



## Financial Services Staff Report

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Report Title: Fees and Charges – 2025  
Author: Colm Lynn, Director of Finance and Treasurer  
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Final Review: Chief Administrative Officer

### Recommendation:

That the Council of the Township of Woolwich, considering Report F20-2024 respecting Fees and Charges – 2025, adopt the By-laws attached as Attachment 1, 2, 3, and 4 to establish fees and charges for general Township services, planning services and fire services.

### Background:

Annually, staff review Township fees and charges and recommend any changes to be brought forward for Committee and Council consideration and approval. The review of fees and charges is a part of the annual budget process and the recommendations that result from this review help determine revenue projections. Revenue that can be generated through user fees will lessen the tax levy required by the Township. Also, as a part of this review staff continues to consider those fees that should be at or close to user pay while remaining realistic by looking at comparable municipalities.

### Comments:

#### Fees and Charges Review Process

Staff has undertaken a review of fees and charges culminating in the amendments to the By-laws attached to this report. The following analysis was performed in the development of these By-laws:

- **Review of Current Legislation** – to ensure that all departments understand and agree on the implications of recent legislation, including:

- Planning Act
- Municipal Act, 2001 – Section 150 – Licensing Fees
- Municipal Act, 2001 – Part XII – Fees and Charges
- **Municipal Fees and Best Practices Design Comparisons** – to provide a financial context for fee adjustments (market comparisons of Township’s fees and charges)
- **Recommended Fee and Charge Refinements** – recommended refinements to improve fee structure.

### **Corporate Services (COR)**

Staff reviewed fees and changes proposed generally fall into three categories:

- Minor inflationary increases to service fees that have not increased in several years (e.g. commissioning)
- Changes to fees following a review of rates set in neighbouring municipalities (e.g. death registration, marriage license)
- Reductions in regulatory fees to promote increased compliance (e.g. sign return fee, 7-day winter parking)
- Staff have been charging fees for a municipally significant event, but it was not explicitly stated in the by-law

### **Development Services (DS)**

#### **Development Engineering**

- Reviewed existing fees and adjusted with cost of living increases
- Adjustment to Minor Zoning Application description and related fee based on actual costs to review
- Additional fees including:
  - Fees for services provided prior to formal application to be refunded once formal application fees are submitted
  - Additional Planning application related review fees (zoning, OPA, etc.)
  - Fees for re-submissions (new or altered design)
  - Fees for review of new or altered services submissions
  - Site Alteration Fees in accordance with the updated Site Alteration By-law

## Planning

- Official Plan Amendment applications – with the changes to the fee structure mid 2024 there was no fee incorporated for an Official Plan Amendment application that wished to proceed without having a preapplication process completed. Staff have incorporated the related fees at a higher rate than that of an Official Plan Amendment application which proceeds with a preapplication to encourage applicants to complete a preapplication review.
- Development Agreement (Site Plan Agreement). With the changes to the fee structure mid 2024 there was no fee incorporated for a Major Site Plan application that wished to proceed without having a preapplication process completed. Staff have incorporated the related fees at a higher rate than that of a Major Site Plan application that proceeds with the preapplication process.
- Effective January 1, 2025, through Bill 23, the Township will be assuming the responsibility from the Region for the processing of Condominium and Subdivision applications. As such, the respective preapplication fees have been added as new fees for 2025.
- An overall 5% increase in planning application fees was applied to the current 2024 planning fees to account for the proposed 2025 fees due to extra time and efforts to take on added responsibilities imposed on local municipalities by the Province. This is as a result of Provincial Bill 23 that removes our upper tier, Region of Waterloo, as a “planning authority” come January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025.

## Financial Services (FIN)

Financial Services are not proposing any changes to their fees and charges for 2025. Most existing fees are rounded to whole numbers (such \$25) and inflationary increases would be consolidated and rounded to the next larger whole number in future years. Finance will be taking a deeper look at their fees in 2025 and have more data informed changes in 2026.

## Fire Services (Fire)

Fire Services have proposed modest increases to their fees and charges in 2025. This includes a \$5 increase to burn permits and a moderate increase to the inspection fees to reflect current costs. Other fees such as the attendance at motor vehicle accidents are based on the latest available MTO rates.

## Infrastructure Services (IS)

Staff are proposing to maintain the department’s fees and charges static with 2024. The only additions to 2025 include fees associated with Consolidated Linear Infrastructure Environmental Compliance Approvals. Responsibility for ECAs were previously with the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) and were downloaded to

municipalities through the CLI-ECA program. The majority of CLI-ECA's are reviewed by Development Services staff through development applications and an issue has been encountered with some development applications that require multiple resubmissions before approval can be granted. Appreciating that this takes additional staff time and resources, it is proposed to include a resubmission fee that can be subjectively applied on a case-by-case basis to ensure that there is an appropriate cost recovery model in place for such instances.

