

Report to Council



Date: May 25, 2020
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: Council Meeting Participation Options
Department: Office of the City Clerk

Recommendation:

THAT Council receive, for information, the report from the Office of the City Clerk dated May 25, 2020 with respect to Council meeting participation options;

AND THAT Council direct staff to proceed with Option 1 described in the report from the Office of the City Clerk dated May 25, 2020.

Purpose:

To consider options and provide direction on Council meeting participation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background:

In response to the public health guidelines and requirements associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, Council has been holding meetings with some members of Council participating remotely via videoconference since March 23, 2020. This has allowed for appropriate physical distancing for Council members as well as staff and maintains capacity for members of the public to attend public hearings within the limit of 50 people for gatherings. With the ongoing restrictions, staff are bringing forward Council participation options to continue to meet public health guidelines.

Discussion:

Following a review of different options, staff are bringing forward two options for Council to consider for participating in Council meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Option 1: Rotating Schedule for Remote Participation

Under this option, approximately half of Council members would participate in meetings remotely following a rotating schedule. For example, half of Council members would participate remotely one

week and in-person the next, with the other half of Council on the opposite schedule. Members of Council could participate individually from home or another meeting room at City Hall could be used for those participating remotely.

Option 2: Engineered Solution for Council Chambers

Staff have done a preliminary assessment of options to modify Council Chambers by adding physical barriers to allow all of Council to participate in-person. Installing plexiglass barriers between Councillors would require an engineered design and the existing configuration presents challenges with extending barriers beyond the desks. Should Council wish to pursue option, a detailed design and cost estimate would need to be undertaken. This option would address Monday afternoon meetings and Tuesday evening public hearings and meetings.

Conclusion:

Staff recommend proceeding with Option 1, with a rotating schedule for members of Council to participate remotely and in-person. A schedule would be set up until the Labour Day long weekend, at which time Council meeting participation options could be reviewed to determine the best approach going forward. Staff will also continue to monitor provincial health orders and guidelines and bring forward any other changes as needed.

Considerations applicable to this report:

Financial/Budgetary Considerations: A cost estimate for Option 2 would be prepared and brought forward for Council consideration should Council direct staff to proceed with that option.

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Authority:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

Internal Circulation:

Existing Policy:

External Agency/Public Comments:

Communications Comments:

Submitted by:

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Approved for inclusion:

S. Fleming, City Clerk