



STAFF REPORT

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CLERKS AND PLANNING SERVICES RE: ELECTRONIC MEETING PARTICIPATION

OBJECTIVE

To establish rules and procedures governing the process for participating and conducting Council and its Committee Meetings in electronic format and to amend By-law 16-6, Council's Procedural By-law accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION

That the report of the Director of Clerks and Planning Services regarding Electronic Meeting Participation be received;

And that Council amend its Procedural By-law to permanently allow for electronic participation beyond a declared Emergency as per amendments made to the *Municipal Act*;

And That Council adopt the Electronic Meeting Operations Procedures Policy as "Schedule B" to Council's Procedural By-law;

And that the appropriate By-law be passed to implement this decision.

BACKGROUND

In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Council, staff and the public have had to adapt to a new way of conducting municipal business.

On April 4, 2020 at an emergency meeting of Council By-law 20-18 was passed being a by-law to amend Council Procedures to allow for electronic participation during a declared emergency. This was allowed through amendments made to the Municipal Act, specifically Bill 187, the Municipal Emergency Act, 2020.

In an attempt to build on citizen engagement and deliver customer centric services, Councils' Procedural By-law was further amended in March of this year to allow Delegations and Public Presentations to participate electronically by providing the zoom link to the participants. We further offered those wishing to contribute to Public Input Session the ability to attend the meeting virtually to present to Council.

Further amendments have been made to the Municipal Act to permanently allow quorum for electronic meetings beyond a declared emergency, and staff is recommending Council amend its Procedural By-law accordingly.

ANALYSIS

Although members are generally expected to attend Council Meetings in person, it is understood that, for various reasons, a Member(s) may not be capable of so attending. If approved, Member(s) would be able to participate in any Meeting by Electronic Means for the following reasons: where distance is a factor, emergency, work-related, vacation, conference, experiencing symptoms of a contagious infection/illness, when they can otherwise not travel to the location of the meeting, or at the discretion of the Clerk.

Amending the Procedural By-law to allow for Electronic Participation beyond a declared emergency will allow physical in-person participation to be optional. The IT Department have configured the Council Chambers to be hybrid, to accommodate in-person and remote participation and several test meetings have been held. It is the goal of the Office of the City Clerk to ensure that those who choose to participate remotely are treated equitably in the process. Remote Delegations, Public Presentations and Public Input Session will become a permanent option for residents to communicate to Committee or Council.

An Electronic Meeting Operation Procedures Policy has been prepared to establish rules and procedures governing the process for participating and conducting Council and its Committee Meetings in electronic format. Should mandates change or be re-introduced (i.e. masking, distancing) the policy will be updated and effectively communicated to all participants.



FINANCIAL IMPACT

To create a hybrid space additional equipment was purchased through the IT Department including a camera, microphone and cables with no significant impact to the budget. No additional staff are required to be able to offer a hybrid meeting.

LINKS TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Strong Municipal Corporate Administrative Governance:

- Review and update by-laws, policies and procedures
- Customer Service Excellence
- Improving Internal and external communications

SUMMARY

In order to meet the needs of Council, Staff and the public through a safe return to Council Chambers, and to keep the business of the Corporation moving; it is recommended the Council approve the allowance of hybrid meetings via electronic participation.