## **Recreation & Community Services (RCS)**

Staff are recommending that Council approve adjustments to departmental fees and charges with an average increase of 2% - 10% over 2024 rates to reflect actual costs where possible. Staff have undertaken evaluations of fees charged in comparative municipalities to assist with establishing our 2025 rates for programs, rentals, and services. Staff are mindful of costs and balance registration and user fees with what the market will pay for programs and rentals.

### **Cemeteries**

Fees have been established to reflect the increased cost for contracted services as well as staff administration and operations. Some fees listed in the fees and charges cannot be adjusted, as they are set by the Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO).

### **Recreation**

#### **Ice Rates**

Council previously approved ice rates for affiliated groups for a 4-year term (2023-2027) that will see a 2.0% increase in 2025 (effective August 1, 2025).

These ice rates and associated rate caps do not reflect associated increased costs for utilities, wages, facility repair and maintenance, but were established to help affiliated groups recover post-pandemic. The 4-year term will assist the associations to establish registration fees through 2027. Staff would note that increases to ice rates across southwestern Ontario range from 2% to 8%.

#### **Aquatics**

Most aquatic rates for pool rentals, drop-in swim programs will increase by 2.5%, and instructional lessons will increase an average by 10% in 2025. These fees are to reflect increased costs for utilities, maintenance, as well as to address the compensation disparity for aquatic staff in relation to neighbouring municipalities, to better position the department for recruitment and retention. Residents will receive a discount on instructional programs.

## Day Camp

Programs and camp registration will see an increase of 3% to assist with program costs and additional staff costs that reflect the most recent increase to minimum wage. New in 2025 is a Non-Resident surcharge of 10% of the program cost.

## Sports Fields, Community Centres

Sport field and community centre rental rates will increase by 2% to reflect increased costs for maintenance and utilities, to offset the increase in minimum wage, and to bring Woolwich's rental fees in-line with surrounding municipalities.

## Settlement Areas

New in 2025, is a Non-Resident surcharge for settlement community centre facility rentals. Additionally, the daily rate in Bloomingdale and Heidelberg have increased by 80% (\$114.09 to \$205.36) for an 8-hour /full-day rental to bring those fees in line with other rental rates in the Township.

## Rentals – Alcohol Events

Staff recommend that alcohol events, including Stag and Does, not be a permitted use for rentals in Township facilities. The current rental fee charged in smaller settlements such as Maryhill, Bloomingdale and Heidelberg do not cover the staff and security costs for this type of rental. There are private facility's operating in the communities that are more appropriately resourced to handle alcohol events such as the Bridgeport Rod and Gun Club located between Bloomingdale and Maryhill, Schwaben Club in Breslau and the Lions Hall in St. Jacobs and Elmira. Council will recall that the Recreation Associations used to staff such events with volunteers and thereby generating a profit. The Township does not have resources to staff these infrequent events and have difficulty finding part-time staff willing to work these events due to the late hours, difficult patrons, and requirement to enforce rental rules and regulations. Historically, most of the alcohol rentals were booked by non-residents due to the lower rental rates. Staff continue to advocate that our role in the community is not to facilitate alcohol events and feel the potential revenue to be gained does not outweigh the risk, liability and challenges.

Additionally, staff note that the Breslau, Maryhill and Bloomingdale Community Centres are booked year-round with family events, birthday parties, and programs. The number of rentals at all facilities continues to increase annually. Conestogo and Heidelberg are not equipped to handle alcohol events.

## Interdepartmental Impacts:

Revenues generated by fees and charges are retained within each program area.

## **Financial Impacts:**

Fees and charges support competitive property taxes by maximizing the use of non-tax revenue sources and will be included in the 2025 Operating Budget.

## **Strategic Plan Impacts:**

By reviewing and establishing appropriate fees and charges the Township is ensuring alignment with one of its key areas of focus and values of being fiscal responsibility and sustainability by creating an appropriate user pay system.

## **Conclusion:**

Staff recommends that Council adopt the By-laws attached as Attachment 1, and 2 to this report to establish fees and charges for general Township services and planning services.

## **Attachments:**

1. By-law to Establish and Require Payment of Fees and Charges (General Fees and Charges)
2. Fees and Charges Schedule by Department
3. Amending By-law Planning Fees and Charges
4. Amending By-law Fire Fees and Charges