

Staff Report

2026-125 - Planning Services



To: Mayor Koetsier and Members of Council
From: Jeff Kratky, Planner II
Date: July 14, 2026
Subject: Outline for the 2026/28 Georgian Bay Official Plan Review and Bill 98 New Framework Update

Recommendation

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council accepts the July 2026 outline for the 2026/28 Official Plan review and Bill 98 update, including a public meeting at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, August 26, 2026; and

THAT Council re-confirms its terms of reference for the 2026/28 Official Plan review and Bill 98 update and future review and update of the Zoning By-law are to:

1. Actively consult and engage the community, partners, and stakeholders
2. Produce an Official Plan and Zoning By-law that:
 - a. Conforms to all applicable legislation, policies and regulations;
 - b. Are aligned with each other; and
 - c. Are user-friendly.
3. Identify in future reports, as necessary, the timelines and budgets including any request(s) for proposals from consultants to lead and/or study topic in the outline; and

THAT Council authorizes the Director of Planning to set the membership of working group(s) for the 2026/28 Official Plan review and Bill 98 update drawing firstly from the Planning Working Group, and adding members as needed to achieve appropriate representation from the community, partners, and stakeholders; and

THAT Planning staff are authorized to prepare future reports, as necessary, regarding any request(s) for proposal of consulting services and/or budgets for the 2026/28 Official Plan review and Bill 98 update.

Report Highlights

- Bill 98 "new official plan framework" required Planning staff to reconsider the outline for the review and update of the Georgian Bay Official Plan and Zoning By-law.
- The Official Plan must be updated before the Zoning By-law.
- The July 2026 outline replaces the March 2026 outline.

- The terms of reference remain unchanged.
- The new outline is to start with a public meeting on August 26, 2026.
- At the public meeting, GBT Planning staff will present the Bill 98 "new official plan framework" and a preliminary list of topics with the intention of seeking comments from First Nations, the District of Muskoka, GBT Council, Planning Working Group(s), Waterfront Community Associations, and everyone in the Community.
- If First Nations are unavailable for the public meeting, Planning staff will be available to them.
- Each topic will undergo discussions between Planning staff with First Nations, Community Associations, and the Community. The discussions will include one or more public open houses.
- After discussions, Planning staff will draft a new Georgian Bay Official Plan for consideration at public open house(s) and meeting(s) before any consideration of adoption by Council.
- During the District review of a Bill 98 update to the Georgian Bay Official Plan, Planning staff will submit a report proposing the review and update of the Zoning By-law.
- The outline should result in the Georgian Bay Official Plan conforming to the Bill 98 "new planning framework" taking effect shortly after the "transition date" of January 1, 2029.

Background

On March 10, 2026, [Planning Services Staff Report 2026-036](#) discussed the requirement in Section 26 of the *Planning Act* for Georgian Bay Township ("GBT") to review and update the Georgian Bay Official Plan and, by extension, Zoning By-law. The report also recommended and Council approved an outline for the review and update.

On June 2, 2026, [Planning Services Staff Report 2026-091](#) explained how Bill 98 went from 1st Reading on March 30, 2026 to passing 3rd Reading on May 14, 2026. It also explained the "new official plan framework" required by Bill 98 before recommending the review and update be paused. Council approved the pause.

