

Staff Report



To	Committee of the Whole
Service Area	Infrastructure, Development and Enterprise Services
Date	Monday, March 2, 2020
Subject	Dolime Community Engagement Results for Proposed Settlement Pathway
Report Number	IDE-2020-22

Recommendation

That the settlement pathway outlined in the report titled "Dolime Community Engagement Results for Proposed Settlement Pathway," dated March 2, 2020, be approved and staff be directed to take the first steps in implementing the settlement pathway.

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To present the findings of the public education and engagement program and to obtain Council approval to implement the proposed settlement pathway to protect Guelph's water.

Key Findings

Public feedback

The results of feedback from the nine-week Our Community, Our Water public education and engagement program indicate that there is support in the community to proceed with the proposed solution to protect Guelph's drinking water provided:

- environmental considerations are a focus of development planning, especially with respect to present wildlife and plants,
- development planning considers and mitigates increased traffic and is designed to be an accessible neighbourhood, and
- the City and taxpayers don't bear responsibility for risks and costs of land development and water safety.

Water management system

A preliminary technical assessment of alternatives for an on-site water management system, which will be undertaken if the settlement pathway proceeds, has shown that a program that involves management and monitoring of water levels in the quarry pond is a viable option which will achieve objectives for long term drinking water quality and quantity protection. This option will be subject to further study through an operational testing program. It is expected that new water supply capacity will be obtained from the water management strategy, referred to as Pond Level Management ("PLM") which will require new City infrastructure to be

constructed including the PLM pumping station. Therefore, a Class Environmental Assessment (EA) will be implemented as is required under the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act.

Planning Approvals

The quarry closure and redevelopment component of the settlement pathway is subject to a number of provincial and municipal restructuring and planning approvals. The provincial approval requirements will need to be discussed with the Province if Council decides to proceed with the proposed settlement pathway.

Financial Implications

Financial implications are subject to a confidential mediation process.

Report

Background

The Dolime Quarry, owned by River Valley Development (RVD), is an active quarry with rock extraction and water-taking permissions that the City believes presents current and long-term water quality and quantity concerns for the City's water supply. City staff have identified that risks arise from a breach in the Vinemount Aquitard (the layer of rock providing protection to the Gasport Aquifer that provides the majority of the City's water supply). The City has been engaged in a study, negotiation and confidential mediation process with RVD and the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) since 2014 with the aim of resolving the City's Appeal against MECP's approval of RVD's Permit to take Water (PTTW), currently before the Environment Review Tribunal (ERT).

Settlement discussions between RVD and the City reached a point where a potential settlement path emerged. This proposed pathway (the "settlement pathway") involves the following components: bring the Dolime quarry lands into the City's boundary, build a water management system at the quarry pond to protect Guelph's drinking water and potentially increase the amount of drinking water available in the municipal aquifer, close the quarry and redevelop the quarry lands for residential development. This settlement pathway would require the agreement of the County of Wellington and Township of Guelph-Eramosa and agreement and approvals from the Province

Public Engagement

Our Community, Our Water summary and results

The City launched **Our Community, Our Water** on October 1, 2019 through a media event, and a meeting with the Wellington Water Watchers. The public education and engagement program focused on sharing the proposed solution for addressing the City's concerns with drinking water quality and quantity related to operations at the Dolime quarry.

Limits to engagement

Limitations to the engagement process should be noted. First, it was not possible to provide a complete picture for how added land and a new residential development would be factored into the Province's growth plans for Guelph. This can only be addressed through discussions with the Province which would only occur if Council

approves moving ahead with the proposed solution (i.e. City staff need to be directed to work with the Province for approvals and planning). Second, capital and operational cost allocations to implement the proposed solution were not available. Final costs won't be available until after any required environmental assessments are completed.

Education and engagement

Our Community, Our Water took place over a nine-week period from October 1- November 30, 2019. The first four weeks of the program were focused on introducing the proposed solution to the community, both in the City and the Guelph-Eramosa Township. The City used a variety of traditional (print ads and media) and digital (video and web, screen and social media ads) to reach the community ([see link for detailed reporting](#)).

During the education phase, people were encouraged to submit questions via phone, email, social media and through the City's Have Your Say website. The City publically answered 16 questions through the Have Your Say site, and addressed other questions posed through social media, email and by phone.

The first open house was held at City Hall on October 29, 2019, with two sessions at 2-4 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. This open house officially launched the engagement phase of the program. Thirty-seven people attended the open house (both sessions) and provided feedback through one of three methods: on computers connected to the City's Have Your Say website, written on a community whiteboard, or filled out on paper.

A second open house was held at the Holiday Inn and Conference Centre on November 26, 2019, again with two sessions at 2-4 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. Forty-seven people attended the open house (both sessions) and provided feedback through one of three methods: on computers connected to the City's Have Your Say website, written on flipcharts, or filled out on paper.

