

October 22, 2020

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Honorable Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
777 Bay St 17th floor,  
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**RE: Town of WS Resolution - DS-045-20 Request for Emergency Extension of Full Municipal Services to Gormley**

Please be advised the above-noted matter was placed before Council at its meeting held on October 20, 2020, and the following resolution was passed:

- 1) That Council confirm the need to replace the Gormley Fire Suppression System with a full municipal water system to prevent possible loss of life and property; and
- 2) That Council request York Region to immediately initiate a process to extend full municipal services to the Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan Area under Section 3.2.6.3 a) of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe; and
- 3) That Council direct the Clerk to forward a copy of this report to Honorable Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing; Honorable Jeff Yurek, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks; Honorable Paul Calandra, MPP (Markham-Stouffville); York Region Public Works; York Region Planning; and the Clerks of York Region, the City of Richmond Hill and the City of Markham; and the Regional Chair.

In accordance with Council's directive, please find attached a copy of Staff Report No. DS-045-20 regarding a Request for Emergency Extension of Full Municipal Services to Gormley.

If you have any questions, please contact Haiqing Xu, Director, Development Services at [haiqing.xu@townofws.ca](mailto:haiqing.xu@townofws.ca) or 905-640-1910 x2431 or William Snowball, Fire Chief, Fire and Emergency Services at [william.snowball@townofws.ca](mailto:william.snowball@townofws.ca) or 905-642-7955 or Rob Adams, Chief Administrative Officer at [rob.adams@townofws.ca](mailto:rob.adams@townofws.ca) or 905-640-1910 x2245.

Yours truly,



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cc. Honorable Jeff Yurek, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks;  
Honorable Paul Calandra, MPP (Markham-Stouffville);  
York Region Public Works;  
York Region Planning;  
Clerk of York Region;  
Clerk of the City of Richmond Hill;  
Clerk of the City of Markham; and  
Chair of York Region Council.

**Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Council Report****Item 3**

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**Subject:** Request for Emergency Extension of Full Municipal Services to Gormley

**Staff Report No.** DS-045-20

**Department:** Development Services  
Fire and Emergency Services  
Leisure and Community Services

**Date:** October 20, 2020

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**Recommendation:**

- 1) That Council confirm the need to replace the Gormley Fire Suppression System with a full municipal water system to prevent possible loss of life and property; and
- 2) That Council request York Region to immediately initiate a process to extend full municipal services to the Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan Area under Section 3.2.6.3 a) of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe; and
- 3) That Council direct the Clerk to forward a copy of this report to Honorable Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing; Honorable Jeff Yurek, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks; Honorable Paul Calandra, MPP (Markham-Stouffville); York Region Public Works; York Region Planning; and the Clerks of York Region, the City of Richmond Hill and the City of Markham.

**1. Purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to seek authorization from Council to request York Region to extend full municipal services to the Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan Area under Section 3.2.6.3 a) of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

## 2. Executive Summary:

The Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan area is a settlement area in the Town and the Region's Official Plans. However, Gormley is not on full municipal services, and so, new industrial development must be for dry industrial purposes only.

Gormley is serviced by a non-potable fire suppression system, which new development has the option of connecting to. This system is under increased capacity pressure as more industrial development occurs in Gormley. Additionally, the system itself has built-in issues that are cause for concern. With the increased development occurring in Gormley, there exists a serious public health and safety threat which must be addressed without delay.

Under the current provincial planning policy framework, there is not sufficient flexibility for the Region to extend full municipal services to Gormley regardless of how close it is to the existing municipal systems in the neighbouring municipalities. As such, in response to the current threats to public health and safety, it is recommended that the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville request York Region to consider an emergency extension of full municipal services to Gormley as permitted under Section 3.2.6.3 a) of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

## 3. Background:

### Current Provincial Planning Framework

The current provincial planning framework does not allow water or wastewater services from a Great Lakes source to be extended to the Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan Area. York Region is partially serviced by a Great Lakes source, and so, this has been the primary reason the Region has indicated in the past that full municipal services cannot be provided to Gormley. However, Section 3.2.6.3 a) of Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe specifically permits such an extension for reasons of public health and safety:

