate for both the Well and Septic upgrade and PACE programs. Some fees reference various Policies of the CAO or the Director of Finance. Council has previously delegated the authority over these fees to the respective owner.

REMOVAL OF DEFUNCT FEES

Staff recommend the removal of defunct fee associated with 'Bylaw P-1000-1, Dog Bylaw'. This fee was charged for the Municipality to impound dogs, which is no longer a service provided by the Municipality.

INFORMATION ACCESS

Discussions with staff on the Communications Team resulted in the recommendation to create new fees for Information Access requests. These requests can often result in substantial staff time to properly research,

package, and share with the information requester. Staff are recommending the following fee structure for a new information access fee: no fee for the first two (2) hours with a fee of \$15 for each additional half hour, rounded down to the nearest half hour. This new fee would apply to both Routine Access and FOIPOP requests. This rate is in addition to the existing \$5 charge for FOIPOP requests required by the *FOIPOP Act*. The \$15 charge per half hour would represent a new fee imposed by the Municipality and is the maximum rate allowed by the Act. Should the request want printed copies of the records, a charge of \$0.15 per page will be imposed.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The draft Policy aligns with the Municipal Key Strategies of Corporate Excellence, Strong Community, and Economic Prosperity.

Alternatives

There are two (2) alternatives to this Policy as proposed:

Accept the Addition of Existing Fees

Committee may choose to recommend to reject the change in planning fees while accepting the integration of all other Municipal fees into this Policy.

Amend as Appropriate

Committee may choose to amend this Policy as appropriate.

Attachments

DRAFT Municipal Fee Policy - With Markup
DRAFT Municipal Fee Policy - Without Markup
Appendix A - Planning Fee Jurisdictional Scan
Appendix B- Permit Fee Comparison