

Effectively Improve Customer Service In Planning & Building Departments

OEMC 2013



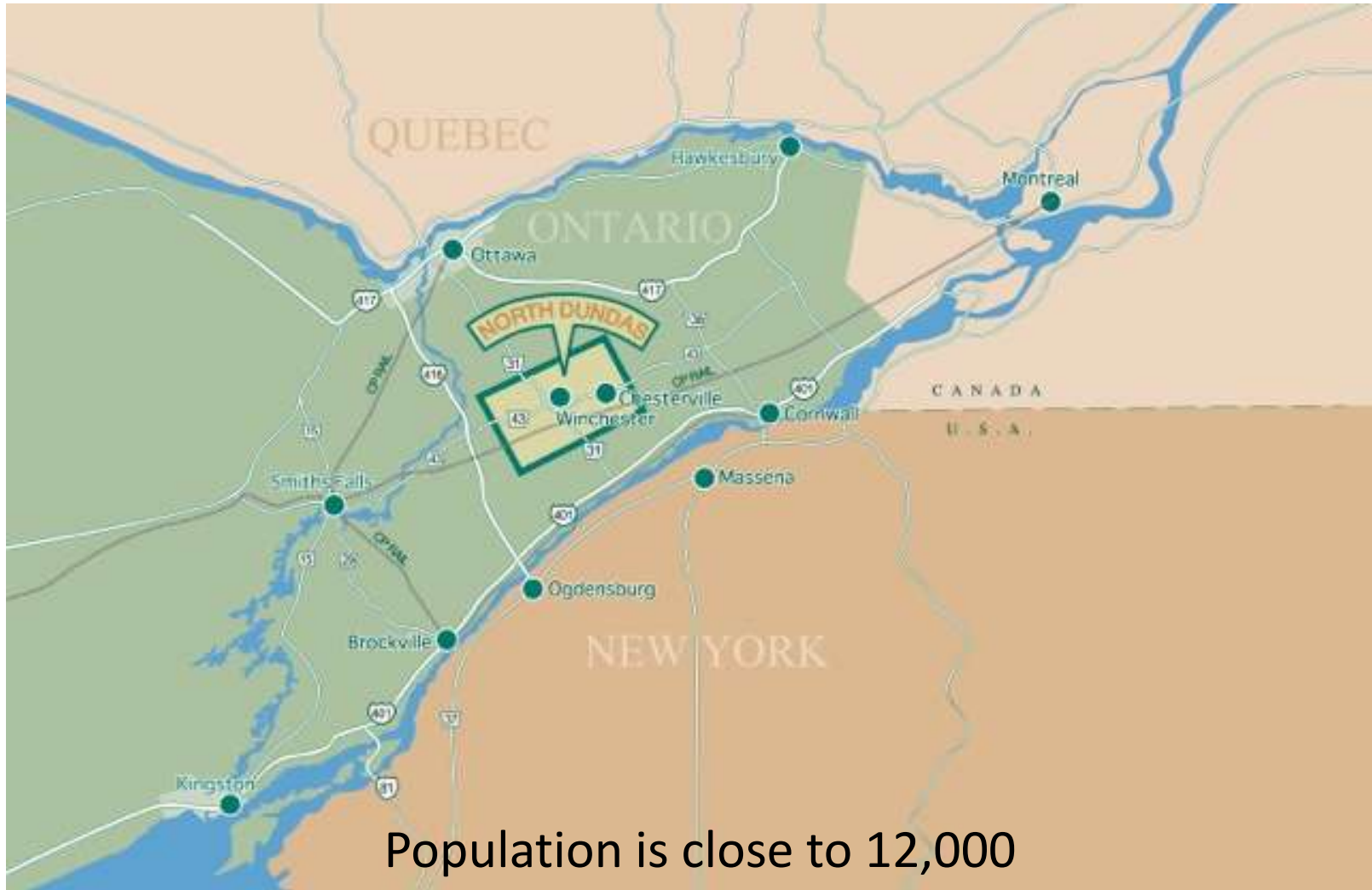
Eric Duncan, Mayor
Calvin Pol, MCIP RPP



Agenda

1. Our New Direction
2. Planning & Building Department Accomplishments
3. Customer Service Survey
4. Questions & Exchange of Ideas

