



**Subject:** *Staffing - Building Inspection Function*  
**To:** CAO for Corporate & Residential Services Committee, December 14, 2021  
**Date Prepared:** December 3, 2021  
**Related Motions:**  
**Prepared by:** John Woodford, Director of Planning and Development  
**Approved by:** Kim Ramsay, Chief Administrative Officer

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### Summary

The municipality is experiencing a sharp increase in development activity and current staffing in the building inspection is not sufficient. Staff are also concerned about succession planning in the function as one inspector approaches retirement. As a result, Staff are proposing a Senior Building Official position be created and funded in the 2022/2023 budget. Anticipated building permit revenue and assessment growth as a result of development will offset these costs.

### Financial Impact Statement

The creation of a Senior Building Official position would have an annual cost, including salary & benefits, of \$90,000 as proposed for the 2022/2023 Budget. It is being recommended that the expected \$45,000 surplus in Building Inspection Revenue for 2021/2022 be put in reserve which could then be used over three years (\$15,000 per year) to lessen the impact of the new position on the tax rate. Assessment growth from development and an increase in building permit revenue expected over the next few years will offset these costs as well.

### Recommendation

That \$90,000 be placed in the 2022/2023 Budget for the creation of a Senior Building Official position and that this position be partially funded over 3 years with up to \$45,000 of surplus revenue from Building Inspection in 2021/2022.

### Recommended Motion

*Corporate & Residential Services Committee recommends that Council:*

- *Approve \$90,000 for the creation of a Senior Building Official position in the 2022/2023 Budget; and*
- *Place up to \$45,000 of surplus revenue from Building Inspection into reserve to partially fund the new position over 3 years; and*
- *Begin recruitment for a third building inspector in January 2022.*

## Background

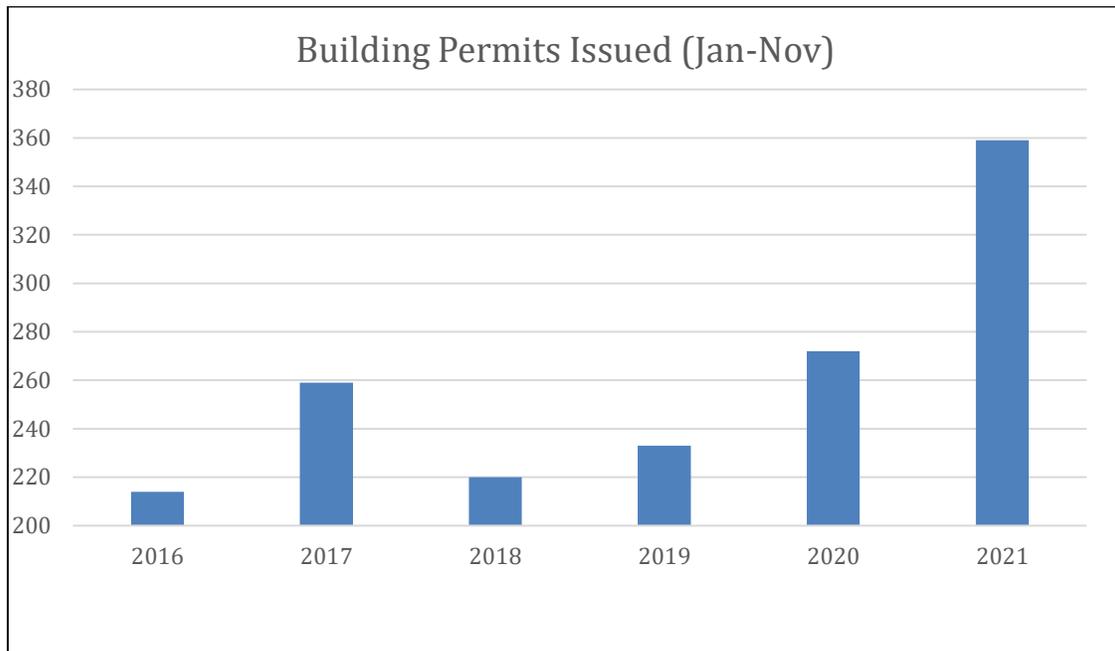
Historically the municipality has issued between 250-300 building permits and conducted 900-1000 field inspections per year. This level of activity has kept two full-time building officials fully occupied. At times, the municipal fire inspector is also engaged for permits and inspections to maintain service levels.

