THE CORPORATION OF THE
CITY OF WHITE ROCK
CORPORATE REPORT

DATE: **April 26, 2021**

TO: **Mayor and Council**

FROM: **Carl Isaak, Director, Planning and Development Services**

SUBJECT: **Development Approvals Program – Funding Application to UBCM**

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RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT Council:

1. Pass a resolution indicating support for the proposed project under the Local Government Development Approvals Program (LGDAP) and willingness to provide overall grant management if awarded funding; and

2. Authorize staff to finalize and submit the application package to the Union of BC Municipalities as presented in principle in Appendix A to this corporate report.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this corporate report is to introduce Council to a funding opportunity offered by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) to assist local governments across British Columbia in addressing the challenges of the development approvals process, and obtain Council's support in making a grant application. The development approvals process refers to all operational steps and decision making in relation to a local government's consideration of approving development, from the pre-application phase to the issuance of the building permit. This grant program, administered by UBCM and funded through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, is one of the outcomes of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs Development Approvals Process Review, which was completed in 2019. The total amount of funding available to municipalities is $15M, with a suggested maximum of $500,000 for an individual program. A copy of the program guide is attached to this report as Appendix B.

This corporate report includes a draft copy of the completed 2021 Application Form (see Appendix A). Staff are working with a grant consultant to further refine the wording of the application and an updated version may be provided as an on-table item at this meeting. The Application Form includes an overview of the project, and project budget. There are four main components to the application, all of which relate to technology upgrades to improve the efficiency and customer experience of application processes related to development.

1. Creating an online application ("eApply") option for Plumbing/Sprinkler Permits issued by the Planning and Development Services Department;

2. Creating an online application ("eApply") option for Highway Use Permits issued by the Engineering and Municipal Operations Department;

3. Providing custom training for staff on the interdepartmental collaborative tools within the City's Tempest Prospero system, to improve the efficiency and accuracy of interdepartmental review of development applications; and

4. Upgrading the City's development application webpage (i.e. Building Permit and Plumbing Permits) to provide a more streamlined customer experience from pre-inquiry to issuance and reduce the number of inquiries for basic questions that could be answered online.

Of the four activities proposed under this application, the first is currently in the draft 2021-2025 Financial Plan (General Fund Capital) and the receipt of grant funding would reduce the contribution required by the City. The eApply for Plumbing Permits (#1 on the above list) is in the budget at $43,000.

The submission deadline for this funding is May 7, 2021, and in order to submit the application there is a requirement for Council to pass a resolution indicating support for the proposed project and willingness to provide overall grant management.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION

Not applicable.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

This corporate report introduces Council to a grant funding opportunity offered by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) to assist local governments across British Columbia in addressing the challenges of the development approvals process, and requests Council's support in making a grant application.

Details regarding the grant program are provided in a program guide attached to this corporate report as Appendix B. Additional information regarding the Provincial process that led to the creation of the grant program can be reviewed in the Final Report on the Development Approvals Process Review at the following link: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/local-governments/planning-land-use/dapr_2019_report.pdf.

The draft application focuses on opportunities to improve "information technology to facilitate development application processing," which is noted in the Program Guide as an eligible activity for funding, including the following elements:

- Undertaking assessments to support future implementation of digital application platform or digital permitting software.

- Purchasing and implementing new or upgraded digital platforms or software

- Training staff on software or platform, or on process changes required to adopt software or platform.

There are other potentially eligible activities in the Program Guide which may be beneficial, for example, a broader review of development application processes. A Building Permit Process Review is still intended to occur and is in Council's Strategic Priorities, however the Manager of Building and Bylaw position is currently being recruited for and this review will have to be undertaken once there are adequate resources to complete the review in addition to the meeting the operational requirements of the Building Division.

Given current resources and the application deadline, it was determined that the information technology improvements, which were already under consideration and require fewer internal

resources, would be the most appropriate activities for the grant application and achievable under the program requirements.

Further details regarding the proposed activities are provided in the application attached as Appendix A.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Appendix A to this corporate report includes a project budget. The budget identifies the role of City staff in addition to the role of consultants to be retained for this undertaking. It is anticipated that the cost of the consultants (implementing the eApply modules in the City's existing Tempest Prospero software platform, as well as providing Prospero training and upgrading the City's development application webpages) will be approximately $124,000, and the grant application includes a request for the entire amount. A minor component of this includes wages for backfilling the staff positions that would be primarily involved in implementing the eApply modules in Planning and Development Services and Engineering and Municipal Operations.

As noted earlier in this report, the eApply for Plumbing Permits project is currently in the draft Financial Plan (General Capital Fund) for $43,000, and any grant received through this program would reduce the contribution required by the City.

The custom training for staff on the Prospero software collaborative tools is not specifically allocated in the current draft Financial Plan, and may not proceed without grant funding. The comprehensive upgrade to the City's development applications webpage similarly is not in the current draft Financial Plan and may not proceed without grant funding, however minor updates (links) may be made to reflect any changes that come out of implementing eApply options.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The improvement of the City's development application webpage as proposed in this grant application would improve communication with property owners and applicants in the City.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL INVOLVEMENT/IMPLICATIONS

Staff in the Engineering and Municipal Operations Department, Financial Services Department, and Information Technology were consulted in the preparation of the grant application.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The "Our Community" theme in Council's includes the following related objectives:

- Manage the delivery of City services efficiently and effectively.
- Advocate on behalf of the community to senior levels of government and other stakeholder groups.

The "Our Economy" theme also includes the following related objective: to "improve provision of efficient and cost-effective services." A previous action under this objective was the implementation of an eApply option for business licences, which was completed in December

2020. The Building Permit Process Review action also under this objective is still intended to occur and is in Council's Strategic Priorities, however the Manager of Building and Bylaw position is currently being recruited for and this review will have to be undertaken once there are adequate resources to complete the review in addition to the meeting the operational requirements of the Building division.

OPTIONS / RISKS / ALTERNATIVES

The following options are available for Council's consideration:

1. Direct staff to revise the grant application and provide support for the application as amended; or

2. Direct staff not to proceed with the grant application.

CONCLUSION

In 2019 the Ministry of Municipal Affairs completed a review of development application processes, and in order to support local governments in making improvements to the process, the Province has made funding available through the administration of UBCM. This corporate report presents Council with a draft funding application package that, if successful, will help offset the costs of improvements to aspects of the City's development application review process, specifically improvements to information technology to facilitate development application processing.

It is recommended that the City authorize staff to submit the enclosed application package (or the application package as amended and provided on-table to Council with changes from the grant consultant) to UBCM and that a resolution be passed indicating support for the work plan, and oversight of the project budget.
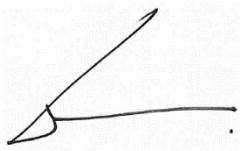
Respectfully submitted,

Carl Isaak, RPP, MCIP
Director, Planning and Development Services

Comments from the Chief Administrative Officer

I concur with the recommendations of this corporate report.

Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix A: UBCM 2021 Funding Application –Development Approvals Program
Appendix B: UBCM Local Government Development Approvals Program Guide