



Subject: *Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy - Motion C23(348)*
To: CAO for Planning Advisory Committee, November 12, 2024
Date Prepared: November 7, 2024
Related Motions: PAC23(59) and C23(383)
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Summary

As part of the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy, Council passed Motion C23(348) to direct staff to bring a report regarding the extension/development of private roads in the Rural Use (RU) Zone in Mount Uniack allowing for the subdivision of lots, for discussion at PAC. This report includes background information and current policies for Planning Advisory Committee's consideration.

Financial Impact Statement

Planning staff has budgeted for the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy as part of the 2024/2025 Budget Cycle.

Recommendation

Acquire additional information on the feasibility of servicing the Mount Uniacke Growth Management Area with municipal water and wastewater before making changes to the GMA.

Recommended Motion

Planning Advisory Committee recommends to Council that Council:

- *Include the consideration of future changes to the Mount Uniacke Growth Management Area, after a Mount Uniacke GMA Servicing Feasibility Study has been completed, in the draft of the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy.*

Background

As part of the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy discussions, Municipal Council has passed the following motion:

C23(348): *Passed to direct staff to bring a report regarding the extension/development of private roads in the Rural Use zone allowing subdivision of lots for discussion.*

In response to Council’s motion staff have prepared the following staff report outlining the importance of ensuring infrastructure is Municipally owned in Growth Management Areas and Growth Reserve Areas to prepare for future commercial and residential development.

UNIACKE GROWTH MANAGEMENT AREA

The policy goal of the Mount Uniacke Growth Management Area is to promote and encourage a combination of residential and commercial growth within designated portions of Mount Uniacke by establishing a Growth Management Area. The purpose of the Mount Uniacke Growth Management Area is unique in that it is intended to act as both a growth management area and a growth reserve area simultaneously. Although the Mount Uniacke GMA currently has on-site services, Council has directed staff through the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy process, to undertake a municipal servicing (water and wastewater) feasibility study as part of the 2026/2027 draft budget.

To effectively manage growth and the impact on East Hants infrastructure in the GMAs, infrastructure, including roads, would ideally be owned by the municipality in order to provide sustainable, consistent and cost-effective services, including but not limited to, public road maintenance and future servicing requirements. A growth management approach to development allows for the natural progression of growth while protecting the inherent integrity of the Municipality.

GROWTH AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES

The purpose of the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy is to help support growth in the community. Mount Uniacke and the surrounding communities act as a bedroom community for HRM. Although much of East Hants’ population growth occurs in the Corridor area of East Hants, Mount Uniacke has experienced and will continue to experience steady population growth. To the right is the chart showing the rate of population change over the past three census periods from the 2023 Socio-Economic Study.

Rate of Population Change (%) by Region	2006-2011	2011-2016	2016-2021
Corridor	6.1%	2.9%	8.1%
Uniacke/Rawdon	3.7%	1.3%	5.3%
Shore/Central	-4.0%	-2.9%	-2.7%
East Hants	3.5%	1.5%	5.6%

In order to support future growth, staff have received direction from Council as part of the Uniacke SPS process to include a servicing feasibility study in the 2026/2027 budget and to consider future servicing as part of the next strategic plan. To encourage population and commercial growth in Mount Uniacke, the municipality should own the roads being constructed in the study area. Public road ownership allows for future local improvements. As the community grows and densification occurs improvements can be made to the road network in terms of sidewalks, active transportation routes, transit routes, and bike lanes. These same improvements have been undertaken in the Corridor as the community has grown.

By owning the roads East Hants secures future street quality for waste management vehicles and EMS access. Densification requires investment in Municipal infrastructure.

RURAL USE (RU) ZONED LAND

For land outside of a Growth Management Area (GMA) or a Growth Reserve Area (GRA), the Subdivision Bylaw permits the creation of new lots on existing public and private roads. The new lots can only be created in compliance with the minimum lot requirements of the Rural Use (RU) Zone.

If a developer wishes to build a new private road subdivision in the communities immediately outside of the Mount Uniacke Growth Management Area, a new private or public road can only be constructed if the property is rezoned from a Rural Use (RU) Zone to another appropriate residential zone, Country Residential (CR) or Lakeshore Residential (LR). The policy was added as part of the 2016 East Hants Plan Review to protect the rural landscape and future residents. When a land use redesignation and rezoning planning application is submitted, a developer has to comply with the Municipal Planning Strategy policies in order for East Hants Council to consider the land redesignation and rezoning.

Policy RR5 outlines the Policies that Council may consider when entertaining a new planning application. Potable water has been an issue for many East Hants residents and when considering an application for a redesignation and rezoning of land a developer has to have a professional hydrologist prepare a hydrogeological assessment to the adequacy of the property to provide an adequate and safe water supply for its future residents. Other policies that help in Council's decision-making process are the environmental impacts of the proposed development; the financial impacts to the Municipality; whether there are soft services to support the development such as schools, recreation facilities, police, and fire services; and whether the road network and proposed transportation connections are appropriate. All of these policies are also considered when a Rural Use (RU) Zoned property in the Mount Uniacke Growth Management Area is redesignated and rezoned to allow for new public roads.

Examples of how policies work to inform Council's decisions on an application or to ensure water availability can be seen in past applications. There have been two approved redesignations and rezoning applications along the East Uniacke Road. Results of the hydrogeological study for one of the application sites led to the developer slightly lowering the number of lots due to the availability of potable water. Another example is a previous application on Monta Vista Road where Council turned down an application based on access and connectivity concerns.

If Council decides to allow for the development of new roads in the Rural Use (RU) Zone as-of-right once again, Council will no longer have input into whether a proposed development is appropriate in terms of the policies of the MPS. New development would be as-of-right. The changes would also impact other Rural Use (RU) Zones, not just the areas around Mount Uniacke.

Conclusion

Changes are not recommended to be made to the Mount Uniacke GMA, such as zoning changes and allowing private roads in the Mount Uniacke GMA, until a municipal servicing (water and wastewater) feasibility study has been completed for the GMA. A servicing feasibility study would consider the ideal area of the Mount Uniacke GMA to be serviced and the cost of the servicing. The results of the study could be used to help identify potential changes to the Mount Uniacke GMA boundary or future zoning changes.

Planning staff continue to work on future reports for the Uniacke SPS. The next report will address Motion C24(221). A draft of the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy is anticipated to be ready early in 2025.

Attachments

None.