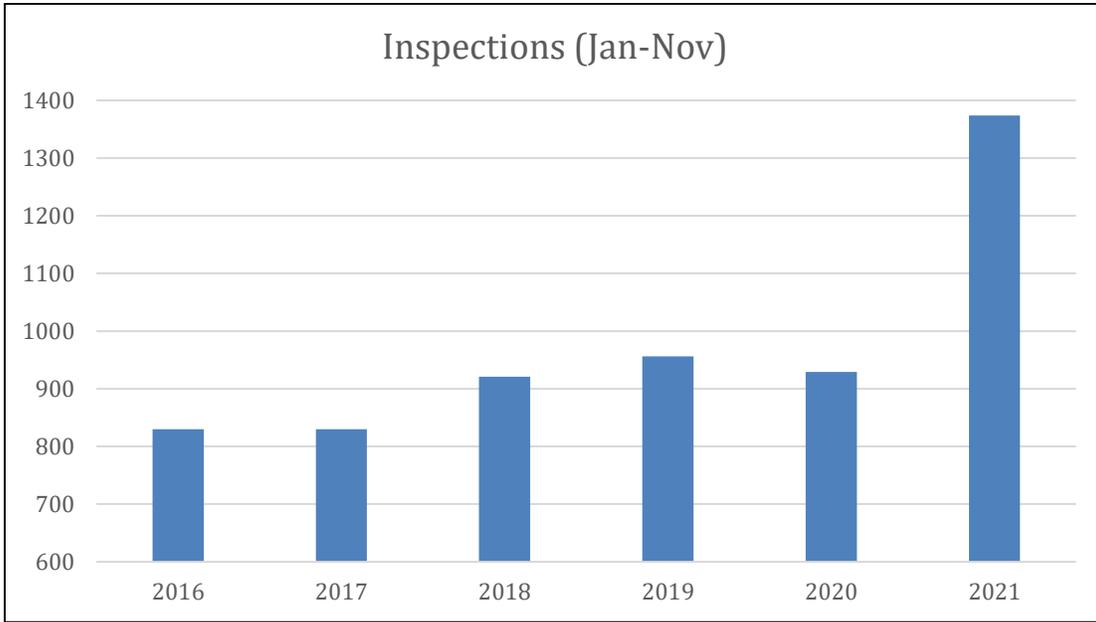
Recently, the municipality has seen a sharp increase in development activity with permits up 50% over the five-year average, inspections up 52%, new dwelling units up 176% and the value of construction up 179% over this time period as shown in the table below.

	Permits	Inspections	New Units	New Lots	Const Value
2016	214	830	134	85	28,792,202
2017	259	893	99	82	35,718,350
2018	220	921	130	14	28,976,417
2019	233	956	135	67	31,704,471
2020	272	929	141	137	33,073,780
2021	359	1374	353	259	88,375,860