*“3. For settlement areas that are serviced by rivers, inland lakes, or groundwater, municipalities will not be permitted to extend water or wastewater services from a Great Lakes source unless:*

- a) the extension is required for reasons of public health and safety, in which case, the capacity of the water or wastewater services provided in these circumstances will be limited to that required to service the affected settlement area, including capacity for planned development within the approved settlement area boundary;”*

The major industrial fire on September 21, 2020 in Gormley has further highlighted a serious existing public health and safety concern and the need for a more permanent solution for the current fire suppression system. Since the most feasible option to address the concern is to extend full municipal services from the neighbouring cities of Richmond

Hill and Markham to prevent possible loss of life and property, staff are of the opinion that Section 3.2.6.3 a) of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe applies.

### **Firefighting Challenges**

While Gormley does not have full municipal services, it is serviced by a non-potable fire suppression system. New dry industrial developments have been given the option to connect to this system. The Gormley fire suppression system provides pressurized water for firefighting. The system itself consists of a pumping station at 25 Gordon Collins Drive, with two above-ground tanks holding approximately 770,000 litres of water. It has one fire pump for distribution and one well pump for refilling, with a series of water mains and fire hydrants.

As a response to recent development applications, the Fire and Emergency Services Department has alerted Development Services staff to concerns about the ability of the system to support the proposed developments that are currently in process. Main concerns revolve around the limited volume of water that the system can provide. Much of the new development in Gormley is of an industrial nature, and thus there are more large facilities, some of which contain high-piled storage, which leads to a large fuel load and higher sprinkler demand. Since the secondary plan was approved by the Region and the system was developed, there have been sustained development interests in the area leading to an increasing demand for the system's extension and water capacity.

Additionally, the Fire and Emergency Services Department has identified that there is poor recovery time to fill the tanks once they have been depleted. During a fire incident, if the tanks are drained, the Fire Department is required to shuttle water in from the nearest fire hydrant, which would be in another municipality. This leaves the community vulnerable from a safety perspective and the municipality vulnerable to risk should another fire occur before the tanks have been able to refill. Currently, there is also no redundancy for the system to fill during a power outage. These issues pose major public health and safety concerns that need to be resolved or reconciled, both in the short term as well as in the long term.

### **September 21, 2020 – Gormley Fire Incident**

On September 21, 2020 an accidental fire occurred in a scrap yard on Woodbine Avenue south of Stouffville Road. This fire resulted in a large volume of combustible salvage to burn. The fire suppression system worked well during this fire, being utilized as a water source for the tanker shuttle response. However, the system was drained by approximately 6:00 a.m. (6.5 hours into the fire). The Fire Department subsequently shuttled water from the closest fire hydrant on Woodbine Avenue in Markham.

Fire staff have estimated that approximately 1.9 million litres of water was utilized to put the fire out, which is approximately 1.13 million litres more than the capacity of the fire suppression system. Below is a summary of the firefighting activities required as a result of the recent Gormley fire:

Number of Firefighting staff	Whitchurch-Stouffville: 24 Richmond Hill: 5 Markham: 1
Number of trucks	Whitchurch-Stouffville: 10 Richmond Hill: 3 Markham: 1
Mutual Aid	Markham truck stationed at station 5-1: 1 Central York stationed at station 5-2: 1
Number of tanker loads of water shuttled	180
Time on site	24 hours

In addition to the concerns regarding the ability of the fire suppression system to provide sufficient water during a fire are concerns regarding private wells in the vicinity. While the primary focus of development for Gormley is for employment land purposes, there are existing residential properties in the Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan area, along with the wells for the private industries. Anytime there is a fire, there are possible threats to any of the private wells in the area due to the well pump operating to fill the water storage tanks as that affects the aquifer. This could pose a potential public health threat, should they become contaminated as a result of the Gormley fire.