The North Dundas Context



Background

Planning & Building Staffing:

- Professional Planner
- CBO
- Technical Assistant
- Junior Planner
- Inspector (part time)



Background

- North Dundas has a diversified rural economy and prides itself on having some of Eastern Ontario's finest agricultural land
- Major centres include the Villages of Winchester and Chesterville and several rural hamlets and settlements
- 18 active subdivisions at various stages
- Averages: 200 building permits/year; 50-60 new houses/year; \$20 million/year



Our New Direction



Duncan, having made reform of the township's planning and bylaw department a key plank in his campaign, was asked how those staff members might now feel at his becoming mayor. "They can look forward to working with me in a constructive way," replied the mayor-elect. "I said I don't come in like a bull in a china shop or anything. I'm going to make the

reform I promised on doing. We're going to roll them out after consultations with the new council."

Duncan added that he had "no vendetta against anybody personally. It is a department and a structural problem we have an issue with. And that's something

I, and council, will deal with together. Not me as an individual against anybody specific."

Voter turnout in North Dundas clocked in at 56.9 per cent, according to Clerk Jo-Anne McCaslin, the township's election returning officer.



Our New Direction

Council asked management to:

- Provide Council with your departments roles and responsibility, staffing, focus on accomplishments, challenges, and future actives to improve the department
- Conduct open houses, information nights
- Improve Permit Review Times, response times
- Improve Customer Service
- Conduct Annual User Survey

DISCLAIMER:

**NO CONSULTANTS WERE HIRED
OR HARMED IN THE MAKING OF
IMPROVEMENTS IN NORTH
DUNDAS.**

**Council Wants
What?!?!**

Change?!?!?!?!?

Planning & Building Department Accomplishments

- We have implemented cost effective methods of improving customer service
- Many items were at minimal cost: used in-house expertise, summer students, off-peak periods
- We focused on the “Customer” and their vantage point. Until you have been on the other side of the counter, it is hard to appreciate their viewpoint

We are fully aware that we cannot keep everyone happy. Residents can have expectations beyond staffing levels and reality:

- Expect that they don't need permits (it's just a tax grab).
- Expect to get permit based on incomplete drawings or inadequate drawings.
- They call for an inspection immediately (same day).
- Permit holders want to know the exact time the Inspector will be there.

- They expect every inspection to be approved.
- They think they are the only permit we are working on.
- Some permit holders are of the belief that the CBO or Inspectors work for them as their employee. (ie. attempt to boss them around, quality control, error checking.)
- Need to remember: The majority of permit holders are happy with the customer service they received. They don't call their Council Members to tell them. The survey was valuable in uncovering this strong majority.

What Have We Done:



Balancing Act

Moved out of our comfort zone - tried new ideas.

1. Planning and Building Counter

- Planning and Building secretarial position was changed to a **Technical Assistant** position with a minimum two year post secondary education in Architectural, Construction Engineering or similar field of study.
- Wanted someone with a **knowledge base** to review permit application completeness at the counter and assist first time applicants.



2. Summer Students

- We hire summer students with a background in planning or architecture with financial help from Job Zone.
- Students have helped with:
 - preparing Adobe PDF forms,
 - website packages,
 - computer generated sample designs,
 - open houses,
 - information nights,
 - open late nights,
 - coverage for vacations, lunches, etc.
 - pool inspections (by-law enforcement),
 - preparing reports, etc.

3. Promotional Material

- Created pamphlets and promotional material for code changes and better practice bulletins from the National Research Council.
- Summer student prepared easy to follow materials used in the open houses, information nights.



