



**SUBJECT: 2020 Annual Building Permit Revenues and Expenses**

**TO: Community Planning, Regulation & Mobility Cttee.**

**FROM: Building and By-law Department**

Report Number: BB-06-21

Wards Affected: All

File Numbers: 565-05

Date to Committee: June 8, 2021

Date to Council: June 22, 2021

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**Recommendation:**

Receive and file building and by-law department report BB-06-21 providing related information for the 2020 annual building permit revenues and expenses.

**PURPOSE:**

**Vision to Focus Alignment:**

- Increase economic prosperity and community responsive city growth
  - Deliver customer centric services with a focus on efficiency and technology transformation
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**Background and Discussion:**

The Building Code Act amendments (through Bill 124) eliminated the practice of applying excess building permit revenues to cover the costs of non-building permit related activities. An activity-based costing model was developed at the time of the building permit fees review that took place in 2005/06. The model was used to determine costs (direct and indirect) associated with delivering services related to the administration and enforcement of the Building Code Act.

The financial model referred to above, was revisited as part of the comprehensive building permit fees review conducted in 2009/10 (report PB-13-10), 2016 (report PB-26-16) and recently in 2019 (report PB-21-19), implemented in January 1, 2020 following approval

by Council on December 16, 2019. Building permit services are based on a “Fee for Service” model that is not supported by municipal taxes and is in full compliance with legislation. The intent behind establishing a Building Permit Stabilization Reserve fund is to provide municipalities with a sustainable tool for providing and maintaining building permit and inspection services throughout a fluctuating construction industry and overall economy. The 2020 building permit fees annual financial report is required to be published before the end of the first quarter of 2021 as mandated by the Building Code Act.

### **Strategy/process**

The purpose of this report is to present Committee and Council with an annual report on building permit fees collected; direct and indirect costs of administering and enforcing the Building Code Act and Ontario Building Code, as well as the balance in the Building Permit Stabilization Reserve Fund for the period January 1 to December 31, 2020.

The reporting requirements respecting building permit activity for the year ending December 31, 2020 are provided in the attached Appendix “A”, the content of which has been provided by the Finance Department based on the financial model developed and implemented in 2006 and later revised in 2010, 2016 and 2019. The Building Code Act and its Regulations (the Ontario Building Code), require that a report be prepared annually on fees collected and costs incurred.

In the second half of 2018, the Building Section commissioned Watson and Associates, to undertake a review of the permit fee schedule within the current building and development landscape. This review was completed in 2019 and a report (PB-21-19) was approved by council at the end of 2019. The data presented in the report demonstrated that the financial model will remain viable into the future.

It is important to point out that the financial model must be structured to accommodate costs associated with streamlining and modernizing technologies/processes, in addition to the day to day operating costs associated with running the permitting/inspection business. Currently the Building Section is working on implementing the electronic delivery of building permit and inspection services. This initiative will help improve and streamline customer service for building permit applications. In line with our Paper Management Strategy it will also reduce the need for paper submissions and paper waste via resubmissions. Electronic submissions will also increase customer satisfaction as the speed and transparency of communication/collaboration improves.

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## **Financial Matters:**

Appendix A, attached to this report, provides the prescribed information for the period January 1 to December 31, 2020. As of December 31, 2020, the balance in the Building Permit Stabilization Reserve Fund was \$2,409,172. This amount represents approximately 0.73 times the 2020 annual direct costs, and 0.62 times the total 2020 costs (direct + indirect costs) of administration and enforcement of the Building Code Act and the Ontario Building Code. The target balance for the reserve fund, as established by Council, is 1.63 times the direct costs (F-46/06).

Building permit revenue for 2020 was \$2,955,215 which represents 66% of the record high revenue of \$4,459,996 experienced in 2019. The revenue loss experienced in 2020 was in large part due to the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the initial period of the pandemic, the Province's emergency order ceased certain types of construction which had significant impacts on permit submissions to the Building Section resulting in loss of revenue. This had a similar impact on the pre-permit applicable law approvals (zoning/planning) which resulted in delayed building permit applications. The restrictions of development in controlled areas under the Interim Control By-law (ICBL) also contributed to delays in permit applications which resulted in a loss of permit fees/revenue. We are anticipating that we will see many large-scale projects coming in for permit application in 2021, as these delayed/pending projects will be obtaining the required pre-permit approvals. As a result of these impacts in 2020, the draw from the Building Permit Stabilization Reserve Fund was \$931,864.

The Chief Building Official and the management team monitor local and regional development and construction activity; and the associated building permit and inspection revenues on a regular basis in coordination with local and regional industry representatives and stakeholders.

### **Total Financial Impact**

The draw from the Building Permit Stabilization Reserve Fund for the period of January 1 – December 31, 2020 is \$931,864 and the closing balance in the reserve fund as of December 31, 2020 is \$2,409,172.

### **Source of Funding**

Revenues generated by building permit fees are the sole source of funding for building permit services; including plans review and building inspections for all construction activity in Burlington, as required by legislation. The Chief Building Official is also mandated to immediately act to safeguard the health and safety of the public where buildings are damaged due to fire, vehicle collision, structural collapse or otherwise rendered unsafe including unsafe septic systems.

### **Other Resource Impacts**

Not applicable

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### **Climate Implications**

Not applicable

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### **Engagement Matters:**

The information contained in this public report will be shared with the Burlington Housing and Development Liaison Committee (BHDLC), West End Home Builders Association (WEHBA) and the Hamilton Halton Construction Association (HHCA).

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### **Conclusion:**

The Building Section experienced a substantial draw from the Building Permit Stabilization Reserve Fund for 2020 but the reserve fund continues to remain in a healthy state. The reserve is established so that when there is a dip in revenues, the business can draw from the reserve. It is anticipated that we will see a recovery in revenues in 2021 which should result in a contribution to the Building Permit Stabilization Reserve Fund.

This annual report represents the state of construction activity in Burlington for 2020 and confirms the sustainability of the “Fees for Service” financial model for building permits and inspection services.

The annual report on building permit revenues and costs, and the status of the Building Permit Stabilization Reserve Fund for the 12-month period of January 1 to December 31, 2020 is provided for information.

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Respectfully submitted,



Nick Anastasopoulos, P.Eng.

Chief Building Official

**Appendices:**

- A. Building Permit Fees Annual Financial Statement for 2020

**Notifications:**

Burlington Housing and Development Liaison Committee (BHDLC)

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**Report Approval:**

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Council. Final approval is by the City Manager.