(Gormley Fire, September 21, 2020)





*(Gormley Fire, September 21, 2020)*



*(Gormley Fire, September 21, 2020)*

## Operational Challenges

Leisure and Community Services is currently responsible for the maintenance of the Gormley fire suppression system. A number of operational challenges are being experienced with the current system, all of which pose serious challenges and potential public health and safety risks. These challenges are outlined below:

1. There is no back up system in place: There is only one well pump and one fire pump, meaning there is currently no redundancy. If the pump is being serviced or repaired, the system will not operate.
2. Upper limit: At this time, there is not a full understanding of how much the system can support in terms of future expansion. There is a need to better understand the operating limits. Currently, when the system has been emptied, it requires approximately two days to refill both water tanks.
3. Power failure: At present time, the fire pump will run on diesel in the case of power failure. However, the well pump will not run to replenish the two water tanks. If the tanks have been emptied, they will not refill.
4. Water distribution: Water will not flow to a sprinkler system if the tanks have been drained or the pump is not running.
5. Water table/Aquifer: At this time, the status of the well and water table and whether it can support the fire suppression system, along with the surrounding neighbours is not known. Drawing additional water from the well might impact other local users. Additionally, installing a second well will require a Permit to Take Water from the Ministry.
6. Site Limitations: To accommodate a larger water storage system for possible future expansions will require the acquisition of additional lands.
7. Staffing Limitations: The system requires weekly inspections which include pump testing for 30 minutes. During that time, there is no water for fire sprinklers to surrounding users. Additionally, each time a business tests their fire sprinkler system, the fire pump runs and staff receive an alarm requiring them to go on-site.

## Development Challenges

The Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan area continues to attract development interests due to its desirable location and ease of access to Highway 404. The Development Services Department is currently processing the following planning applications:

- 12388 Woodbine Ave: Regional EMS Station
- 12492 Woodbine Ave: Non-residential Site Plan Approval
- 12379 Woodbine Ave: Multi-unit Commercial Site Plan Approval
- 7 Brillinger Industrial Place: Non-residential Site Plan Approval
- 2346 Stouffville Road: Corporate Office and Accessory Uses Site Plan Approval
- 12153 Woodbine Ave: Warehouse and Office Site Plan Approval



- 12116 Woodbine Ave: Industrial and Institutional Mixed-use Draft Plan

There are major and extended development interests in the area beyond the Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan area. While these developments would help create jobs and generate the much-needed non-residential tax revenue for the Town, Development Services Department is currently unable to consider their proposals due to limitations in Provincial and Regional plans as well as the absence of full municipal servicing.

#### **4. Analysis and Options:**

##### **Gormley Fire Pumping Station Assessment**

In order to address current operational challenges, the Leisure and Community Services Department is undertaking an assessment of the Gormley Fire Pumping Station. This assessment will result in recommendations related to current operational procedures/concerns. The assessment will cover:

- Fire pump system assessment;
- Tank heating system and mixing system;
- Requirement for emergency power system due to power outages;
- Facility health and safety review;
- Applicable regulatory compliance;
- Monitoring and control systems;
- Considerations for future demand/expansion in response to growth; and,
- Needs assessment for staff training.

It is anticipated that a draft condition assessment report will be provided by the consultant in October, with the final report scheduled for completion in November. The final report will prioritize all recommended system changes and upgrades if necessary; and will provide itemized construction cost estimates for all necessary repairs and upgrades.

That being said, this assessment will only address the short-term maintenance needs and solutions. It will not be able to completely eliminate the public health and safety concerns and address future planned demand as they will require much more sizable permanent solutions. Staff will report back to Council once the assessment has been completed.

##### **Options to Satisfy Public Health and Safety Issues**

##### **Option 1 (Recommended): Full Municipal Servicing**

The provision of full municipal services to Gormley is ultimately the preferred option for ensuring public health and safety in the future. Two alternatives have been identified as potential servicing solutions:

##### **Alternative 1**

- Extend a watermain from Bayview Avenue (400mm watermain trunk owned by the Region) to Bethesda Sideroad to Woodbine Avenue to serve the Gormley

area and connect to Markham's watermain system at Elgin Mills. This solution will require approximately 10.2 km of a watermain trunk.

