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2019 Council and Committee of the Whole Meeting Schedule Staff Report

Report Number: 2018-74

Department(s): Legislative Services

Author(s): Kiran Saini, Deputy Town Clerk

Meeting Date: December 10, 2018

Recommendations

1. That the report entitled 2019 Council and Committee of the Whole Meeting Schedule dated December 10, 2018 be received; and,
2. That Council maintain the current schedule as presented in **Attachment A**, and effective March 1, 2019, begin all Committee of the Whole meetings at 10:00 AM; and,
3. That staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Council direction on the 2019 Council and Committee of the Whole meeting schedule.

Background

At the September 24, 2018 meeting, Council adopted the recommendations in report 2018-55 entitled November 2018 to December 2019 Council and Committee of the Whole Meeting Schedule. In addition, Council directed staff to present the schedule to the new term of Council with the following items included as part of the discussion.

Discussion

Council discussed possible changes to both Council and Committee of the Whole start times, day of the week changes, and adding meetings in July and August.

1. **Amending Committee of the Whole meetings to begin later in the day**

There was suggestion to amend the Committee of the Whole start time to later in the day (i.e., evening). The benefit and considerations of this suggestion are outlined below.

Benefit

- May allow for additional members of the public to attend in-person to watch debate and discussion of agenda items.

Considerations

- Staff who, normally do not attend Committee of the Whole meetings, but are required to do so to address specific agenda item(s) will be required to stay past their normal work hours; thereby increasing their overtime pay.
- Staff have heard positive comments from Council Members when Committee of the Whole meetings are scheduled earlier in the day (e.g., at 10:00 AM). Beginning meetings earlier in the day provides additional time to consider agenda items, which means there is the opportunity for more fulsome discussion.
- The average length of Committee of the Whole meetings in 2017 and 2018 was just over 4 hours in length (note: this information does not include any items discussed in closed session). If these meetings are scheduled to begin in the evening, they will likely not finish until the late evening.
- External stakeholders (e.g., York Region Transit, Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, etc.) and their staff typically make presentations to Committee of the Whole, and are likely more available to attend these meetings during the day versus the evening.
- With the Town's live streaming and archiving meeting videos (on the Town's website and through YouTube), the public has access to view the meetings in either real-time or at their own leisure.

2. Amending Committee of the Whole meetings to begin earlier in the day

There was suggestion to amend the Committee of the Whole start time to earlier in the day (i.e., morning). The benefit and considerations of this suggestion are outlined below.

Benefit

- Staff have heard positive comments from Council Members when Committee of the Whole meetings are scheduled earlier in the day (e.g., at 10:00 AM). Beginning meetings earlier in the day provides additional time to consider agenda items, which means there is the opportunity for more fulsome discussion.

Considerations

- An afternoon start time allows for Members of Council an opportunity to use the morning to ask staff questions of clarification outside of the formal meeting, which can assist with the time spent on agenda items during the formal meeting.
- When there is a fulsome agenda, staff will often recommend that the start time of the Committee of the Whole meeting be moved to earlier in the day.

3. Amending Council meetings to begin earlier in the day

There was suggestion to amend the Council start time to earlier in the day (i.e., morning). The benefit and considerations of this suggestion are outlined below.

Benefit

- Staff have heard positive comments from Council Members when meetings are scheduled earlier in the day (e.g., at 10:00 AM). Beginning meetings earlier in the day provides additional time to consider agenda items, which means there is the opportunity for more fulsome discussion.

Consideration

- Open Forum provides an opportunity for the public to comment on any municipal matter. If Council meetings were moved to the morning, this opportunity for the public may not be as accessible.
- By having Council and Committee of the Whole meetings starting at different times of the day (i.e., Council in the evening and Committee of the Whole during the day), it could be suggested that this provides more opportunities for the public to engage with Council. This is because if a member of the public is interested in making a deputation regarding a specific agenda item, but cannot attend a Council meeting, because they work night shifts, they may have more of an opportunity to attend a day time meeting because they are not at work. Further to this, the opportunity to provide written comments on agenda items exists for the public, should they not be able to attend in-person.

- With the Town’s live streaming and archiving meeting videos (on the Town’s website and through YouTube), the public has access to view the meetings in either real-time or at their own leisure.

4. Amending meeting days from Mondays to Tuesdays

There was a suggestion to move Council and Committee of the Whole meetings from Mondays to Tuesdays. The benefit and considerations of this suggestion are outlined below.

Benefit

- Moving the meetings to Tuesday would allow for an additional day for reviewing the agenda material.

Considerations

- In 2015, some Council Members had indicated to staff that there was an interest in moving the regular Committee of the Whole and Council meetings from Mondays to Tuesdays to avoid meeting conflicts on holiday Mondays. Staff reported to Council, and advised that from an administrative perspective, there are no concerns with re-scheduling the regular Committee of the Whole and Council meetings from Mondays to Tuesdays; however, Council maintained the Monday meetings (note: at that time Rogers was also broadcasting Council meetings).
- Prior to approving a change in meeting days, other commitments would need to be further reviewed. For instance, Central York Fire Services Joint Council Committee (JCC) and Heritage Newmarket Advisory Committee both regularly meet on Tuesdays. As JCC is comprised of Newmarket and Aurora Councillors, greater consideration and further consultation with the Town of Aurora would be required.

5. Regular meetings in July and August

In the past, meetings have been scheduled in the summer months on an “if required” basis; however, they have always been cancelled because they were not required, or because quorum could not be obtained. To ensure that Council, staff and the public can confidently plan other commitments around meetings, it is not recommended “if required” meetings be scheduled. If an additional meeting is required, for any reason, then a meeting can be scheduled.

Further to this, it is the Town’s practice to avoid scheduling Public Information Centres (PIC) in the summer months. This practice aligns with the position that the summertime is not necessarily the best time of year to obtain public input on various municipal matters. It also aligns with the Town’s practice of not scheduling public meetings or PICs during March break; it is understood that the public may not be as engaged during this period, or simply because they are unable to participate due to other commitments.

Conclusion

Council directed staff to review the five above suggestions, which have subsequently been outlined with their respective benefits and drawbacks.

Staff would recommend that Council and Committee of the Whole continue to meet on Mondays, and maintain the meeting frequency such that Council meets in the evening and Committee of the Whole during the day.

Staff would recommend that effective March 1, 2019, Committee of the Whole meetings be scheduled to begin at 10:00 AM. A March effective date would allow sufficient time for the public to be notified that meetings will now be held in the morning instead of the afternoon. Additionally, given that external presenters have already been scheduled to attend various Council Workshops in December and January, it would not be recommended that Council amend the schedule for December or January as it may result in scheduling conflicts for those external presenters.

Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages

This report relates to the Well-equipped and Managed link of the Town's Community vision – implementing policy and processes that reflect sound and accountable governance.

Consultation

Members of the Strategic Leadership Team and Operational Leadership Team were consulted.

Human Resource Considerations

None.

Budget Impact

None.

Attachments

Attachment A - 2019 Meeting Schedule

Approval

Lisa Lyons

Director of Legislative Services/Town Clerk

Esther Armchuk

Commissioner of Corporate Services

Contact

For more information about this report contact Kiran Saini, Deputy Town Clerk, ksaini@newmarket.ca or 905-953-5300 extension 2203.