



REPORT TO MAYOR AND COUNCIL

PRESENTED: NOVEMBER 5, 2007 - SPECIAL MEETING
FROM: ENGINEERING DIVISION
SUBJECT: DRAFT WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN

REPORT: 07-194
FILE: 5280-23/9

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council receive the draft Water Management Plan report; and further

That Council authorize staff to proceed with further public consultation including a final stakeholder meeting and two public open houses to obtain feedback on the draft plan recommendations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Township is recognized locally and provincially as a leader in groundwater management. Staff has been working closely with Provincial staff to develop a water management plan that will ensure safe and sustainable groundwater for our community. The draft plan includes a series of recommendations aimed at:

- reducing groundwater overuse,
- protecting groundwater quality,
- preserving groundwater flows to fish habitat; and,
- improving knowledge and understanding of local resources.

A copy of the Draft Water Management Plan is available for viewing in the Clerk's Office.

It is anticipated that implementation of the plan be a partnership between the Province and the Township, with a dedicated governing body to fill in administrative gaps and ensure that water management receives high priority. As the Province is currently undertaking a study on water governance models for BC, it is opportune that the Township continues its collaborations on this topic.

The plan follows an adaptive management framework and it will be reviewed in five years.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is provide Council with an overview of the draft Water Management Plan and to obtain approval for staff to proceed with further public consultation, including a final stakeholder meeting and two public open houses to obtain feedback on the draft plan recommendations.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY:

During the past year, Township staff has worked closely with Provincial staff to develop a water management plan under Part 4 of the *Water Act*. The planning team, composed of representatives from the Township and the Ministries of Environment and Agriculture and Lands, has met more than twenty times in the past ten months. The outcome is a series of recommendations aimed at:

- reducing groundwater overuse,
- protecting groundwater quality,
- preserving groundwater flows to fish habitat; and,
- improving knowledge and understanding of local resources.

The Township has hosted stakeholder and expert workshops to obtain input on the plan. Further public communication and consultation has been pursued through media and the Township's website. Presentations have also been given to watershed stewardship groups, the drilling industry and other interested groups as requested.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

A draft Water Management Plan has been completed and it includes 44 recommendations. A summary of key recommendations are as follows:

To manage overuse of groundwater:

- **Require drilling authorizations for all new or altered water supply wells.** Currently, well drilling is unregulated with drilling occurring in an adhoc and unsustainable manner.
- **Mandate hydrogeological assessments for new large capacity wells** to reduce well interference impacts.
- **Install flow restrictors on non-domestic water supply wells** to encourage water use efficiency. Restrictors would limit flows, with sizing based on the number wells on the property, property area and intended water use.
- **Install water meters on new and existing wells** to monitor groundwater use. Meters would be phased in over time. Changes to existing legislation are also recommended so that pricing structures (e.g., cap and penalty) can be developed.
- **Introduce residential metering and rate structure on municipal connections** to reduce water use.
- **Limit the amount of groundwater extracted by municipal wells.**
- **Expand residential sprinkling restrictions** to include private wells.

To protect groundwater quality:

- **Implement a Township-wide septic management plan** to reduce the risk of groundwater contamination from septic waste. Measures may include mandatory clean-outs and limitations on septic densities;
- **Improve practices for agriculture** including mandatory composting, manure storage and fuel storage requirements.
- **Introduce a nutrient management plan pilot for the Hopington aquifer area** to manage nutrient application and establish appropriate practices, procedures and standards.

- **Establish a special conservation officer within the Township** under the provincial Conservation Officer Service. The local officer will be responsible for monitoring and enforcing aspects of the water management plan as well as specific components of Provincial regulation.

To preserve groundwater flows for fish habitat:

- **Implement a riparian set-back for new large wells next to a fish bearing stream** to reduce the potential impact of water extraction on stream baseflows.
- **Encourage the Province to improve water management by integrating groundwater and surface water allocation.**

To improve knowledge and understanding of water:

- **Mandate submission of well data to the Provincial database** to determine the number of active and abandoned wells in the Township.
- **Establish monitoring programs and undertake necessary studies** to achieve better understanding of surface water and groundwater resources.
- **Expand Water Wise program** to educate and encourage residents in behaviours which will protect groundwater.

The planning team envisions a dedicated governing body overseeing the implementation of the plan with the Province and Township taking the lead on recommendations that are within their jurisdiction. A study would be undertaken to examine governance options (e.g., a board, commission, or council) and evaluate the roles and responsibilities of the new body. It is envisioned that the body be non-profit, self-funding, representative, and have the ability to access grants through Provincial and/or Federal programs. The Province is currently undertaking a study to look at options for water governance bodies across BC - this study could provide direction for the proposed local governance body.

The Township of Langley's Water Management Plan is intended to be a living document that is periodically reviewed and amended as required to ensure objectives are being met. The first review would occur after five years.

Next Steps:

The planning team is seeking detailed feedback on the draft plan from the Plan's Stakeholder Advisory Committee. Additional feedback will also be obtained at two public open houses and via the website. After modifications and adjustments are made, the final plan will be brought to Council for approval.

Legislation:

Recommendations included in the water management plan may require amendments to Provincial legislation including the Environmental and Water Acts which are currently under review. Some aspects of the plan may require the revision of local by-laws.

Interdivisional Implications:

The proposed Water Management Plan will have implications for municipal water supply, land development, bylaws and enforcement, thus requiring coordination for phased implementation.

Community Implications:

Both private well owners and municipal water users will benefit from safe and secure supply of groundwater.

Environmental Implications:

Safe and sustainable of groundwater is essential for healthy fish habitat.

Financial Implications:

The preliminary order-of-magnitude cost to implement all of the recommendations contained in the water management plan is \$800,000 per year excluding the cost of metering. This cost includes initiatives that would likely be carried out and funded by the Province. Although a detailed estimate has not been completed for capital costs for meters on private wells, they are likely to be in the order of \$1,000 to \$2,000 per well.

There are several funding mechanisms that could be considered for implementing the water management plan. Initially, funding of the water management plan could be obtained through a conservation levy. Future funding considerations could include cost recovery through water use fees, which could be administered through the governing body. Staff will work closely with senior agencies to identify funding opportunities through provincial and federal grant programs.

Respectfully submitted,

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