

TO: GENERAL COMMITTEE
SUBJECT: BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATION SOLUTION
WARD: ALL

PREPARED BY AND KEY CONTACT: A. TAYLES 
MANAGER OF APPLICATION SERVICES

SUBMITTED BY: C. GLASER 
DIRECTOR IT

G. ALLISON 
DIRECTOR BUILDING & BYLAW SERVICES

GENERAL MANAGER APPROVAL: R. FORWARD, MBA, M.Sc., P. Eng. 
GENERAL MANAGER OF COMMUNITY & CORPORATE SERVICES

R. BUNN 
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INNOVATE BARRIE

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER APPROVAL: C. LADD 
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

RECOMMENDED MOTION

1. That a capital project entitled "Building Permit Application Solution" be created and added to the 2014 Capital Plan in the amount of \$500,000 and to the 2015 Capital Plan in the amount of \$900,000; and be funded from the Building Code Reserve (13-04-0434).

PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

2. The purpose of this staff report is to obtain Council's approval for the procurement and implementation of a building permit application solution, to be funded from the Building Code Reserve (13-04-0434).
3. The Corporation currently utilizes AMANDA as a permitting and inspections system for the Building & By-law Services Department, with some limited use in the planning and by-law departments. The current system has been in place for 15+ years at the City and does not meet the needs of staff and users throughout the community.
4. The City's current solution requires an investment by the corporation to enhance the existing functionality and address improved automation and self-service electronic delivery. Specifically, the City has looked into opportunities to achieve a citizen web portal, GIS/mapping integration, mobile inspections, electronic building plan review, online payments, financial system integration, provincial reporting needs regarding intensification, and the automation of manual processes. In its investigations, the City has been unable to confirm that the current software can accommodate all of the required functionality.
5. Given the investment impacts from both a financial and staff resourcing perspective to improve the existing system's functionality and address customer service needs, the recommendation from both the Building & By-law Services and IT Departments is to search the market and implement the best possible permitting solution for the Corporation.

ANALYSIS

6. The Building & By-Law Department has an immediate need to advance its electronic service delivery approach and incorporate enhanced mapping, reporting, mobility and customer self-service access in its permitting and inspections solution.
7. An enhanced permitting and inspections solution will enable Building staff to improve their interactions with residents, businesses and developers in an automated and fully electronic environment – accessible online in a ‘one stop shop’ approach for the application, payment and processing of permits and inspections. Furthermore, a new solution will eliminate manual and labour intensive tasks associated with the current system, substantially reducing time spent by staff and the public in initiating, tracking and completing permit applications.
8. Customer service improvements via new technologies will create an always open window for citizens and business operators to apply for services, review existing applications and interact with the Corporations representatives. In 2011 an analysis was completed by the Building Department highlighting opportunities for improved efficiencies through online services.

If 50% of permit applications were submitted online, a savings of 133 staff hours per year would have been realized.

If 25% of the telephone enquiries and inspection requests were handled online, a savings of approximately 900 staff hours per year would have been realized.

The increase in our speed to handle requests through online functionality will enable processing of more requests and enhanced customer satisfaction – improving the service delivery of permitting activities.

9. Timing for a permitting solution for the Corporation is driven by anticipated approvals for land development in Barrie’s south end. The Building & By-law Services Department anticipates an influx of permit applications and would greatly benefit from a fully automated solution to be in place as early as 2015 to ensure that the system is operational. Furthermore, this system will ensure the City is able to meet its tracking, monitoring and reporting requirements relating to land intensifications rates.

ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

10. There are no environmental matters related to the recommendation.

ALTERNATIVES

11. The following alternatives are available for consideration by General Committee:

Alternative #1 The City could continue with the existing system (AMANDA) for the processing of building permit applications. (i.e. Status Quo)

This alternative is not recommended as it would require the continuation of manual and labour intensive processes associated with the initiation, tracking and completion of building permits. The Building Department would not be able to realize improvements to electronic service delivery and the automation of customer self-service and online access.

Alternative #2 The City could alter the proposed recommendation by delaying the request for project and funding approval to have it align with the 2015 Business Plan process.

Although this alternative is available, delaying the project start until March of 2015 (when the 2015 Business Plan is anticipated to be approved) would result in a delay of ten months. Manual and labour intensive processes would continue among Building staff and the public well into 2016, when a new solution (if approved) would be in place.

FINANCIAL

12. Staff are requesting funding approval to not exceed \$1.4 million for the procurement and implementation of a building permit application solution. The funds being requested are to support the hardware, software, staffing, consulting, training and implementation fees associated with the project.
13. Staff anticipate that approximately \$500,000 will be spent in 2014 with the remainder being spent in 2015.
14. The Building Code Reserve (13-04-0434) was setup to stabilize the financial impact from the varying levels of building code activities on a year to year basis. The Building Code Act authorizes the use of building permit fees for the anticipated reasonable costs of administration and enforcement of the Act, including hardware, software, staffing, consulting, training and implementation costs for a building permit application solution. This project meets the parameters of the Building Code Act and the use of Building Code Reserve funds.
15. The Building Code Reserve (13-04-0434) fluctuates annually based on building permit activity. The Reserve currently has a balance of \$1,503,786 as of the end of 2013. By committing up to \$1,400,000 to the Building Permit Application Solution, the Reserve will have an uncommitted balance of no less than \$103,786. If the balance of the Reserve is insufficient to support building operations in 2014 and 2015, staff would be required to investigate opportunities to mitigate and manage the situation (e.g. consideration of building permit fee increases).

LINKAGE TO 2010-2014 COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

16. The recommendation(s) included in this Staff Report support the following goals identified in the 2010-2014 City Council Strategic Plan:

- Manage Growth and Protect the Environment
- Improve and Expand Community Involvement and City Interactions
- Management and development of the new lands
- Customer service improvements via new technologies such as integration with the City's mapping systems and a Citizen Portal for making on-line permitting and inspection requests.