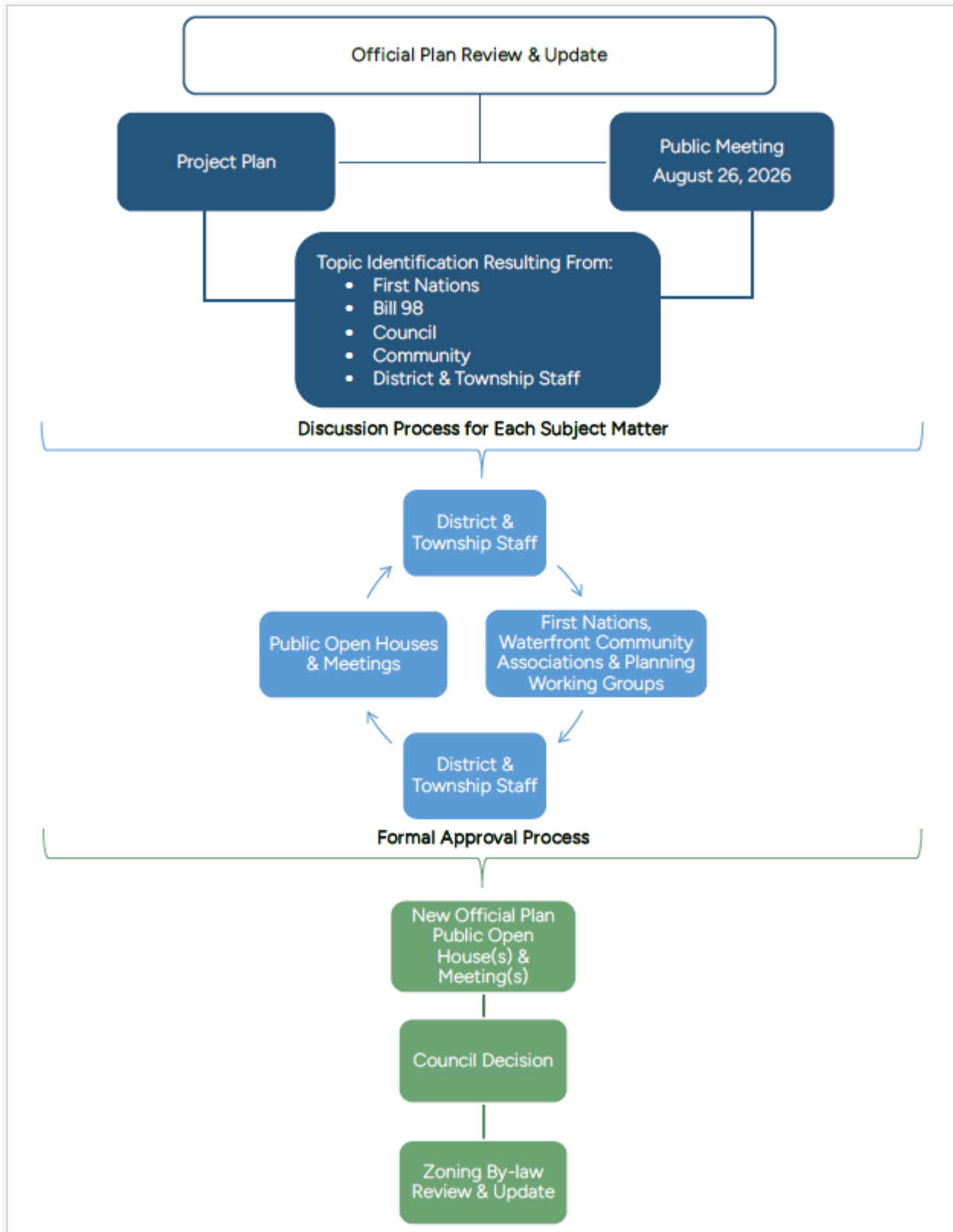
Meanwhile, GBT Planning staff with support from District Planning staff are separately proposing housekeeping amendments to the Official Plan and Zoning By-law regarding Additional Residential Units and Source Water Protection topics. All of the other potential housekeeping topics joined the pause for the review and update.

Analysis and Options

The 2026/28 Georgian Bay Official Plan and Zoning By-law Review and Update terms of reference are to:

1. Actively consult and engage the community, partners, and stakeholders
2. Produce an Official Plan and Zoning By-law that:
 - a. Conform to all applicable legislation, policies and regulations;
 - b. Are aligned with each other; and
 - c. Are user-friendly.

3. Identify timelines and budgets including any request(s) for proposals from consultants to lead and/or study an outline topic in a future project plan for Council approval before starting a topic requiring such consulting expert(s).



However, Bill 98 makes it impossible to concurrently review and update both the Official Plan and Zoning By-law.

Instead, the 2026/28 Georgian Bay Official Plan Review and Bill 98 Update must be complete before starting a review and update of the Zoning By-law. As illustrated in the image, the outline includes three processes, being:

1. A public meeting on August 26, 2026;
2. Discussions of topics; and
3. A formal approval process for the Bill 98 Update.

Public Meeting - 9 a.m. Wednesday, August 26, 2026:

If Council approves July 2026 outline, the first process begins with the public meeting of GBT Planning Council at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, August 26, 2026. Planning staff will give a presentation providing the public with information regarding the "new official plan framework" required by Bill 98, and listen to comments from First Nations, the District of Muskoka, GBT Council, Planning Working Groups, Waterfront Community Associations, and everyone in the Community who wishes to participate.

