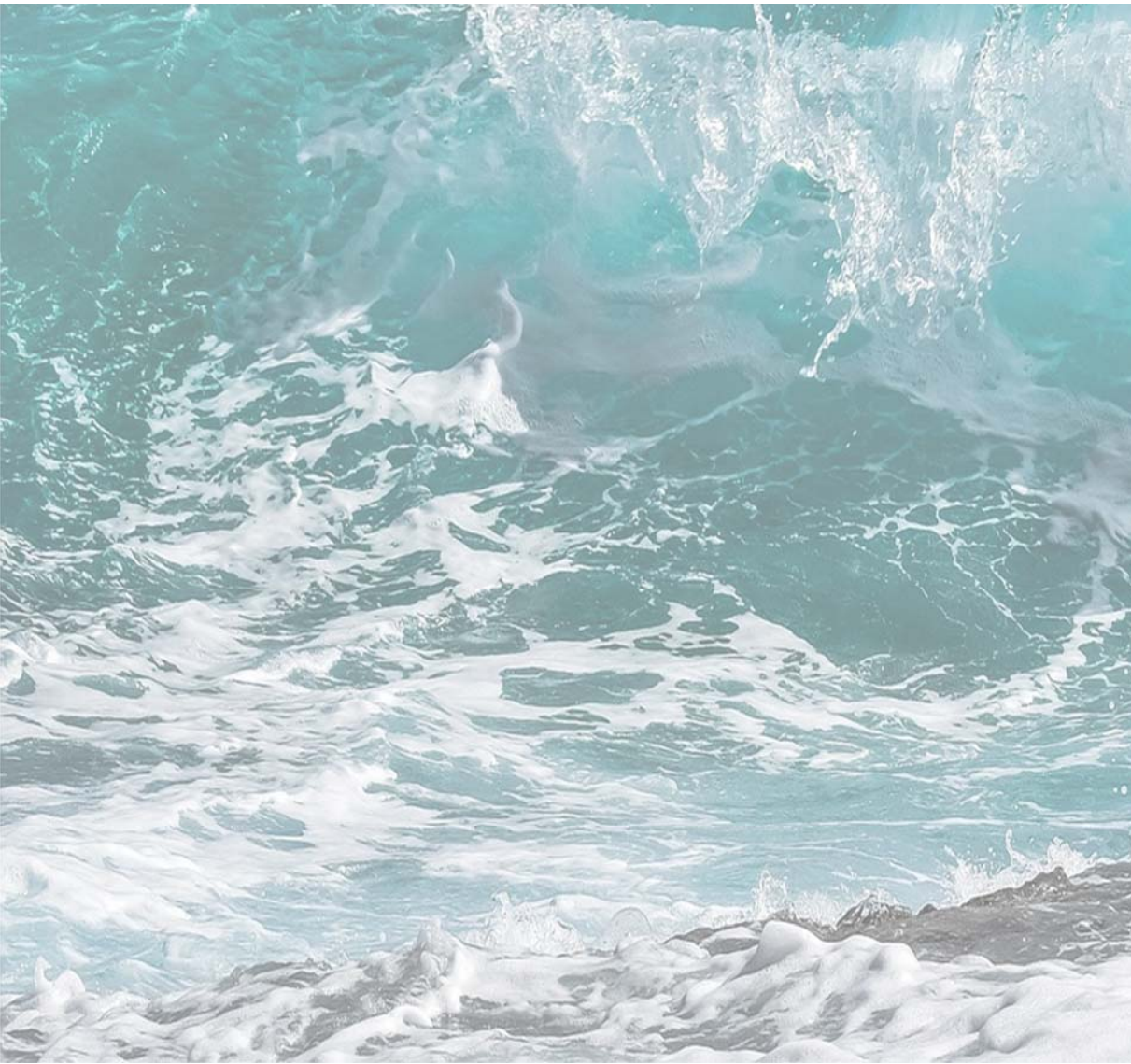


# The Case for Regional Land use Planning Services

Submitted by your Regional AMANS representatives



## Why now?

The Province of Nova Scotia recently introduced legislation for minimum planning standards for all municipalities in Nova Scotia. The MGA has been amended to reflect these new standards, and municipalities are required to comply, the date which is yet to be announced.

Furthermore, the Province recently announced funding for innovation in modernizing municipal government.

These two combined factors inspired our AMANS regional team to assess the capacity of each unit and the current status of respective MPS/LUB plans as compared to the new legislation.



