



Municipality of the District of West Hants

SUPPLEMENTARY STAFF REPORT

TO: Planning Advisory Committee

FROM: Jeanne Bourque, Planner

DATE: August 16, 2012

SUBJECT: Pothier Motors Rezoning Application – Windsor Fire Chief Comments

ORIGIN

Subsequent to the July 19, 2012 Staff Report presented to PAC, Planning staff received comments from Windsor Fire Chief Scott Burgess, who expressed concerns regarding the adequacy of existing fire flows in the area of the development.

RECOMMENDATION

This Supplementary Staff Report is to inform PAC of the discussion. There is no change to the original Staff recommendation made in the July 19 report.

ISSUE

Provincial codes and standards determine the amount and rates of water that must be available to fight fires, and this is usually referred to as “fire flow”. The amount required varies greatly according to many factors such as building size, use, design, type of construction material and location of the building in relation to fire stations. In addition, the water needed to fight fires can come from a variety of sources such as municipal piped water, dry hydrants, on- or off- site storage systems (ie. holding tanks or water towers), or other supplies such as nearby water bodies (ie. lakes and rivers) from which tanker trucks can refill.

During initial meetings, Mr. Pothier told Planning staff that he was looking at constructing a new building on the subject property, and a possible building size of about 20,000 square feet was mentioned. This size was used for illustration purposes during discussion with other municipal staff, although no other details are available until such time that a building permit is applied for.

Policy 16.3.1 (a) (iii) of the MPS requires Council to “*consider whether the proposal is considered premature or inappropriate in terms of ... the adequacy of fire protection.*” The response of planning staff to this policy was, “*the subject property is in a hydrant-protected area and any new commercial structure will be required to be built in accordance with building and fire codes in effect at the time application is made for a building permit.*” Chief Burgess pointed out that being serviced with a hydrant system does not mean that any structure can meet the building and fire code requirements using only the hydrant system. The Falmouth water main infrastructure in the vicinity of the subject property cannot provide sufficient fire flow to a large building without careful building design to minimize fire flow requirements, and perhaps other methods to supplement the existing municipal water supply. The particulars would depend greatly on the variables mentioned above.

Planning staff were aware of this concern and spoke with Director of Public Works Rick Sherrard and Senior Building Official Tim Leslie regarding possible issues with the fire flow. The general consensus was that by minimizing water demand and increasing water supply, a new commercial building could be accommodated on the property, although the specific details would have to be worked out during the building design stage. All costs to meet the building code requirements would be borne by the developer, and it was generally felt that these costs would not be so high as to prohibit commercial activity.

Chief Burgess advised that the existing infrastructure would not be able to support a large development all by itself; but he clarified, *“with some major design and planning ... this rezoning can move forward to allow commercial development.... I have reviewed different design and protection systems the developer could utilize in the planning and design stages to minimize the required fire flows and still meet the codes and standards.”*

Planning staff, Mr. Sherrard and Mr. Leslie met with Mr. Pothier on August 15 to discuss, in general terms, some of the issues raised by the Fire Chief’s comments, and suggest possible building design and supplemental water supplies that Mr. Pothier could consider. Mr. Sherrard has also been investigating detailed computer generated models that can predict available fire flows under different circumstances. These numbers will be provided to the developers design engineers when a building permit is applied for.

CONCLUSION

After careful consideration of the requirements of the MPS and LUB, Planning staff recommended that Council approve the application from John Pothier to rezone the subject property to Highway Commercial. If the rezoning is approved, the property owner must submit an application for development and building permits, which will be reviewed by the Development Officer, the Senior Building Official and the Director of Public Works. At that time, detailed engineered design plans must show how the new construction will meet the requirements of building, fire and any other applicable codes.

Respectfully submitted,


Jeanne Bourque
Planner