

DATE OF MEETING March 29, 2021

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SUBJECT OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN AMENDMENT APPLICATION PROCESS

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to request a postponement of the 2021-MAY-01 and 2021-NOV-01 Official Community Plan (OCP) amendment application intake rounds, pending adoption of the new OCP, in order to reduce the potential confusion that two parallel OCP processes may cause.

Recommendation

That Council postpone the 2021-MAY-01 and 2021-NOV-01 intake rounds for applications to amend the Official Community Plan until 2022-MAY-01.

BACKGROUND

The City's practice for processing Official Community Plan (OCP) amendment applications through semi-annual intake rounds in May and November of each year is based on the policy direction in the current OCP (Plan Nanaimo). The OCP review, which is taking place as a key component of the comprehensive strategic policy initiative REIMAGINE Nanaimo, has reached Phase 2 – Exploring Options, where future growth scenarios are being developed for review and subsequent public consultation. The next intake for OCP amendment applications is scheduled for 2021-MAY-01.

DISCUSSION

Typically, at this stage in an OCP update process, Council is asked to provide direction to postpone intake of additional OCP amendment applications while it is deliberating on the new OCP. A postponement of OCP amendment application intake would reduce the likelihood of introducing additional variables at the scenario development stage of the OCP update and would also reduce the potential for confusion, both on the part of the public and applicants, that could result from running an OCP update and the review of OCP amendment applications as two parallel processes. It is also anticipated the processing of new OCP amendment applications would be in conflict with Council's consideration of a new OCP and the OCP bylaw adoption process that is expected to commence in early 2022.

There are currently eight OCP amendment applications under review, including the following significant applications:

1. Sandstone (OCP91)
2. Oceanview (OCP94)
3. Green Thumb (OCP96)

Staff are working with applicants for current OCP amendment applications to develop review timelines for their applications that respect and align with the anticipated timeline of the OCP review.

At this time, Staff do not anticipate that any major amendment applications are currently being prepared for submission for the upcoming 2021-MAY-01 intake round. Given the extraordinary circumstance of the OCP review, Staff are recommending Council postpone the 2021-MAY-01 and 2021-NOV-01 intake rounds for applications to amend the OCP until 2022-MAY-01.

Should Council choose to postpone the 2021-MAY-01 and 2021-NOV-01 intake rounds for OCP amendment applications, property owners will still retain the right to make application and the City must still accept applications. However, direction to postpone the upcoming application amendment intake rounds would allow Staff to communicate clearly with potential applicants Council's preference regarding the appropriate timing of OCP amendment applications, given the status of the OCP review. If an OCP amendment application were to be submitted, despite direction to postpone intake of applications, Staff would bring the application forward to Council for direction prior to undertaking standard application review.

OPTIONS

1. That Council postpone the 2021-MAY-01 and 2021-NOV-01 intake rounds for applications to amend the Official Community Plan until 2022-MAY-01.
 - Advantages: Reduces the likelihood of introducing additional variables at the scenario development stage of the OCP update. Reduces the potential for confusion, both on the part of the public and applicants, that could result from running an OCP update and OCP amendment application review as two parallel processes. Limits the potential that processing of new OCP amendment applications would be in conflict with Council's consideration of a new OCP and the OCP bylaw adoption process.
 - Disadvantages: Postponing OCP amendment application intake could discourage or delay developers from bringing forward proposals of merit.
 - Financial Implications: None identified.

2. That Council deny postponement the 2021-MAY-01 and 2021-NOV-01 intake rounds for applications to amend the Official Community Plan until 2022-MAY-01.
 - Advantages: Denying postponement of OCP amendment application intake would not discourage or delay developers from bringing forward proposals of merit.
 - Disadvantages: Does not reduce the likelihood of introducing additional variables at the scenario development stage of the OCP update. Does not reduce the potential for confusion, both on the part of the public and applicants, that could result from running an OCP update and OCP amendment application review as two parallel processes. Does not limit the potential that processing of new OCP amendment applications would be in conflict with Council's consideration of a new OCP and the OCP bylaw adoption process.
 - Financial Implications: None identified.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The City's practice for processing Official Community Plan (OCP) amendment applications through semi-annual intake rounds in May and November of each year is based on the policy direction in the current OCP (Plan Nanaimo).
- The next intake for OCP amendment applications is scheduled for 2021-MAY-01.
- A postponement of OCP amendment application intake would reduce the likelihood of introducing additional variables at the scenario development stage of the OCP update and would also reduce the potential for confusion, both on the part of the public and applicants, that could result from running an OCP update and the review of OCP amendment applications as two parallel processes.
- At this time, Staff do not anticipate that any major amendment applications are currently being prepared for submission for the upcoming 2021-MAY-01 intake round.
- Direction to postpone the upcoming application amendment intake rounds would allow Staff to communicate clearly with potential applicants Council's preference regarding the appropriate timing of OCP amendment applications, given the status of the OCP review.
- If an OCP amendment application were to be submitted, despite direction to postpone intake of applications, Staff would bring the application forward to Council for direction prior to undertaking standard application review.

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