

THE CORPORATION OF THE  
**CITY OF WHITE ROCK**  
CORPORATE REPORT



**DATE:** September 25, 2023

**TO:** Mayor and Council

**FROM:** Anne Berry, Director, Planning & Development Services

**SUBJECT:** Building Permit Application Processing Update Report

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**RECOMMENDATION**

THAT Council receive the corporate report dated September 25, 2023, from the Director of Planning and Development Services, titled “Building Permit Application Processing Update Report” for information.

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report is intended to provide Council with an update as to the status of building permit applications since retaining the services of the consulting firm Pontem Consulting Group Ltd. (the Consultant) and implementing the utilization of casual Building Official staff to review building permit applications in order to reduce the building permit backlog.

**PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION**

<b>Motion # &amp; Meeting Date</b>	<b>Motion Details</b>
2023-042 January 30, 2023	That Council direct staff to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for temporary contracted Building Official services to assist staff with building permit application reviews in all application streams in order to reduce the current building permit backlog. <div>CARRIED</div>
2023-122 March 27, 2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. THAT Council receive the report dated March 27, 2023, from the Director of Planning &amp; Development Service, titled “Consulting Services for Building Permit Application Review &amp; Inspection Services” for consideration; and</li><li>2. Award the contract to Pontem Consulting Group Ltd. for consulting services for building permit application review and inspection services on a time durated basis and assign a \$150,000 budget for such services allocated from 2022 anticipated surplus.</li></ol> <div>CARRIED</div>

## **INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

The intent of this report is to provide Council with an overview of the improvements to the City's building permit application volume and processing concerns since the direction from Council to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for temporary contracted building permit application review services to reduce building permit backlog.

### **Background**

On January 30, 2023, Council directed staff to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for temporary contracted building permit application review services, in order to assist with reducing the current volume of applications awaiting review and permit issuance. Over the course of the previous 1.5 years the city experienced a high volume of building permit applications, combined with numerous vacancies in the Building Division which were challenging to fill.

This has resulted in an unsatisfactory permit review wait time, necessitating additional staff resources in the Division prompting Council to authorize the hiring of a Building Official III and a clerical support position for the Planning and Development Services department. As filling the current and new building official vacancies has been particularly challenging, staff also looked to hiring casual staff to help keep the application flow moving.

Per Council direction staff posted an RFP for consultant services to assist with the building permit review backlog. One submission was submitted. On March 27, 2023 Council directed awarding the contract to Pontem Consulting Group Ltd. for consulting services for building permit application review and inspection services on a time-durated basis, at a cost of \$150,000 budget for such services.

### **Current Status**

<b>Application Type</b>	<b>Number of files to be reviewing at RFP posting (April 2023)</b>	<b>Number of files to be reviewed effective July 24/23</b>	<b>Number of files to be reviewed effective September 14/23</b>
Tenant Improvement	27	10	1
Multi-family	4	1	1
Single Family Dwelling	42	7	7
Multi-family renovation	(included with MF)	1	1
Single Family renovation	3	4	1
<b>Total applications yet to be reviewed</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>11</b>

It is important to note that the numbers above are snapshots in time. Building permit application volume is fluid and changes on a daily basis depending on how many new applications are submitted. The totals above do not reflect the actual number of building permit applications in process, only those that were yet to be pulled from the queue for review. In many cases, multiple rounds of review are required before a permit can be issued. Applications in process (under review or issued) are prioritized over new (not yet reviewed) applications. There are currently 501 active building permit files in the review process or issued for construction with the City. It should also be noted that this number does not include any subsequent permits like plumbing, sprinkler, and tree permits that support building permits.

The majority of the tenant improvement applications were processed by the Level 3 Casual Building Officials, allowing the efforts of the consultant to focus on several large multi-family/mixed use development projects.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Approximately \$67K of the \$150K allocated has been used. Additional work will be completed by the Consultant this year, and staff also recommends carrying forward any unused funds to 2024, with further discussions anticipated during the 2024 Budget process.

### **INTERDEPARTMENTAL INVOLVEMENT/IMPLICATIONS**

Most building permit applications require referral to the Engineering and Fire Departments to ensure servicing and Fire Code requirements are met and approved. External referrals to Fraser Health and Metro Vancouver are also a component of the review process for certain mixed use and tenant improvement applications.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR TREE PRESERVATION AND TREE CANOPY ENHANCEMENT**

Tree Management Permits, if required, must be processed in conjunction with Demolition and Building Permit applications.

### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

The retention of the Consultant and the Casual staff is in alignment with the following strategic priority of Council:

*Improve permit process to reduce wait times.*

### **OPTIONS / RISKS / ALTERNATIVES**

No alternative options are recommended at this time.

### **CONCLUSION**

In summary, the services being provided by Pontem Consulting Group Ltd. and the Casual Building Official staff has resulted in a significantly reduced wait time for building permit application reviews since March 2023. Staff recommends that the City continue to utilize these services moving forward as needed, while the existing budget remains, with further discussion to be undertaken during the 2024 Budget process.

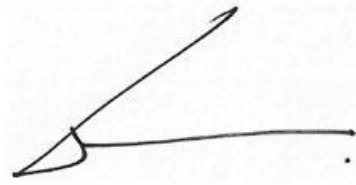
Respectfully submitted,



Anne Berry  
Director, Planning & Development Services

### **Comments from the Chief Administrative Officer**

This corporate report is provided to Council for information.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'G' followed by a horizontal line and a small dot at the end.

Guillermo Ferrero  
Chief Administrative Officer