The City also participated in or held a total of four pop-up sessions:

- Breezy Corners Breakfast hosted by Councillor James Gordon on October 31, 2019
- West End Recreation Centre information booth on November 9, 2019
- Old Quebec Street Mall information booth on November 16, 2019 (hosted to coincide with the arrival of attendees for a Guelph Storm Hockey Game)
- Ward 5 Townhall hosted by Councillors Cathy Downer and Leanne Piper on November 21, 2019

Through these events, City staff spoke with over 150 people who had the opportunity to talk to City staff, have questions answered, and provide comments in person, or online later at their convenience.

The three questions asked throughout engagement were:

- i. What do you think are the benefits of the proposed solution for our community?
- ii. What do you think are the challenges of the proposed solution for our community?

- iii. Council will consider water, financial, technical and planning aspects of the proposed solution in making their decision. What additional considerations are important to you in the context of this proposed solution?

These questions were aimed at understanding what our community values with respect to the proposed solution in terms of perceived benefits and risks, and whether there was a sense of benefit that outweighed risk or vice versa. The third question was aimed at ensuring Council understood what considerations were important to the community as they look to make a decision on whether to pursue the proposed solution.

November 30, 2019 was the last day for people to submit comments about the proposed solution.

Internal communications and engagement

The City also hosted internal opportunities for staff from other departments to learn about the proposed solution and ask questions or provide comments. All staff were invited to learn about the program and the program team held specific sessions for staff in Planning Services and Water Services (most directly impacted).

Outcomes

The City collected 135 written comments on the proposed solution from all sources. About 10 per cent of overall comments were out of scope of the engagement (including off-topic or unrelated comments) and were not included for further analysis. All comments are available in the [detailed report](#).

Overall, comments about the proposed solution were primarily neutral to positive (81 per cent).

Four key themes were brought forward from residents regarding the proposed solution:

1. Water protection: Most comments and inquiries received were related to, and supportive of, the need for water protection, particularly given the unique groundwater source the City uses for drinking water.
2. Environmental considerations: With respect to the development aspect of the proposed solution, some respondents identified concerns and had questions pertaining to plants and wildlife in the area and ensuring they are considered in the final plans.
3. Growth and long-term sustainability: A key theme voiced by respondents was related to Guelph's growth as a community, and spoke to the need for innovative and accessible neighbourhoods to support a potential increase in population and traffic.
4. Cost implementations to taxpayers: Some respondents believe that RVD should be responsible for any risks and costs associated with the redevelopment of the land and water safety, and the City and taxpayers should not be accountable for providing any funds.

More details on these key themes and the overall findings of the engagement are available in the [Our Community, Our Water engagement report](#).

Settlement Pathway

On-Site Water Management System Component

City staff have completed preliminary technical assessments of the proposed settlement pathway for the Dolime quarry. Initial technical assessment of alternatives for an on-site water management strategy has shown that a program called Pond Level Management (PLM) which involves management and monitoring of water levels in the quarry pond is a viable option which will achieve both long term drinking water quality protection and quantity objectives. This plan would be subject to further study through an operational testing program (OTP). It is expected that new water supply capacity will be obtained from PLM which will require new City infrastructure to be constructed including a pumping station. This and other technical water management system requirements will be confirmed as part of a Class Environmental Assessment (EA) will be implemented as is required under the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act.

The detailed technical requirements of pond level management will need to be obtained through an OTP which monitors groundwater levels. An operational testing program consisting of an expanded data gathering, monitoring and verification program, conducted over several years, is now needed to:

- validate effectiveness of PLM;
- provide an accurate estimate of the maximum, sustainable water available to the City's water supply wells within the southwest quadrant under PLM;
- establish a final post-closure design and contingency program for PLM; and
- finalize the cost estimates for PLM.

Quarry Redevelopment Component

One of the components of the proposed settlement pathway is the anticipated planning approval process for the redevelopment of the quarry lands.

It should be emphasized that this component of the settlement pathway will require approvals that are not within the decision-making authority of the City including provincial approvals as well as approval of the Councils for both the County of Wellington and Township of Guelph Eramosa. Consultation has been carried out with all three of these government bodies.

Planning approvals will involve public engagement.

Financial Implications

Financial implications are subject to a confidential mediation process.

Consultations

Finance - James Krauter, Deputy Treasurer/Manager, Taxation Revenue

Legal, Realty and Court Services - Christopher Cooper, General Manager/City Solicitor

Corporate Communications and Customer Service - Tara Sprigg, General Manager

Strategic Plan Alignment

The recommendations in this report align with Sustaining our Future as the recommendations will directly lead to protecting Guelph's groundwater – the

drinking water supply for residents and businesses. The recommendations also support Building our Future as an investment in infrastructure will be required.

Attachments

None

Departmental Approval

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