



To: COUNCIL
Meeting Date: 5/28/2024
Subject: 24-030-CD – Approval of the Amended Grand River Source Protection Plan
Submitted By: Joan Jylanne, Manager of Policy Planning
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Report No.: 24-030-CD
File No.: A.16.02.03.03.01
Wards Affected: Wards 3, 4, 5 and 8

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. 24-030-CD Approval of the Amended Grand River Source Protection Plan be received as information;

AND FURTHER THAT Cambridge Council support the updates to the Amended Grand River Source Protection Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Purpose

This report is being provided to update Council on the amendments being proposed for the Grand River Source Protection Plan (Plan) that impact the City of Cambridge.

Key Findings

- The Grand River Source Protection Plan (Plan) affecting the City of Cambridge was approved by the Province and has been in effect since July 1, 2016.
- An amendment to the Plan is required to support operational changes at four well fields, including one in Cambridge known as the Blair Road well field.
- The proposed increase in the permitted pumping at the Blair Road supply well requires an update to the Well Head Protection Area (WHPA) mapping.
- The changes to the WHPA for the Blair Road well field will result in a 2.5% increase in the amount of land in the city that is within a WHPA.
- The update to the Plan requires Council support as per the Clean Water Act.

Financial Implications

- The cost of negotiating a Risk Management Plan (RMP) with the Regional Risk Management Official, and any costs associated with implementing the measures outlined in the RMP, continue to be the responsibility of those making a planning or building permit application.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:

Strategic Action

Objective: Not Applicable

Strategic Action: Not Applicable

OR

Core Service

Program: Water

Core Service: Drinking Water Quality

Periodic updates to the Grand River Source Protection Plan due to operational changes or updated technical information ensures that municipal sources of drinking water are protected.

BACKGROUND:

The Clean Water Act was passed by the Ontario Legislature in October 2006 and provides a framework for the development and implementation of local, watershed-based source protection plans. It is intended to implement the recommendations made by Justice Dennis O'Connor in the Walkerton Inquiry Report which investigated a tragic drinking water contamination event in that community. The key objectives of the source protection planning process are to: (1) complete science-based assessment reports that identify the risks to municipal drinking water sources; and (2) develop local, watershed-based source protection plans that put policies in place to protect the quality and quantity of existing and future sources of municipal drinking water.

The Grand River Assessment Report (Assessment Report) was approved in August 2012 and provided the scientific understanding needed to develop a local source protection plan. The Grand River Source Protection Plan (Plan) affecting the City of Cambridge was approved by the Province and has been in effect since July 1, 2016. The Plan includes policies to protect municipal sources of drinking water in the Grand River watershed.

Amendments to the Plan have occurred multiple times since the original approval to keep the Plan relevant as new technical and operational information becomes available. In 2024, the Region initiated an amendment to the Plan to support operational changes at four well fields, including one in Cambridge known as the Blair Road well field.

ANALYSIS:

Well Head Protection Area Changes

Operational changes at the Blair Road well field have increased the Well Head Protection Areas (WHPAs) around the Blair Road well field area. WHPAs are land areas around a municipal well based on how quickly water travels underground to the well. The update to the Plan requiring Council support is due to the proposed increase in the permitted pumping at the Blair Road supply well which has resulted in a change to the WHPA mapping. See **Appendix No. 1** for the proposed changes. The changes to the Plan are limited to the WHPA mapping, there are no policy changes related to the update of the Plan.

The changes to the WHPA mapping for the Blair Road well field will result in a 2.5% increase in the amount of land in the city that is within a WHPA. This increase does not necessarily directly translate into new requirements for property owners, as the majority of the new area under protection is farther away from the well, where activities identified in the Clean Water Act cannot be significant threats to drinking water sources. Additionally, policies for single family residential properties are largely related to education and awareness with respect to the use of fertilizers and salt.

Impacts

City staff do not anticipate the changes to the Blair Road well field WHPA to impact the timelines for processing development and building permit applications given the well-established process in place since the implementation of the Plan on July 1, 2016.

The Region of Waterloo houses the Risk Management Official's (RMO) office for Cambridge. Under Section 59 of the Clean Water Act, the municipality/RMO must screen planning and building permit applications for potential threats within vulnerable areas around wells before they can proceed through the City's planning and building approvals process.

To simplify the Section 59 Notice process, the Region developed an online questionnaire to be filled out by the applicant. This tool has been in place since July 1, 2016 and will be updated by the Region to reflect the mapping updates. Applicants that receive a Section 59 Notice, indicating they need to negotiate a Risk Management Plan prior to proceeding through the City's approval process, will need to contact the RMO. This typically applies to industrial, commercial, and institutional properties. With a

cooperative applicant, negotiating a Risk Management Plan with the RMO takes approximately two to four weeks.

EXISTING POLICY / BY-LAWS:

City of Cambridge Official Plan (2012)

Policies pertaining to Source Water Protection are found in the Cambridge Official Plan in Chapter 15 (Appendix A: Regional Official Plan Policies Modified for Source Water Protection in Cambridge) and Map 15 (Source Water Protection Areas).

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The cost of negotiating a Risk Management Plan (RMP) with the Regional Risk Management Official, and any costs associated with implementing the measures outlined in the RMP continue to be the responsibility of those making a planning or building permit application.

PUBLIC VALUE:

Sustainability:

Periodic updates to the Grand River Source Protection Plan, due to operational changes or updated technical information, will support sustainability by ensuring that municipal sources of drinking water are protected.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE INPUT:

Advisory Committees Consulted:

Not Applicable

PUBLIC INPUT:

The Source Protection Authority will notify property owners potentially affected by the Source Protection Plan (Plan) amendment in the summer of 2024 as part of the formal consultation period required by the Clean Water Act. It is expected that the formal consultation will include notification letters and information posted on the Source Protection Authority website.

INTERNAL / EXTERNAL CONSULTATION:

City staff participate in the Region’s Source Water Protection Liaison Committee which includes representation from Area Municipal staff in the Planning and Engineering Departments.

CONCLUSION:

The Region initiated an amendment to the Grand River Source Protection Plan to reflect operational changes at four well fields, including one in Cambridge known as the Blair Road well field. The amendment includes updating the Well Head Protection Area (WHPA) mapping.

The changes to the WHPA mapping for the Blair Road well field will result in a 2.5% increase in the amount of land in the city that is within a WHPA. This increase does not necessarily directly translate into new requirements for property owners, as the majority of the new area under protection is farther away from the well, where activities identified in the Clean Water Act cannot be significant threats to drinking water sources.

It is recommended that Cambridge Council support the amendments to the Grand River Source Protection Plan.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: **No**

By-law: **No**

Budget Amendment: **No**

Policy: **No**

APPROVALS:

This report has gone through the appropriate workflow and has been reviewed and or approved by the following as required:

Director

Deputy City Manager

Chief Financial Officer

City Solicitor

City Manager

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 24-030-CD Appendix A – Proposed changes to the Well Head Protection Areas in Cambridge