



Working together with our community

Council Meeting – September 23, 2025

Subject: Forestry Farm Gas Well Update
Report Number: CDS-25-064
Division: Community and Development Services
Department: Administration
Ward: Ward 2
Purpose: For Decision

Recommendation(s):

That Council receive Staff Report CDS-25-064 Forestry Farm Gas Well (FFR) Update as information; and

That Council authorizes a single source supply as outlined in Norfolk County Purchasing Policy GP-028, Section 5.9.4 with Engineering firm AtkinsRealis - to provide expert advice to Norfolk County and the Province of Ontario in search of a permanent solution to the ongoing Forestry Farm gas well and area issues and complete the project management functions at the FFR site; and

That the General Manager, Community and Development Services be authorized to negotiate and execute a contract with AtkinsRealis; and

Further that the Treasurer/Director of Finance enter into a Provincial Transfer Payment Agreement with the MNR to cover the cost of hiring AtkinsRealis as well as any other associated costs.

Executive Summary:

As Council will recall staff presented Staff Report CDS-25-006 in July 2025. As part of that report staff updated Council on the results of the ground water study and staff were to report back to Council in September on the progress made on the recommendations within report.

Report included the following recommendations:

“That Staff Report CDS-25-006, Next Steps-Forestry Farm Road Gas Well be accepted as information; and,

That Norfolk requests that the Province coordinates an update meeting with local interested residents; and

That Norfolk requests the Province to arrange for a multi-Ministerial meeting to advocate for a Provincially funded and managed action plan to address the concerns at the Forestry Farm Road Gas Well site.”

Discussions:

Since the July report being presented, Norfolk staff have met with MNR staff and can offer the following updates.

1. CAO and Councilor Veri attended the AMO conference in August and were encouraged with continued support and a pledge to move forward with solutions of the issues at the FFR site from the minister level. The Minister committed to ongoing leadership on finding a solution to the issues and to improved communications, including keeping Norfolk residents informed.
2. MNR and Norfolk staff will hold an informational update meeting with residents in the first part of October. Date, time and location to be determined.
3. MNR staff have also set up biweekly meetings with Norfolk staff, including the Medical Officer of Health, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks for updates. These meetings will aid with overall communication with all future activities at the FFR site.
4. Following the recent report from Montrose, MNR has established a multi-ministry working group, including MNR, MECP and MINES (Ontario Geological Survey) to support next steps and the development of a permanent solution. Norfolk County is also seeking approval to bring on a dedicated project management firm to lead the development of a solution.
5. To provide relief to residents while a permanent solution is developed, a portable odor control system will be installed at the FFR site. The purpose of this system is to reduce the level of hydrogen sulfide in the air and the associated odor. It is a system that has previously been used at landfills, water treatment plants, and other industrial settings for this purpose.

The portable odor control system is scheduled to be moved to the site as early as the week of September 22nd and should be operational in approximately 2 to 3 weeks. It is a temporary portable unit which will be powered by a generator. The complete setup will consist of a tank, storage shed and odor control unit.

The installation and cost of the temporary unit is being funded through MNR's Abandoned Works Program at no cost to Norfolk.

6. Lastly, AtkinsRealis has been chosen as the go forward Consulting Firm to be the project manager for the FFR site, based on collaboration between MNR and Norfolk. Norfolk staff see this as being very positive that a project manager has

been identified and assigned to the FFR site. This company will be focused on all future activities on site. AtkinsRealis is seen to have the expertise and resources to tackle this complex problem. Direction will now be changing from trying to locate the well bore hole to focusing on controlling and treating the flow.

To move ahead with work on site in a timely matter, Norfolk will enter into a single source procurement with AtkinsRealis as project manager for the site. MNR seeks approval to enter into a transfer payment agreement with Norfolk that will cover the expenses incurred associated with this project.

Norfolk does not have in-house expertise to evaluate recommendations and confirm steps being recommended are best for Norfolk. The project manager will be tasked with reviewing all recommendations within the July report from Montrose Environmental, along with previous studies and information available to develop a permanent solution. Norfolk and MNR staff will meet regularly with the project manager to ensure that Norfolk staff are up to date and understand the decisions being made. Staff and the project manager will also report back to Norfolk Council on regular basis as decisions and actions are being made.

- Continued monitoring of the situation
- Continued calibration of groundwater flows
- Full survey of additional groundwater discharge points
- Pivot the focus of discharge from FFR to the Spanjers' spring area
- Prioritize nearby gas wells for decommissioning as part of the Abandoned Works Program
- Stop erosion at FFR by installing a nearby pressure relief well
- Initiate a technical working group with MNR, MOE, MOH and Norfolk to work towards long-term solutions
- Initiate an Environmental Assessment to address potential treatment and discharge of groundwater
- Installation of a temporary portable de gasser system to address the smell of hydrogen sulfide

Finance Comments:

As identified within the report, based on discussions between Norfolk County and Ministry staff, the expectation is that all costs associated with ongoing project management, consulting, monitoring, and remediation work will be 100% funded by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Finance and CDS staff will continue to work with the Ministry to define the project scope and execute a formal transfer payment agreement for this phase, as well as track-related project costs, and comply with any reporting requirements.

Interdepartmental Implications:

Purchasing

Purchasing staff have reviewed the report and advise that Norfolk County Policy GP-028, Section 5.9.4 requires all single source procurements to be authorized prior to the purchase through resolution of Council. Single source supply is defined where there is more than one vendor able to supply the goods or services but for reasons of function or services, one supplier is recommended for consideration, and the purchase will be made without a competitive bid.

Consultation(s):

Consultation has occurred with staff from MNR, Grand Erie Health Unit, MECP and various departments in Norfolk.

Strategic Plan Linkage:

Building Norfolk - Develop the infrastructure and supports needed to ensure complete communities

Attachment(s):

- N/A

Approval:

Approved By:
Al Meneses, Chief Administrative Officer

Prepared and Reviewed By:
Bill Cridland, GM, Community and Development Services