The AMANS regional group is comprised of AMA members from Digby, Yarmouth and Shelburne Counties. This group tasked CAOs Chris Frotten, Alain Muise and Stephane Cyr to develop a presentation to respective councils.

## Identification of gaps

Other than the Town of Yarmouth, no municipality in the Tri-County area has a full-time planner on staff. Most use contracted services, and these services differ depending on the unit. Some share the same consultant. Recently, the municipalities of Yarmouth and Argyle shared a full-time planner, who retired in September of 2018. While the planner was shared, the MPS/LUB were prepared separately.

The illustration on page two indicates the status of each municipal unit – as you can see, units are either fully compliant with the legislation with updated plans or do not have a plan in place.

## The disconnect

Currently, even if all municipal units were compliant, our land use planning services are fragmented and represent a transactional approach to planning. There is no planning department that consistently considers the assets and status of neighbouring units. Our planning is often reactionary (which is contrary to planning) and isn't focused on regional growth.

We do have a regional organization in place – the WREN. The WREN certainly has membership at a regional level for economic development, however its role does not include land use planning or strategies relating to this. A regional planning organization would certainly strengthen the work of the WREN.

Unfortunately, without dedicated planning staff, land use planning issues are not always at top of mind for administrators or councillors. We have all experienced a time where controversial land use has been difficult to navigate politically and administratively. Also, residents often feel left out or ill-represented when these issues arise. Proper and professional land use planning is an effective insurance policy to reduce the likelihood of land use conflict. An effective public

engagement strategy is a critical piece to planning, as residents are more effectively informed on why planning controls are (or are not) put in place.

### **What are our common goals and values?**

In developing this idea of a regional solution, we understand all units are interested in the following goals and values:

- Fairness in cost allocation and cost sharing, using a combined base fee plus user fee;
- Growth-oriented approach to land use and municipal planning, integrating all our regional assets;
- Attraction and retention of talent for the region, with opportunities for multiple planning personnel working together and supporting one another;
- Improved capacity and response to municipal planning needs;
- Proactive approach to planning services;
- Reduction of duplication of services;
- Simplification of planning services, which would include the merging of language of MPS/LUB documents for customer ease;
- Ensure ease of compliance of legislation now and into the future;
- Cost reduction through shared service provision desirable, but not a main driver.

### **Our proposal – a request for a Tri-County Land Use Planning Service**

We are requesting permission from your Council to propose a regional land use planning service, which would potentially provide services to the following:

Municipalities: Shelburne, Barrington, Argyle, Clare, Yarmouth, Digby. Towns: Digby, Shelburne, Clarks Harbour, Yarmouth.

Any total municipal assistance is not yet calculated and would depend on the amount of interested parties. Our plan would be, with your approval, to submit a proposal to the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing (DMAH) under the innovation/modernization funding stream.

The application would request 90% funding support to engage a third party to lead and develop an intermunicipal model supported by a governance framework suitable to its members. This would leave a 10% remaining for the participating municipalities to pay.

Should this application be accepted by DMAH, a Request for Proposal would be prepared by our AMANS regional team, which would be brought to interested councils for approval.

Furthermore, we would create a regional subcommittee consisting of elected officials and staff from each interested unit.

## A taste of what could be...

Imagine regional intermunicipal cooperation that would head up all land use planning issues, work collaboratively with your respective development officers, lead Planning Advisory Committee meetings with proactive ideas for land use, and share those ideas with other municipal units in the agreement.

Imagine two to three planners working on issues quickly and efficiently, and fully representing your interests when controversial issues arise, or representing your planning interests at UARB hearings.

Imagine a fully developed public engagement strategy handled regionally, ensuring that our residents and municipal units are well informed on land use issues and are able to engage properly in the process.

### Status of Planning Needs

| Level of planning service   | Limited political discussion or admin. issues | Growth issues needing planning support                  |
|---|---|---|
| Meet standards, comprehensive plan current                                    |   | <b>Mun Digby, Town Digby, Barrington, Town Yarmouth</b> |
| Meet standard, needs updated plan   | <b>Mun Shelburne, Mun Clare</b>               | <b>Mun Argyle, Mun Yarmouth</b>                         |
| Not sure if standards are met, need update and deeper engagement of community |   |   |
| Not meeting standards/ no plan  | <b>Town of Shelburne</b>                      |   |