*Data for 11 month period (Jan-Nov) each year*

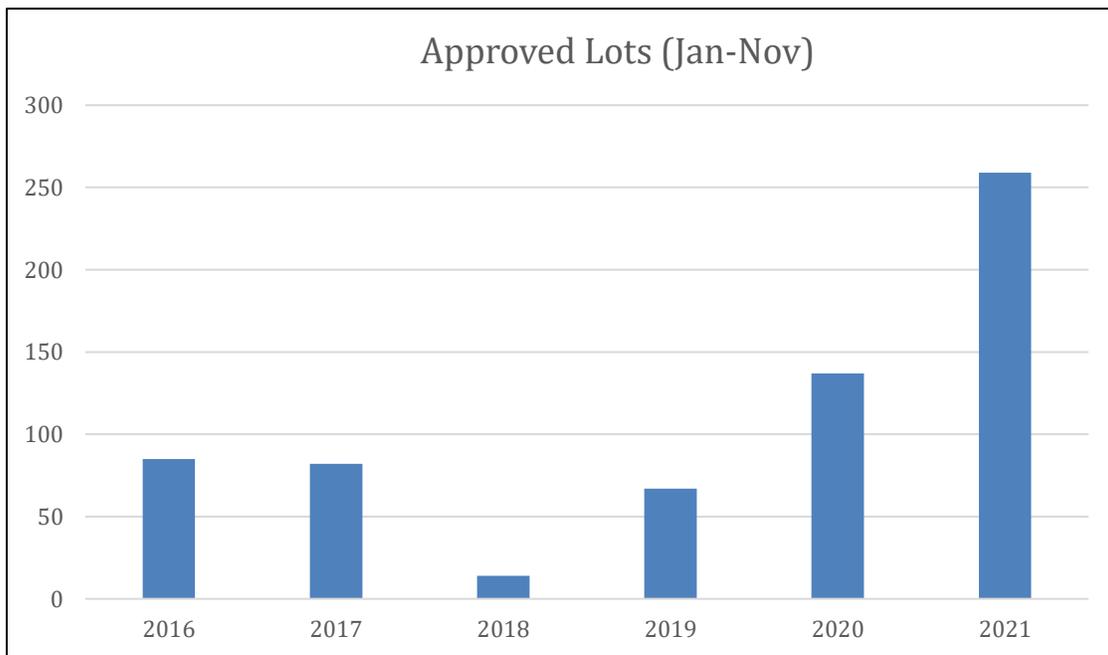
Given that the large developments recently approved by Council in Lantz (i.e., Kiln Creek & Wickwire Station) are now just getting underway, in addition to a general increase in development across the municipality, it is anticipated that building inspection activity will continue at a high rate for a number of years.





Planning staff are also in constant contact with the development industry and are aware that there is continuing strong developer interest in East Hants with a number of projects in the subdivision, site plan approval, planning application or pre-application stage.

A useful leading indicator for future building inspection work is subdivision approvals as lots have to be created before houses are built on them. New approved lots have increased 236% over the five-year average indicating that the high rate of building inspection activity will continue.



The increase in permits and inspections is causing an impact in several areas within the division:

- Inability to follow up on stale permits

- Increased use of Fire Inspector as a back-up Building Official in order to process the influx of permits, which obviously takes that staff member away from his core responsibilities
- Requirement for use of a contract inspector, John Strickland
- Lower service level (i.e. wait times for permits and inspections)
- Personal impacts such as overtime and additional stress trying to keep up with the workload

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## Discussion

As outlined above there is now a clear need for additional staffing in building inspection based on increased workload. In addition, as part of succession planning, a third position would be invaluable as finding qualified building officials is very difficult.

Training is conducted by the Nova Scotia Building Officials Association (NSBOA) as opposed to a community college. There is no set program where courses start in September and finish in June over two years. Instead, NSBOA holds courses when they perceive there is interest. As a result, it can take several years for new inspectors to become trained. This often results in municipalities having to hire someone who has not yet completed the training program and allow them to train on the job. Under the NS Building Code Act, an inspector cannot sign off on permits or inspections until they complete the NSOBA training requirements.

One of our inspectors is expected to retire in 2-4 years which could leave us with one inspector, or a second inspector who is not fully trained for some period of time. If this happens with the current work load, fire inspections would be severely impacted, we would have to hope our contract inspector, who has retired, is interested in more hours and service levels would undoubtedly suffer. As recruitment and training is a lengthy process, permission to begin this process in January 2022 is being sought.

If a third building inspector is hired, staff are proposing to create a Senior Building Official position. This senior position would be responsible for leading and directing the activities of the building permits and inspections section and develop policies, procedures and practices to be used within the department. An example would be to ensure that there is consistent municipal interpretation of the building code and regulations on issues such as unstamped lumber. Taking on this responsibility would also help alleviate some of the administrative burden on our Manager of Development Services who is very busy in her own right.

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## Conclusion

The current staffing compliment in building inspection is insufficient for the increase in development activity currently being experienced and expected over the next few years. For this reason, as well as succession planning purposes and to share the administrative burden with the Manager of Development Services, Staff are recommending that a Senior Building Official position be funded in the 2022/2023 budget.

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## Recommendation

That \$90,000 be placed in the 2022/2023 Budget for the creation of a Senior Building Official position and that this position be partially funded over 3 years with up to \$45,000 of surplus revenue from Building Inspection in 2021/2022. Also, that recruitment of the third building inspector begin immediately.