



# Staff Report

---

**Report No.:** BLD-19-2018

**Meeting Date:** December 19, 2018

**Submitted by:** Arnie Marsman, Director of Building Services / Chief Building Official

**Subject:** Pre-Budget Approval of Electronic Building Permit Application Processes

---

## **Recommendation:**

THAT the amount of \$13,000 be pre-approved for Building Division's 2019 operating budget for the implementation of an electronic building permit application submission process.

## **Purpose:**

To request that Council support the building division by single-sourcing software through 2019 pre-budget approval so that the municipality can leverage a cost-effective and industry leading software application that will assist the building division's goals of delivering cost-effective and accessible municipal services.

## **Background:**

Over the past few years, the building division has received an increasing number of requests from homebuilders for the ability to apply for building permits electronically.

In recent years, a number of large municipalities have made electronic applications a reality, but have come at significant costs of staff time and computer software/hardware. Generally, these processes take from several months to more than a year to be implemented. They involve installation of complex software that require frequent updates and come at a cost that can only be justified by building permit activity that far exceeds Middlesex Centre's building permit activity.

Recently, staff have become aware of a new opportunity to consider; a cloud-based permitting system. 'Cloud Based' meaning that the software is hosted, updated and maintained by a service provider over the internet using industry best practices.

Generally, the application process proceeds as follows:

- Originating from a link on our website, the applicant creates a project and uploads the required application, forms and drawings using a user-friendly step by step process. The applicant can also authorize designers to upload drawings directly to their project. When the applicant believes the application is complete, they direct the system to advise the municipality of an application.

## Staff Report

---

- Upon notification of a complete application, the municipality logs into the website to view and download the information.
- The municipality proceeds to conduct a plans review electronically. Once satisfied, the approved plans are uploaded back to the applicant's project with a building permit.

For the building industry, benefits of this cloud-based system include:

- Zero printing costs for applications to submit (this includes building plans, truss/heating drawings, site plans, etc...)
- Travel time and expense to/from the municipal office to drop off/pick up applications/permits is eliminated
- Ability to track several permits at one time
- Inspection scheduling/results electronically
- Allows for quicker application process given that designers can submit plans/drawings directly to their project online.

Other Benefits of this system include:

- Applicant's ability to monitor the progress of an application
- Inspections are requested and results of inspections are posted on the system.
- Upon completion of the project, the files can be archived into Middlesex Centre's laserfiche document retention system
- Availability of plans on-line at all times
- In line with Middlesex Centre's strategic priorities which support customer satisfaction, environmental sustainability and innovation

It has been determined that Evolta is the preferred solution as it best fits the requirements of the building division. This system is the primary building permit application system used in Finland where over 250 municipalities are enrolled. In Canada, the City of Windsor is its first client from which we've received the recommendation of this company. Middlesex Centre is one of several municipalities who are actively considering the implementation of this software.

Staff have reviewed the ability of Middlesex Centre's current software, including Keystone and Laserfiche. Neither of these software applications have established processes in Ontario which support a similar process for electronic building permit applications. Based on the cost of this item and the limited number of complete options, a single source procurement is proposed, as allowed by the municipality's Procurement Policy.



## Staff Report

---

Given that Evolta is aggressively marketing their system in Ontario, they've offered a reduced cost (savings of approximately \$10,000) for municipalities that sign on by the end of 2018. If Middlesex Centre signs on in 2018, this rate would be locked-in for any other Middlesex County municipality choosing to sign on in 2019.

Staff have met with Evolta on multiple occasions including Middlesex County IT Services and Planning and Mapping Services. County IT Services and the Planning and Mapping Services departments have reviewed the software for technical feasibility to which they support the application permitting software.

**Financial Implications:** \$13, 000 from Building Division's operating budget which is funded entirely by building permit applications. This would have no impact on the tax levy.

**Strategic Plan:**

- Sustainability and Innovation
- Customer Service
- Streamlining Key Processes