DISCLAIMER
The information presented on this website is to introduce the reader to the changes in the 2012 Ontario Building Code. Consult the most recent version of code for more accurate wording.
May 6, 2011

2012 Residential Energy Efficiency Requirements

Ontario Climate Zones
North Dundas is in Zone B



Windows and doors are labeled with the zone they are suited for

Ceiling with Attic Space

AFUE \geq 90%	AFUE \geq 78% and $<$ 90%	Electric Space Heating
RSI 8.1	RSI 8.1	RSI 8.1
R 50	R 50	R 50

Walls Above Grade

AFUE \geq 90%	AFUE \geq 78% and $<$ 90%	Electric Space Heating
RSI 3.87 - 5.11	RSI 5.11	RSI 5.11
R 22 - 27	R 29	R 29

Windows & Sliding Glass Doors

AFUE \geq 90%	AFUE \geq 78% and $<$ 90%	Electric Space Heating
Max. U-Value 1.6 - 1.8	Max. U-Value 1.8	Max. U-Value 1.8

Exterior Doors (without storm door)

Except for doors on enclosed unheated vestibules and cold cellars, and except for glazed portions of doors, all doors that separate heated space from unheated space shall have a thermal resistance of not less than **RSI 0.7 (R 3.75)** where a storm door is not provided.

2.1.1.9 Minimum Thermal Resistance of Doors

Basement Walls

AFUE \geq 90%	AFUE \geq 78% and $<$ 90%	Electric Space Heating
RSI 2.11 - 3.52	RSI 3.52	RSI 3.52
R 12 - 22	R 20	R 20



U-Value is the overall coefficient of heat transfer expressed in $W/(m^2 \cdot K)$

Hot Water Heater

AFUE \geq 90%	AFUE \geq 78% and $<$ 90%	Electric Space Heating
Min. EF	Min. EF	Min. EF
0.57 - 0.8	N/A	N/A

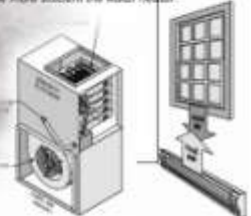
Energy Factor (EF): Energy Factor is the ratio of useful energy output from the water heater to the total amount of energy delivered to the water heater. The higher the EF is, the more efficient the water heater.

The amount of required insulation in a house is determined by the AFUE* of the furnace.

- AFUE \geq 90%**
Generally limited to gas furnaces but some oil furnaces qualify as well.
- AFUE \geq 78% and $<$ 90%**
Generally oil furnaces

Electric Space Heating
Electric forced air furnaces and baseboard heaters.

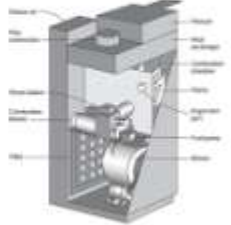
*Annual Fuel Utilization Efficiency



Heat Recovery Ventilator

For homes that have forced-air heating – the HRV is usually connected to the heating system ductwork. This requires running the furnace fan continuously to distribute outdoor air throughout the house, increasing operating costs. However, the improvement in air quality is significant.

For homes that don't have forced-air heating – the HRV is connected to a specially insulated network of small-diameter outdoor air ducts.



4. Checklists & Information Packages

- Created new, easier to follow checklists and information packages for applicants
- We heard from the public that our forms were too overwhelming and complex
- Contains sample drawings for those who wish to produce their own drawings
- Includes standard permit forms and information from other agencies who may have an effect on the permit process

Checklists & Information Packages

Originally, we only had two basic permit packages:

1. House package, and
2. Everything else.

Now created five types of simplified packages and checklists

1. House package
2. Accessory Buildings & Structures
3. Farm Buildings
4. Commercial/Industrial/Institutional
5. GeoThermal Systems

Checklists & Information Packages

- New forms saved on paper, as redundant information was excluded.
- Created an on-line building permit application forms (can be filled out using Adobe Acrobat).
- Further to this, the information was added to the municipal website to help people do their own research and preparedness outside of normal business hours

5. Incomplete Application Solutions

- Created a system that could accept incomplete applications and speed up the permit process
- Allow “Early Design” review
- Provided the applicant with an easy to understand checklist of what is missing
- Applicant signs and dates form acknowledging outstanding items, and that the process has not begun
- As time permits, commence a review of the application based on the information submitted

Incomplete Application Solutions

- Reduced the need for follow up visits by the applicant to the Township Office
- Allowed better time management for the municipality
- When client leaves, they know and agree with missing application components (Memorandum of Understanding). They know: the sooner they get it to us, the sooner their permit will be issued
- Reduced frustration levels for the applicant



