



Report 2019-050

Information Report

To: Chair and Members of the Planning Advisory Committee

From: Megan Rueckwald, Manager of Community Planning

Prepared by: Megan Rueckwald, Manager of Community Planning

Date of meeting: May 6, 2019

Re: **Planning Advisory Committee – Township Committee of Adjustment Lean Process Improvement Update**

Recommendation

This report is for information purposes only.

Background

In January 2019, planning staff from each member municipality and the County initiated a Lean process improvement exercise with the intent of improving the Township Committee of Adjustment process. Planning staff have focused on the planning application process in an effort to find efficiencies and eliminate waste. It was identified by the group that making improvements to the planning application process will give time back to staff, reduce duplication, waiting and processing time and improve the experience for the citizen / applicant.

The process has been facilitated by Kevin Farrell, Manager of Continuous Improvement and Lean Black Belt, and Lisa Moreland, Human Resource Generalist and Lean Yellow Belt. Economic Development staff from the County have also been involved in the exercise to provide input from the view of an applicant. This report is intended to provide the Planning Advisory Committee with an understanding of Lean Process Improvement and an update on the planning application exercise.

What is Lean?

Lean thinking is the belief that there is a simpler, better way through a continuous drive to identify and eliminate waste, or inefficiencies and errors, in our day-to-day work. It is about making our work environments efficient and effective, so we can provide higher quality of services to our customers. Lean improves safety, quality, costs, efficiencies,

and service delivery. Lean helps create time for quality improvement to be part of everyday routine activity.

What Lean Is:

- Solutions to a customer’s needs
- Identification and removal of process waste
- Quality at point of service
- Reduction or elimination of defects
- Improving process flow
- About doing necessary tasks
- Continual improvement
- Focusing on value added activities
- Redeployment of resources into value added activities

What Lean is Not:

- Focused on provider needs
- Writing new policies or procedures
- Job reduction
- Measuring quality into service
- Batch and queue
- Not about doing a lot of work
- One time random improvement
- Busy work that fills your day

What is the Lean Process and What Stage is the Planning Process At?

At the core of the Lean methodology is a five-phase roadmap known by the acronym DMAIC which identifies each phase: Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, and Control.

Define - The define phase is about bringing a team together to brainstorm around the root causes of the problem/opportunity, understanding the current state by creating a current state map and deciding what needs to be measured.

Measure - The measurement phase is about working with the team and other staff members to collect the baseline measures and the voice of the customer. The measurement phase can be the most difficult phase because you are asking staff to collect measures on top of their daily job so it is important that the measurement tools created are easy to fill in.

Analyze - The analyze phase is where graphs are created so the data story can unfold. By looking at the data in a variety of ways using tools such as trend charts and Pareto charts the data story emerges. It is important to ensure it aligns with the problem/opportunity that was developed during the define phase. This could be the shortest of all five phases but it is the link between truly understanding the process and creating and implementing improvements.

Improve - By this point teams are ready to brainstorm solutions and improvements using the Lean tools and principles that best address the root cause(s) and test the improvements using the PDSA (Plan Do Study Act) tool.

Control - In the control phase teams validate the controls that have already been put in place and identify any other controls that need to be put in place to ensure the process does not slip back into the old way of doing things.

The define phase was completed by the project team in January 2019. The project team defined the project statement as, “Our current process provides insufficient information to applicants, public, staff, and decision makers, which leads to timing and processing issues. This causes challenges to comply with legislative requirements in a consistent,

cost effective and affordable manner”. At the end of the January meeting, the project team decided what needed to be measured to assess the problem statement. The following questions were measured from February 1st to March 31st by the project team.

Questions assessed by the project team:

- How many times does an outside department provide information?
- How many times do you require more info from applicant during pre-consult?
- How many times is everyone organized following the pre-consult? How many times is communication happening after consult and prior to application submission?
- How many times is the file touched when fulfilling conditions/after approval? Severance vs. variance
- Walk-ins that should have made an appointment?

On May 2nd, the project team will be getting together to review the finding of the measurement phase and analysis completed by Lean facilitators. The project team will then be brainstorming improvement ideas and creating an implementation schedule for the improvements. A key component to the Lean process is the control phase which staff anticipate will occur later in the summer; the project team will get together to compare findings from the implemented improvements and identify further controls to ensure the process does not return to the prior state.

