

Section III – Items for the Information of the Board

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors
Meeting #7/20, Friday, October 23, 2020

FROM: Michael Tolensky, Chief Financial and Operating Officer
Sameer Dhalla, Director, Development and Engineering Services

RE: **PLANNING APPLICATION REVIEW AND ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM (PARES)**
Strategic Business Planning Initiative

KEY ISSUE

To provide information to the Board of Directors regarding a planned initiative to modernize Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's (TRCA) planning, application review and enforcement process to address opportunities for efficiencies and an improved user experience identified in the existing planning process.

RECOMMENDATION

WHEREAS opportunities for greater efficiencies and to address user experience issues in TRCA's plan input and review services have been identified by TRCA staff and stakeholders including the TRCA BILD industry working group;

AND WHEREAS consultation with staff and stakeholders occurred throughout 2019 to develop a suite of proposed solutions that includes the proposed Planning Application Review and Enforcement System (PARES) and other measures including better quality digital submissions and policy and operation procedure updates;

THEREFORE, IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the report outlining details and next steps to securing the required funding for PARES be received.

BACKGROUND

In accordance with TRCA's Strategic Business Planning (SBP) Policy, all potential new projects/programs or proposed modifications to existing initiatives must proceed through the SBPP Policy workflow, including reporting to the Board of Directors for informational purposes.

As a result of the increased demand for TRCA's services, the current system, policies, procedures, and processes utilized to process plans and permits is recognized as being less than ideal and generally provides a lower quality of user experience than desired. As a result of current processes and systems, staff currently spend a significant amount of time on manual inputs to compensate for the shortcomings of the current system. Additionally, with an outdated system there are also communications issues resulting in repetitive emails, messages and phone calls between staff and stakeholders throughout the plan input and review process.

TRCA's Development and Engineering Services or Policy Planning divisions receive and manage planning and permit applications using several different methodologies including software applications, hard copy, Office 365 platforms and GIS mapping. Currently there is limited integration or automation between each process. To address the current issues, staff and business units have developed auxiliary methods to help track, manage, and report on planning projects including the use of local spreadsheets and web applications.

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RATIONALE

In order to fully address a solution that results in operational efficiencies, staff have developed a proposed solution, the Planning Application Review and Enforcement System (PARES). PARES is intended to support both Conservation Ontario's and TRCA's Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) Client Service and Streamlining Initiatives as well as TRCA's updated Strategic Plan objectives. It is proposed that PARES will integrate with municipal enterprise planning solutions in our jurisdiction where available and where feasible. Outputs from PARES will include more accurate and measurable data related to TRCA service deliverables such as, employee productivity, product quality and customer satisfaction.

It is intended that PARES will function as an efficiency-tool that will significantly reduce the current gaps in TRCA's planning process. TRCA is proposing to select and adopt a web-based cloud platform that is designed to improve user experience and reduce inefficiencies by utilizing a "one-stop-shop" to modernize planning and permitting review at TRCA.

Projected benefits include improved employee productivity, product quality, and client satisfaction. Staff will have more opportunity to focus on tasks pertaining directly to the planning and permitting lifecycle, increasing productivity overall. Furthermore, there will be improved data tracking, communication and automation which will help staff track their workloads and allow for the assignment of relevant tasks. PARES will include a review interface for TRCA projects led by other divisions and departments including Restoration & Infrastructure, Parks & Culture, Property & Risk Management, Project Management Office, and Education & Training further improving services for internal business units within TRCA.

The platform will also include a robust toolset designed to improve user experience through its modern interfaces and communication instruments such as, a fully digitized planning and permit submission review approval and enforcement system, improved automation for staff functions, streamlined coordination between staff and other divisions, and an interactive dashboard for real-time staff and client status updates. These improvements will enable staff to focus on quality of deliverables, while improving the stakeholder experience by integrating the ability for users to view comments in real-time.

The planning process for this project involved the use of a broad range of subject matter experts that make up the Steering Committee. Throughout the buildout, the Steering Committee will continue to provide business context, ensure deliverables are met, and will approve any scope changes. An external Guidance Team (including representations from BiLD, municipal and provincial partners) as well as an internal Project Team, including organization-wide representatives from key business units, will provide input, review and testing throughout the process.

Relationship to Building the Living City, the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following strategies set forth in the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan:

Strategy 9 – Measure performance

Strategy 10 – Accelerate innovation

Strategy 11 – Invest in our staff

FINANCIAL DETAILS

The current total estimated cost to purchase and implement the PARES platform is \$1.6M between 2020-2022. The staff support required to guide this process is estimated to be an additional \$175,000 (2021-2022) for a total implementation cost of 1.78M over 2 years. The ongoing maintenance costs for the system including licensing fees, professional services and

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staff support are estimated at approximately \$350,000 per year. The cost breakdown is provided below:

Platform Development, 2020-2022

- Software Purchase and implementation (Platform purchase and configuration, testing and release): **\$1,600,000**
- TRCA staff support: **\$175,000**, 2021-2022

On-going costs, 2021 and future

- Software Licensing fees: **\$200,000 per year**
- Professional Services: **\$50,000 per year**
- TRCA staff support: **\$100,000 per year**

The platform development portion of this initiative is currently unfunded, and upon approval of this report, will be added to TRCA's unfunded priorities list. Staff will continue to work with the Strategic Business Planning and Performance Team to develop a sustainable funding model for the project prior to implementation. The funding model will analyze current budget efficiencies, short-term user fee increases, and will include solicitation of funds from partner municipalities. The ongoing costs totaling \$350,000 per year will be covered through existing user fees as per the approved TRCA fee schedule and service level agreements.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

Following the approval of this report, staff will add this project to TRCA's unfunded priorities list. A sustainable funding model will be developed in consultation with the SBPP business unit. Once funding has been secured, staff will report back to the Board of Directors prior to award of a request for proposal for vendor selection.

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