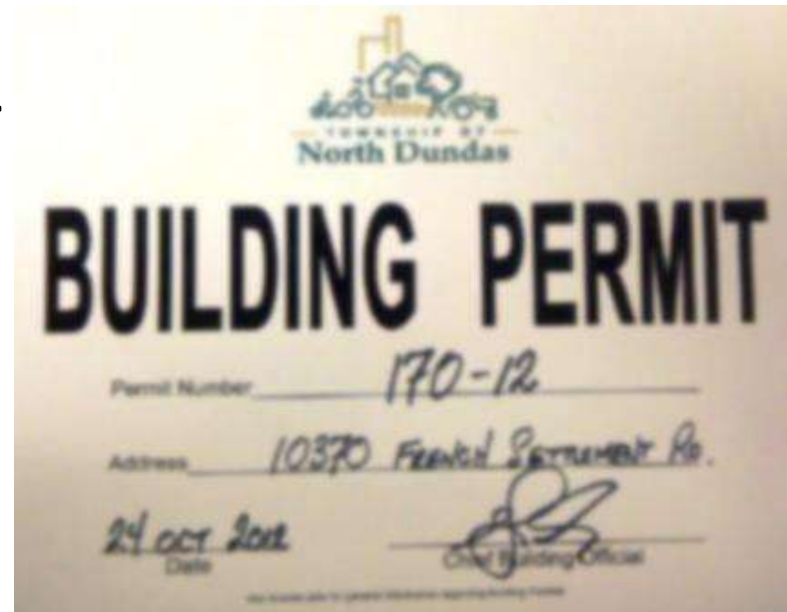
6. Permit Approval Time



- North Dundas issues permits at half provincial maximum time (because of time management gained from “Early Design review)
- Chief Building Official reviews each application, in the order that they arrive (unless it is a very simple permit (eg. shed, deck, garage, etc.)
- For basic permit applications, our goal is for our Technical Assistant to pass the Ministry Exams to be able to sign these permits on the spot

7. Building Permits

- Laminate (seal) the card stock placard Building Permit:
 - Laminated placard eliminated fading documents out in the field.
 - Weather resistant
 - Also provide the applicant with a legible copy of their permit for future reference.

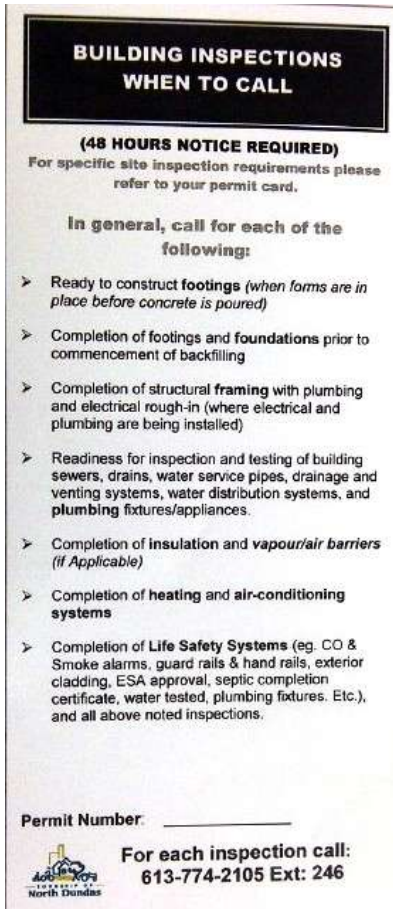


8. Timely Inspections

- Inspections will be carried out within 48 hours of calling and booking an inspection.
- We have occasionally failed due to miscommunication. Need improvements here.
- Once we have a full time inspector, we hope to be able to offer shorter notice times (same day).



9. Checklists



**BUILDING INSPECTIONS
WHEN TO CALL**


(48 HOURS NOTICE REQUIRED)
For specific site inspection requirements please refer to your permit card.

In general, call for each of the following:

- Ready to construct **footings** (*when forms are in place before concrete is poured*)
- Completion of footings and **foundations** prior to commencement of backfilling
- Completion of structural **framing** with plumbing and electrical rough-in (where electrical and plumbing are being installed)
- Readiness for inspection and testing of building **sewers, drains, water service pipes, drainage and venting systems, water distribution systems, and plumbing fixtures/appliances.**
- Completion of **insulation and vapour/air barriers** (if Applicable)
- Completion of **heating and air-conditioning systems**
- Completion of **Life Safety Systems** (eg. CO & Smoke alarms, guard rails & hand rails, exterior cladding, ESA approval, septic completion certificate, water tested, plumbing fixtures. Etc.), and all above noted inspections.