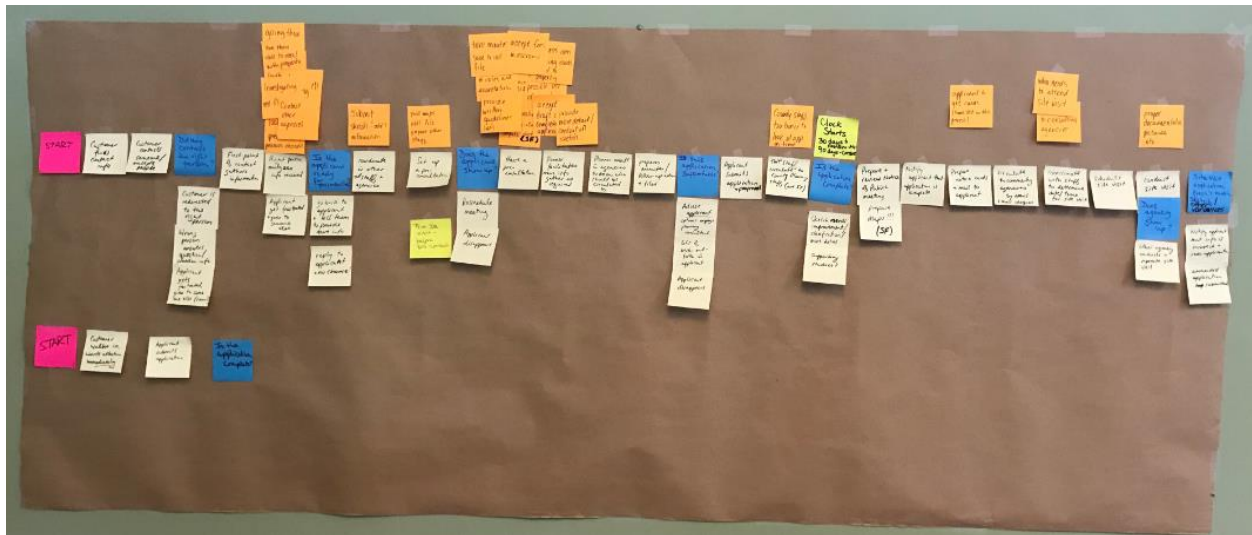


Image 1. The first half of the Committee of Adjustment application process.

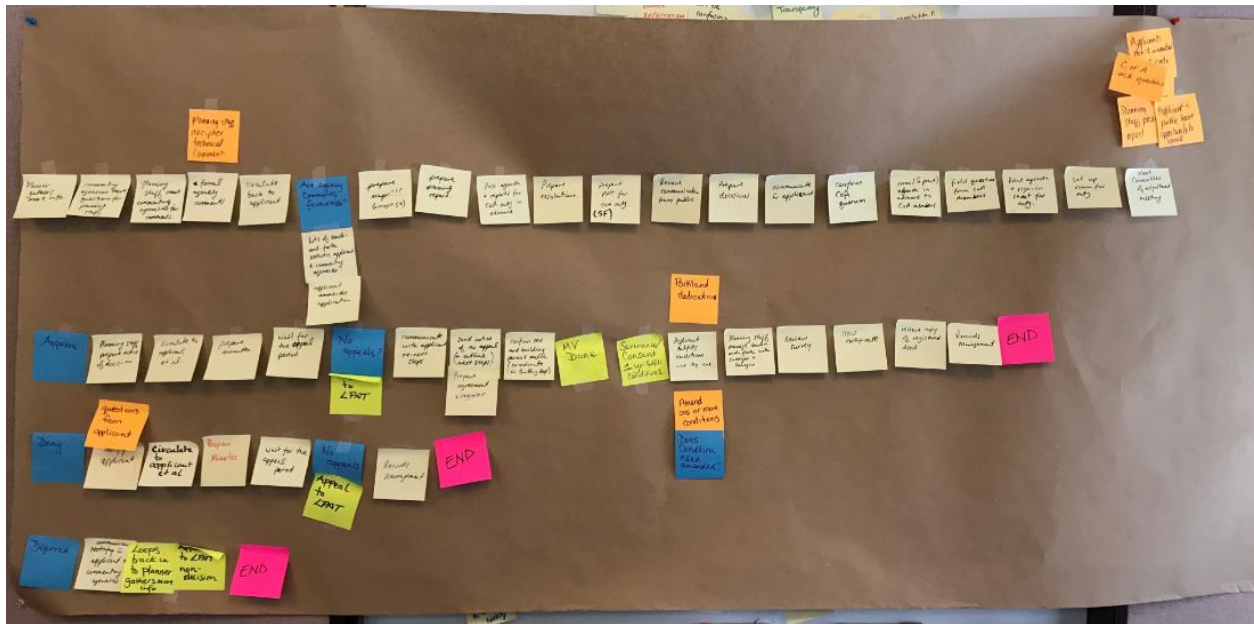


Image 2. The second half of the Committee of Adjustment application process.

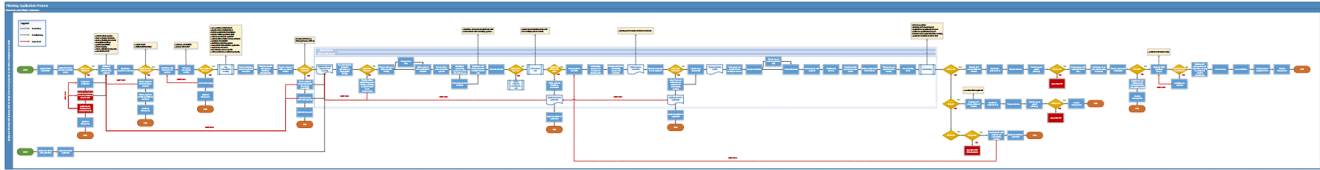


Image 3. The completed process flow map of the Committee of Adjustment process (large map available at meeting).

Comment

The Committee of Adjustment Lean process improvement exercise has been a very valuable exercise for planning staff across the County. In addition to improving the process, planning staff are enhancing connections across the County and creating a consistent approach to planning across the Frontenacs. Following the completion of this exercise, planning staff may identify additional processes that could benefit from a Lean exercise.

Sustainability Implications

One of the key focus areas of *Directions for Our Future*, the County’s Sustainability Plan, is Land Use Planning and Management. From a sustainability perspective, this involves an approach that ensures a clean and healthy environment, a strong economy, and long term viability. Planning staff have identified that the current process is not sustainable and is leading to timing and processing issues and staff capacity concerns. Through this exercise, the project team will locate efficiencies by enhancing the knowledge of applicants, streamlining the commenting agency review while also increasing transparency to the public.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications to the County of Frontenac.

Organizations, Departments and Individuals Consulted and/or Affected

Township Planning Staff
Lean Frontenac Implementation Team (LIFT)
Planning and Economic Development Department