- Sanitary servicing for the Gormley area can be provided through a new sanitary sewer along Woodbine Avenue to connect with an existing sanitary sewer north of Elgin Mills (600 mm sanitary sewer owned by City of Markham). This solution will require approximately 3.5 km of sanitary sewer, excluding local sewers.

### **Alternative 2**

- Extend a watermain from Leslie Street/Bethesda Sideroad (2-400 mm pipes owned by Richmond Hill) to Woodbine Avenue and serve the Gormley area, with no looping connection to the watermain at Elgin Mills, which is approximately 4 km from the Gormley area.
- Sanitary servicing for the Gormley area may be provided through a sanitary sewer along Stouffville Road and to a recently constructed sanitary sewer at Leslie Street/Stouffville Road (450 mm diameter sewer owned by Richmond Hill), which is approximately 2 km from the Gormley area.

### **Opportunities:**

- Long term and ultimate solution for both water and wastewater servicing in area.
- Alternative 1 provides watermain looping which is preferred from a water quality perspective.
- Works with elevations and supports gravity flow conditions.
- Aligns with Provincial Policy Statement in regard to full servicing.
- Gormley area distribution watermain are sized to serve full water servicing.

### **Challenges:**

- Requires local sanitary sewer network.
- Requires approval from Region of York, MECP, TRCA, MNRF.
- Requires coordination with City of Richmond Hill and City of Markham.
- Requires EA studies for the proposed works.
- Requires significant capital investment.

## **Option 2: Expansion to existing fire suppression system**

Based on the assessment being completed through the Leisure and Community Services Department, an expansion to the existing fire suppression system may be considered. Results of the assessment are not yet available and therefore the evaluation of this option may be premature.

### **Opportunities:**

- Most of the infrastructure is already in place.
- Town has capacity and experience in managing this infrastructure as it exists.
- Less capital investment.

**Challenges:**

- Service will be limited to Firefighting purposes only.
- Requires assessment of existing well for any future extension possibility.
- Requires MECF approval for additional water pumping.
- Ownership of the existing pumping station parcel.
- Requires capital investment for any improvement in well, pump or storage tanks.
- Existing site is too small to introduce additional overhead tank, would need to demolish existing tanks and rebuild new tanks. Meeting fire demand for the construction phase is a challenge.
- May prove to be cost prohibitive from an efficiency perspective.
- Possibly only a short-term solution.

**Option 3: Partial Services**

The provision of full water services with no sanitary servicing is called partial services. This model is not supported and is prohibited in the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan Area. This model is high in construction and operations costs as opposed to the benefits it would provide to public.

Partial services are considered generally problematic, particularly where industry may be using water as part of the manufacturing process. This type of system would likely be cost prohibitive and ineffective.

**Considerations for all Options**

From a public health and safety perspective, the Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan area is in need of a servicing solution to ensure the protection of life and property from the threat of fire. In terms of considering all of the options, each of them would require an Environmental Assessment to be completed. It should be noted that under each of the options highlighted below, the EA could be integrated with the development process.

**5. Financial Implications:****Lowest Cost****Expand Existing Fire Suppression System**

- Schedule 'B' EA – 2 years
- Costs to expand system to connect to new wells would be higher than connecting to municipal water
- Higher life cycle costs due to maintenance of new wells

**Highest Cost****Full Municipal Servicing**

- Schedule 'B' EA – 2 years
- Lowest Risk to Town since we would be connecting to existing systems
- Average lifecycle costs

It would be difficult to determine costs at this time with the necessary studies, as these will determine feasibility and construction costs. However, cost can be generally summarized in a range as follows:

There are no financial implications at this time, however, staff will continue to apprise Council of costs as possible solutions are determined and further scoped.

## **6. Alignment with Strategic Plan:**

### **1. Asset Planning, Maintenance and Development**

Successful stewardship of the infrastructure and facilities required to support a growing community and vibrant economy.

- Address / plan for maintenance of existing assets & infrastructure; Create new infrastructure
- Focus on continuous improvement of the asset register for asset management planning

## **7. Attachments:**

None

## **8. Related Reports:**

None

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