Permit Number: _____

For each inspection call:
613-774-2105 Ext: 246



Created a user friendly quick checklist for “When to call for Inspections.”

- We found that despite our best efforts, permit holders forget to call for inspections.
- The quick view inspection card is designed to be by the phone, simple to follow.
- Created, reviewed and modified the card using internal staff from other departments, unfamiliar with permits and inspections.

10. Performance Based Refund

Implemented a performance based refund to the permit fee schedule.

- The department essentially eliminated several years of back log in unfinished permits.
- This performance based refund also had the effect of making permit fees less expensive and more fair to builders who build on a regular basis, and cheaper for those builders who were organized.
 - Note: We bill/invoice against the performance deposit for extra inspections, change orders, and annual renewals.
 - We bill \$75 per inspection, if you call and are not ready.
- This enabled better time management which allowed us to produce more with the same amount of staff.

11. Reminder Notices

- Summer Students send out an annual reminder in July/August to complete outstanding permits
- This letter helps remind permit holders that their permit is still incomplete
- Encourages them to complete and close off their permit
- Bill against performance deposit
- Greatly helps reduce the number of open permits



12. Building Code Information Sessions

- Host Building Code Information Sessions
- Teamed up with neighbouring municipalities
- Help each other. Their CBO attended session in our Township and our CBO attended sessions in their Township



Building Code Information Sessions

Benefits:

- a. Townships speak as one voice
 - b. No different requirements between Townships. Dispelled the notion that it's less restrictive to get permits in the neighbouring municipality
 - c. Develop presentations jointly, less work than by yourself
 - d. Builds cooperation, relationships, friendships & moral. (You're not alone)
 - e. Increases available expertise
 - f. Builds knowledge base
- Different types of sessions are held throughout the year (early spring and fall).

Building Code Information Sessions

1. Offered Training/Education sessions for designers and builders based on recent code changes.
 - All local designers and builders were personally invited to attend.
 - Builders and designers got advance notice of pending changes **BEFORE** they apply
 - They modified their designs to meet code changes; without the CBO having to write changes all over plans.
 - Developed charts and forms to recognize the new energy efficiency requirements.
 - Resulted in greater acceptance and understanding of Code changes.

Building Code Information Sessions

- Builders and designers gained an appreciation of the CBO's work and knowledge requirements
- Brought the CBO from behind his desk into a neutral environment (hall)
- New products, design ideas and building science information is placed on display



Building Code Information Sessions

2. Hosted Building Code Information Nights to explain to the **general public** the code changes and offer assistance with obtaining a permit
 - Each session is hosted by two inspectors/building officials and last year an architectural graduate on site to answer questions
 - Sessions are to provide basic information and assistance on obtaining a building permit in the evening
 - Residents do not have take time off work

Building Code Information Sessions

- Creates an opportunity for residents to “pick the brain” of the Building Department
- Guides, information packages are made available
- Sometimes presentations are made of Code changes
- Helps residents understand the process and Code requirements

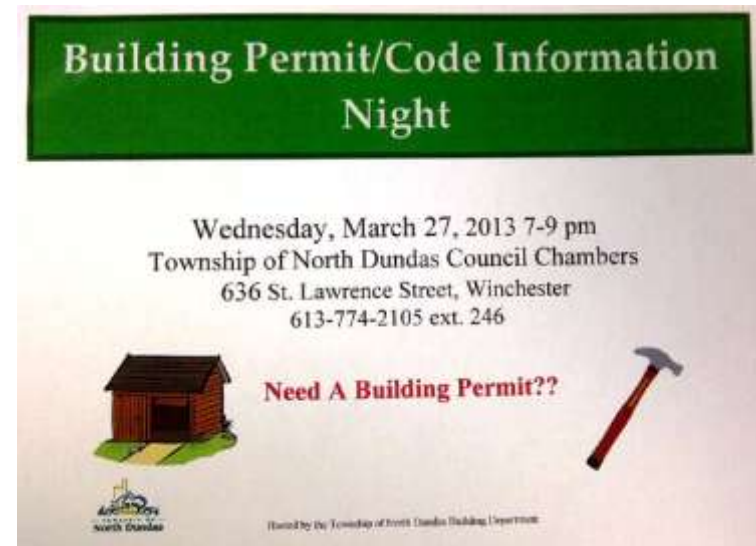


Building Code Information Sessions

Target: Builders, designers, homeowners, everyone thinking of building

Purpose: Educate and assist



Posters, newspaper ads, website, press announcements, direct calls, email directly to our developers and designers (keep and email list), tweets



