

Colchester to Undertake Major Sewer Capacity Reviews

By Maurice Rees

Request for Sewer Capacity in Brookfield for some potential residential developments has resulted in the county approving a issue a request for proposals for capacity reviews in other high growth areas such as Brookfield, Tatamagouche, Hilden, Valley and Truro Heights. Results could then be presented to Council for further consideration.

The matter came to a head at council's meeting of January 27, 2022, Council discussed a potential development on Carter Road in Brookfield. Concerns had been expressed by a local developer who wanted to develop a 42-acre lot, to include housing for 76 people, but was told by staff that there was inadequate sewer capacity for the proposed plan.

Following the discussion, Council passed a motion to asking staff to investigate the capacity issue and bring back an Action Item on how to correct the situation.

The sewer system in Brookfield currently includes approximately 300 system connections. At 2.3 persons per household (2016 Census data), this would translate to 690 people. The community has a dedicated sewage treatment plant which runs anywhere between 60% and 100% capacity depending on wet weather. As an average, the plant is at about 80% capacity.

Staff were approached via e-mail by a potential developer in December of 2021 regarding a vacant 42-acre parcel on Carter Road in Brookfield. The individual was considering a purchase of the lot but wished to first confirm sewer capacity for 76 2-bedroom units and 14 single family homes. No preliminary plan was formally submitted to the Development Officer.

The proposed developer again contacted staff via email in January of 2022 asking about sewer capacity for 442 people in Brookfield. Based on the current population in Brookfield and the remaining capacity at the treatment plant, staff advised the potential developer that the system has inadequate

capacity for the proposal.

In February of 2022, the proposed developer again emailed staff asking about capacity for 50% of the original proposal, and staff advised that a formal preliminary submission to the development office is required before any answers on capacity can be provided.

Staff advised council there are a number of items to be discussed surrounding the development request in Brookfield, and the implications extend across the entirety of the County. These items are outlined below:

Development Requests: with the recent housing boom, there is a rush to purchase vacant land to develop new housing units within the County. Over the last 2 years in particular, staff have received numerous informal requests from real estate agents and potential buyers regarding servicing capacity for large developments.

Staff cannot provide informal feedback to potential developers regarding substantial housing developments, in particular when a purchase and sale agreement hangs in the balance. This was the case for the proposed development in Brookfield.

Subdivision By-law contains a clear submission process for proposed new developments. This process allows staff to review implications such as serviceability, traffic, zoning, stormwater and green space. Any necessary system upgrades can then flow from the process, and any required capital upgrades would be presented to Council for consideration.

System Capacity - Brookfield: the Brookfield system currently has capacity for the growth rate we've seen over the last 10 to 15 years. Staff could not have planned for or predicted a 50% to 75% increase in system capacity with a single development. Staff can start a detailed system capacity assessment for Brookfield, this process will take time, and Council approvals would be required for any capital upgrades.

Competing Development Pressures: The situation in Brookfield is not unique.

Over the last number of months, staff have been faced with requests for large volumes of new housing units in Hilden, Tatamagouche, Valley, Truro Heights and Debert. While the sewer systems (and water systems) in these communities have some room for growth, none of them have been budgeted for expansions of 50 to 100% capacity over the next 1-2 years.

Debert Housing Development: At Council's strategic planning session in the Fall of 2021, the development of Debert was listed as a top priority. In addition to developing the business park itself, Council requested that staff investigate options for creating housing units in Debert. To that end, and as presented to Council in December of 2021, staff issued a request for proposals for the concept layout of a new housing development on Hudson Street.

The Debert Business Park Committee has been working with the selected consultant on a plan and the current layout is proposing 595 new units over 41.5 acres. Staff have been directed to investigate infrastructure capacity to accommodate the development, and this work is underway.

Go Forward: While a sewer system capacity for Brookfield can be undertaken by staff, it would also be of benefit to include system capacity reviews for other communities where large development pressures exist. This approach can inform Council on all needed infrastructure upgrades, and can allow Council to prioritize work areas. With current staff resources and existing project commitments, it would be quite challenging

for staff to focus on upgrades in every community simultaneously. The Debert system capacity review is already being completed.

Strategic priorities implications: The capacity review for the proposed housing development in Debert aligns with Council's strategic priority for development of the Debert Business Park. This work is proceeding. Debert is not included in potential review, because it is already underway.

A motion asking staff issue a request for proposals for sewer and water system capacity reviews for Brookfield, Hilden, Tatamagouche, Valley and Truro Heights was approved by council on motions by Deputy Mayor Stewart and councillor Boutilier.

Developer's cost is whatever is required within the project, but municipality is responsible for "downstream cost". Staff suggested consideration might be given to having developers assist in cost reduction of enlargement of downstream upsizing, but would require a by-law change. This caused Councillors Boutilier and Gregory to put forward a motion, subsequently approved by council, directing staff to develop bylaw regarding Developer costs and participation for development infrastructure.

After the motion was passed, Deputy Mayor Stewart mentioned there is another Brookfield area property which might be developed. It is double the size of the project currently under discussion which is projected at 442 people on 42 acres. He added, We certainly, we don't see development stymied, by under capacity. We need to be proactive".



Wind Turbine By-Law Amendments Pass Second Reading

By Maurice Rees

On motion of Councillor Lomond, seconded by Councillor Sandeson, council approved by way of Second

Reading, amendments to the Wind Turbine Development By-law as presented. The Wind Turbine Development By-Law has been in existence, but council decided earlier this winter to make amendments.

The amendment stated: For a period of six months commencing January 27, 2022, no applications for a

wind turbine development will be received for small or

large-scale wind turbines while the Municipality reviews the requirements for small- and large-scale wind developments.

Upon a motion by Council, where additional time is deemed necessary to complete the review, this review period may be extended one time by a further period of up to six months. Any applications received following the expiry of the review period shall be processed in accordance with the requirements in force at that time.

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