



Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Ontario AgriCentre

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April 4, 2016

Mr. Ken Petersen, Manager
Local Government and Planning Policy Division
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
777 Bay Street
13th Floor
Toronto, ON M5G 2E5

Dear Mr. Petersen;

RE: EBR Registry Numbers 012-6823, 012-6824, 012-6825, 012-6826 and 012-6827

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is Canada's largest voluntary general farm organization, representing more than 36,000 family farm businesses across Ontario. These farm businesses form the backbone of our robust food system and rural communities with the potential to drive the Ontario economy forward.

The OFA has focused its comments to the specific aspects of these EBR postings that we see as impacting farmers and their operations.

EBR Registry Number 012-6823 Updating complete application requirements for applications for Official Plan Amendments, Zoning By-law Amendments, Minister's Zoning Order Amendments and Plans of Subdivision

The OFA supports in principle the requirement that public consultation strategies be submitted by applicants as part of a complete application. However, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing should set out in regulation the required elements of a public consultation strategy. This must not be left to the discretion of the applicant.

Furthermore, many key farming activities are highly seasonal; spring planting and the subsequent harvest (July to November) which can make it quite difficult for farmers to participate in public consultations. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing needs to ensure that the potential concerns of farmers within the range of planning applications under Regulations 543 to 546 will be thoroughly explored, despite the seasonal nature of farming.

EBR Registry Number 012-6824 Updating notice requirements in relation to Official Plans, Official Plan Amendments, Zoning By-laws, Zoning By-law Amendments, plans of subdivision, minor variances and consents.

Modernizing, simplifying and updating the content of notices for publishing in newspapers and posting on properties.

The OFA opposes adopting “free” community newspapers as the sole vehicle for providing notice of a variety of Planning Act activities; Official Plans, Official Plan Amendments, Zoning By-laws, Zoning By-law Amendments, plans of subdivision, minor variances and consents in place of paid subscription newspapers. We are highly skeptical that these papers are widely read, particularly the portions that would hold these notices. OFA will accept them as an additional means of communicating municipal notices, but not as an alternative to notices in paid subscription newspapers.

The proposal also calls for adding email to the current option; personal service, mail or fax. We have no objections to this.

With respect to modernizing and simplifying notices, we emphasize need to retain a clear statement regarding assuring the retention of one’s appeal rights must be a mandatory element of these notices. Furthermore, since access to reliable, high speed internet is limited across rural and more remote portions of our province, the OFA opposes any notice changes that rely on internet access for further information and details on an application. Notices should include a telephone number, including extension if applicable, as well as a file name or number to facilitate telephone follow up.

We note the variance in the circulation distance for a variety of notices; some at 120 metres (Official Plans, Official Plan Amendments, Zoning By-laws, Zoning By-law Amendments, Minister’s zoning orders, plans of subdivision) while others, notably minor variances, are only 60 metres. In rural and agricultural areas, notice to other property owners within 60 metres may capture only one property adjacent to the one subject to the posting. In some instances, there may even be no other properties within that 60 metre distance. Perhaps in these instances, properties abutting the subject property as well as ones across the road from the subject property should automatically receive notice.

EBR Registry Number 012-6825 Adding a requirement to the record that is forwarded to the Ontario Municipal Board following an appeal of a minor variance.

The OFA supports adding the minutes of public hearings for appeals of minor variances to the Ontario Municipal Board.

On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture’s members, I thank you for your consideration of our recommendations and suggestions.

Sincerely,



Don McCabe
President

DM/pj

cc: Hon. Ted McMeekin; Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Hon. Jeff Leal; Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
OFA Board of Directors