Building Permit/Code Information Night

Wednesday, March 27, 2013 7-9 pm
Township of North Dundas Council Chambers
636 St. Lawrence Street, Winchester
613-774-2105 ext. 246

Need A Building Permit??

Hosted by the Township of North Dundas Building Department

13. Extended Summer Hours

- We remain open until 7:00 pm Wednesday from Victoria Day to Labour Day
- Offer Building Permit and Planning Applications in-take
- Live - answer phones; sell dog tags
- No additional cost to Township (Hours exchanged for Friday Afternoons)
- Do not need to take time off work to apply (Good for DIY)
- Improved employee moral - Everyone loves getting off early on weekends!



14. Planning Department Efficiencies

A. Committee of Adjustment (Minor Variances)

- Typically 15 - 16 days to decision
- Signs done in-house
 - Print and laminate signs, tape onto coroplast, insert in steel post
 - Post on property same time as site visit for photographs used in public hearing
- Meeting at 3:00 pm mid-week



Planning Department Efficiencies

Committee of Adjustment (CoA)

- Decision given to applicant immediately at the MV Hearing
- Five member committee
 3 members sit in rotation.
- One annual business meeting (Select Chair)
- Like to use former members of Council for the CoA



Planning Department Efficiencies

B. Zoning Amendments

- Application, once reviewed for completeness, is brought to the next available Council meeting to set a date for the Public Meeting. Public Meeting is held ASAP
- Draft ZBLA prepared immediately, detailed planning report follows
- Mail out notices. (GIS System)
- Post sign (made in-house - no delays, take photos, can confirm was erected)

Planning Department Efficiencies

- Draft by-law and planning report provided to applicant at the Public Meeting
- If no objections Zoning By-law Amendment passed the same evening
- If very controversial, Council will defer the decision
- For controversial uses (Flea market, convenience store), have successfully modified the by-law to a temporary use (Max 3 years) to see if “it fits”
- Notice of passing prepared for next day mail out



Planning Department Efficiencies

C. Site Plan Control

- Site Plan Control Committee comprised of staff
(Director of Planning, CBO, Public Works Director, Waste Management, CAO, and Economic Development Officer)
- Staff negotiate changes to the proposed site plan. Where disagreements arise, all non-zoning issues are negotiable - with Council being the final determinant
- Site Plan Agreement prepared by staff based on Committee decisions
- By-law and Agreement to Council ASAP

Planning Department Efficiencies

D. Consents (Severances)

- Authority to comment and impose conditions passed to Professional Planning Staff
- No review by Council, only summary reports
- Sped-up process
- Consents reviewed as they come in
- Introducing a new process to enhance economic development: Commercial and Industrial consents to get priority

Planning Department Efficiencies

E. Subdivisions

- Host pre-Meetings with all parties (Engineers, Conservation Authority, OCWA, Public Works, Roads, etc.)
- Mid meeting & final if necessary (proved very effective in solving unresolved issues)
- Started a “Name a Street” contest (school kids)



Winchester, Kansas



The Survey

- The annual survey is sent to each permit applicant. If you applied for a shed permit, new house, commercial building, etc. you are given an opportunity to comment directly to Council
- Each survey package includes a prepaid postage return envelope, making it as easy as possible to return
- Each survey includes a personalized letter from me
- Council was pleased to report that the results and comments from 2012 were quite positive
- The comments were reviewed to determine where additional improvements can be made. These were implemented this year

YOUR TURN

- We want to hear from you!
- What improvements have you made?
- Share your customer service success stories

Thank You!

- **Calvin Pol, RPP, MCIP**
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- **Eric Duncan, Mayor**
eduncan@northdundas.com