
NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 14th, 2020

COUNTY of RENFREW RECEIVES EXEMPTION on OFFICIAL PLAN from PROVINCE of ONTARIO

Pembroke, ON: In what can be described as unprecedented consultation, the County of Renfrew and the Province of Ontario have agreed to undertake a process to make changes to the recently updated County of Renfrew Official Plan in a way that will address the uniqueness of the geography of the County and reflect the intent of the Provincial Policy Statement.

The County of Renfrew is pleased to announce that the Province of Ontario has approved its request for “exemption” from Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing approval of County of Renfrew Official Plan Amendments, effective August 31, 2020.

An Official Plan is the municipality’s road map for general land use planning policies. An update to the Official Plan is also an opportunity to ensure that the County of Renfrew continues to address landowners’ local priorities and changing community needs.

In the case of the County of Renfrew, the 5-year review of the Official Plan was approved on March 26, 2020 by the Province of Ontario but with a series of modifications that were not previously agreed to by County Council.

Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke MPP John Yakabuski, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, became aware of the County’s concerns over the modifications in May and quickly initiated a meeting with members of County Council. After listening to Council’s concerns he began speaking with his cabinet colleagues in order to find a solution.

At the same time, in an effort to ensure that the County of Renfrew Official Plan maintains its unique rural focus, County Council made a formal request to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on a series of possible solutions for a path moving forward.

After a series of successful meetings with MMAH Minister Steve Clark and Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke MPP Yakabuski, it was determined that a deferral was not possible under current legislation.

However, both Ministers offered regular meetings with senior staff members on the future of planning issues in Renfrew County and that steps would begin immediately on the request for exemption status. The announcement on August 31, 2020 was the culmination of those discussions.

Under exemption status, amendments to the County Official Plan (except for five-year reviews) will not require Provincial approval. Instead, once County Council adopts an Official Plan Amendment, and after clearance of the mandatory 20-day appeal period, the amendment would come into effect.

The exemption status will now allow the County to fine-tune the Official Plan to address the unique context of Renfrew County, and to that end the County will be undertaking an amendment to the Official Plan (Official Plan Amendment No. 31).

Warden Debbie Robinson was pleased to express, “Ministers Clark and Yakabuski continue to listen to the concerns of Renfrew County residents on the provincial decisions and how they impact to local planning matters. They have heard those concerns and providing the County with exemption status allows for a path forward to find possible solutions for local context. We are very appreciative of their efforts.”

Chair of Development and Property Bob Sweet said, “Economic Development remains a top priority for County Council. Undertaking an amendment to the Official Plan over the next few months will set the tone for future development and assist in our recovery efforts from the COVID-19 pandemic.”

“We responded as quickly as possible to the concerns of Renfrew County. This exemption essentially gives the County full control of managing development in the best interest of its residents,” said MPP John Yakabuski. “I would like to thank the council and staff of Renfrew County for working with us as well as Minister Clark for supporting the County’s request for this exemption.”

General information on the Official Plan and other planning matters can be found on the County of Renfrew’s website under the Business and Development tab, and clicking on “planning and land use”.

For More Information Please Contact:

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