If First Nation partners are not available to attend the public meeting, Planning staff will be available at other dates/times/locations to meet with them.

Topics & Discussions:

The second set of topic-specific processes for the Review and Update will most likely continue throughout 2027 and perhaps into 2028. The processes will be iterative, with GBT Planning staff drafting discussion reports with input from District Planning staff. After those reports are discussed with First Nations, Community Associations, and Planning Working Groups, staff will make adjustments to the reports before discussions at public open houses.

It remains important for the Planning Working Group to have membership representative of the community. Given the diversity of GBT topics, working groups and membership will require adjustments throughout these processes. Therefore, Planning staff continue to request that Council authorize the Director of Planning to set and adjust the membership of and purpose for working group(s). That is, there may be unique working group(s) by topic.

The list of topics will not be finalized until a report to Council in either October or December of 2026 provides a summary of the public meeting to take place on August 26, 2026. On a preliminary basis, Planning staff suggest the following topics, being:

1. Indigenous Engagement (required by Bill 98);
2. New designations and schedules (required by Bill 98);
3. Policies for new designations (required by Bill 98);
4. MOP, Community Plans, and site/area-specific policies (discussed in Environmental Registry of Ontario Number [026-0315](#));
5. Water access, levels (including climate change resilience), navigation, and marinas;
6. Employment, commercial and resorts;
7. Housing in *settlement areas*;

8. Port Severn Village Centre;
9. MacTier boundary;
10. Recreational water quality; and
11. "Big picture" shoreline accessory use, building, and structure policies.

Formal Approval Process:

In 2028, the formal approval process will start with GBT Planning staff preparing a draft new Georgian Bay Official Plan. Although the Bill 98 "new official plan framework" poses a challenge, some sort of changes-tracked version will be prepared.

GBT staff will consult with District staff followed by Council before releasing a first draft of the Bill 98 Update. It will likely take three (3) months for this part of the formal approval process.

Next, at least one public open house and one public meeting will take place before Planning staff provide a report to Council recommending the Bill 98 Update to the Georgian Bay Official Plan. Realistically, there will be two open houses and public meetings. This is likely a four (4) month part of the process before adoption by Council.

Lastly, the District has 6 months to consider an adopted Georgian Bay Official Plan. During this time, GBT Planning staff will propose to Council the project plan for the review and update of the Zoning By-law.

Therefore, a new Georgian Bay Official Plan should be in effect soon after the Bill 98 "transition date" of January 1, 2029.

Environmental Consideration

Bill 98 and related reforms are not consistent with the Environmental Protection pillar described in the GBT 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. GBT must conform to Bill 98 during the Review and Update of the Georgian Bay Official Plan.

Financial Considerations

GBT Council approved a \$200,000.00 budget for the Review and Update that continues to be carried forward. Thus far, Planning staff have not spent any of the budget. Planning staff anticipate the Bill 98 Update will include costs for expert services (e.g., mapping, housing study, employment lands study, etc.). Financial considerations will be discussed in later report(s) as appropriate.

Conclusion

Approval of the July 2026 version of the outline for a 2026/28 Georgian Bay Official Plan Review and Update is intended to satisfy the Bill 98 "new official plan framework" on or before January 1, 2029. The updated Official Plan will comply with the *Planning*

Act, be consistent with the PPS, conform to the MOP, and be good and proper planning in the public interest.

Report Supported By

This recommendation report is in alignment with the following strategic pillars:

- ☐ Environmental Protection
- ☐ Fiscal Responsibilities and Technology Efficiencies
- ☒ Streamline Planning Policies and Procedures
- ☐ Customer Experience and Community Engagement
- ☐ District and Township Relationship
- ☒ Engage with Indigenous Communities

Relevant Background Report

[Planning Services Staff Report 2026-036](#)
[Planning Services Staff Report 2026-091](#)

Reviewed By/Collaborated With:

- ☐ Chief Administrative Officer
- ☐ Chief Building Official
- ☐ Director of Corporate Services / Clerk
- ☐ Director of Finance / Treasurer
- ☐ Director of Fire and Emergency Services / Fire Chief
- ☐ Director of Human Resources
- ☐ Director of Operations
- ☒ Director of Planning
- ☐ Director of Sustainability
- ☐ Other

Reviewed By

Derek Witlib, Director of Planning

Karen Way, Director of Corporate Services / Clerk

Status:

Approved - 29 Jun 2026

Approved - 03 Jul 2026