

City of Mississauga
Corporate Report



<p>Date: November 1, 2021</p> <p>To: Mayor and Members of Council</p>	<p>Originator's files:</p>
<p>From: Andrew Whittemore, M.U.R.P., Commissioner of Planning & Building</p>	<p>Meeting date: November 10, 2021</p>

Subject

COVID-19 In-Person Public Meetings

Recommendation

Please enter Recommendation here That Council endorse the following recommendations contained in the report from the Commissioner of Planning and Building, dated November 1, 2021 titled "Covid-19 In-Person Public Meetings":

1. That Council and Standing Committee meetings, except Audit Committee, remain in a hybrid format until June 30, 2022.
2. That Advisory and Quasi-Judicial Committee of Council meetings continue to be held in a virtual format until June 30, 2022.
3. That staff or Councillor led community meetings continue to be held in a virtual format until June 30, 2022, unless a Councillor wishes to host a hybrid meeting.
4. That if Council chooses to enact a bylaw that requires members of the public who attend public meetings to show proof of vaccination, such meetings are to be conducted using a hybrid format with an option for members of the public to participate virtually.

Executive Summary

- Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, all in-person community engagement associated with legislative, advisory or strategic planning processes halted.
- On May 27, 2020, Council directed staff to resume "Planning and Development Committee" in a virtual format. This decision also enabled councillors and/or City staff to resume community meetings in a virtual format. Since the resumption of meetings virtually, numerous community engagement initiatives have successfully occurred including PDC, Council Committees, and community meetings.

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- Council and Standing Committee meetings, with the exception of Audit Committee that has chosen to remain virtual, are currently held in Council Chambers in a hybrid format and are open to the public.
- All Advisory and Quasi-Judicial Committees of Council meetings are currently conducted virtually.
- Councillor or City staff led community meetings are currently conducted virtually.
- Benchmarked regions and municipalities plan to remain virtual to the beginning of 2022 subject to prevailing regulations, public health guidelines and safety advice.
- On October 21, 2021 staff consulted the Region of Peel’s Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Loh, on this matter, who advised that any in-person meetings should ensure COVID-19 safety protocols are adhered to.
- Regarding a requirement for proof of vaccination, at present, the Government of Ontario’s Proof of Vaccination regulations do not apply to government operations. Consequently, should Council wish to enact such a requirement, a bylaw would need to be passed.
- Virtual meetings have proven to be effective at increasing the options for participation, and should likely remain a permanent fixture of engagement long after the pandemic.

Background

Many City services rely on community engagement as part of a legislative, advisory or strategic planning process. Community engagement presents an opportunity for the public to participate and inform the decision of Council. Traditional engagement often includes in-person events such as; information booths, town hall meetings, engagement websites, surveys, pop up displays, open houses, workshops, and community meetings.

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, all in-person community engagement associated with legislative, advisory or strategic planning process halted. On April 22, 2020, Council suspended Planning and Development Committee (PDC) and Committee of Adjustment meetings, however, agreed to proceed with non-controversial development applications and City-led initiatives.

As the duration of the pandemic continued, Council recognized the need for alternative solutions to facilitate the planning and development decision-making process. As such, on May 27, 2020, Council directed staff to resume “Planning and Development Committee” in a virtual format.

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This decision also enabled councillors and/or City staff to resume community meetings in a virtual format.

Since the resumption of meetings virtually, numerous community engagement initiatives have successfully occurred including PDC, Council Committees, and community meetings. Nonetheless, many members of Council have recently inquired about the resumption of in-person meetings.

Comments

The City of Mississauga has been a leader at pivoting to virtual meetings, and more recently hybrid meetings. In fact, the City is one of only a few municipalities where Council, General Committee, Budget and Planning and Development Committee meetings are offering both in-person and virtual options. Among those benchmarked regions and municipalities, most plan to remain virtual through to the beginning of 2022 subject to prevailing regulations, public health guidelines and safety advice.

It should be noted that on October 21, 2021 staff consulted the Region of Peel's Medical Officer of Health. Dr. Loh, advised that any in-person meetings should ensure COVID-19 safety protocols are adhered to.

1. Council and Standing Committees

Council and Standing Committee (General Committee, Planning & Development, Audit and Budget) meetings, with the exception of Audit Committee that has chosen to remain virtual, are held in Council Chambers and are open to the public. A hybrid (in-person and virtual) meeting format has been adapted to accommodate the meeting preferences of all residents. There are no capacity limits in Council Chambers and proof of vaccination is not required of the public in attendance. To date, there has been limited in-person attendance.

Staff recommend Council maintain the hybrid meeting format for the Council and Standing Committee meetings, except Audit Committee which can remain virtual, until June 30, 2022 which follows the Council Procedure By-law allowance of electronic participation.

Regarding a requirement for proof of vaccination, at present, the Government of Ontario's Proof of Vaccination regulations do not apply to government operations such as municipal Council or Committee meetings. As such, should Council wish to enact a requirement, a bylaw would need to be passed.

2. Advisory and Quasi-Judicial Committees

All Advisory and Quasi-Judicial Committees of Council meetings are currently conducted virtually.

Should there be a desire by Council to allow for in-person meetings, all committee members are subject to the City's vaccination policy, however, any member of the public in attendance is not. Moreover, because such meetings are exempt from the Government of Ontario's Proof of

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Vaccination regulations, should Council wish to enact a proof of vaccination requirement for members of the public attending committee meetings, a bylaw would need to be passed.

The Chair of each advisory committee will be consulted to determine how to most effectively engage with the Committee members, but must always allow for a hybrid format. Staff recommend that Advisory and Quasi-Judicial Committee of Council meetings continue to be held virtually until June 30, 2022 which follows the Council Procedure By-law allowance of electronic participation.

3. Community Meetings (Councillor/City Led)

Since May 2020, Councillor or City staff led community meetings have been conducted virtually.

Staff recommend that community meetings continue to be held in a virtual format for the near future, unless a Councillor wishes to host a hybrid meeting.

It is important to note that a hybrid format community meeting can only be offered at the Council Chamber. Despite meeting rooms at City owned facilities being available for rent, they do not have the necessary audio-visual requirements to conduct a hybrid format meeting.

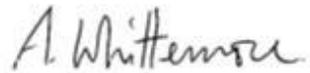
Regarding a requirement for proof of vaccination, at present, the Government of Ontario's Proof of Vaccination regulations do not apply to such government operations. Consequently, should Council wish to enact such a requirement, a bylaw would need to be passed.

Financial Impact

There are costs associated with conducting a hybrid meeting – mainly additional technical support. Costs include audio-visual requirements (including any outsourcing), or those associated with implementing safety measures/protocols.

Conclusion

Community engagement is a central tenet to municipal government operations. All community engagement initiatives must ensure that members of the public can participate fully. Virtual meetings have certainly proven to be effective at increasing the options for participation, and should likely remain a permanent fixture of engagement long after the pandemic. In-person meetings also have their benefits as not everyone has access to the technology to participate virtually. Moving forward a hybrid model is likely to become a more standardized approach.



Andrew Whitemore, M.U.R.P., Commissioner of Planning & Building

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