
Subject: Proposed Flag Raising and Sign Lighting Policy Amendments

Report To: Corporate Services Committee

Report date: Wednesday, June 12, 2024

Recommendations

1. That the proposed amendments to Corporate Policy C-A-027, Flag Raising and Niagara Sign Lighting Policy, in Appendix 1 of Report CLK 2-2024, **BE APPROVED.**

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval to amend Corporate Policy C-A-027 – Flag Raising and Niagara Sign Lighting Policy.
- Regional Council approved the policy on June 25, 2020, to ensure that requests for flag raisings and sign lighting are appropriately reviewed and properly administered.
- At the Corporate Services Committee meeting held March 6, 2024, staff were directed to review the policy and provide suggestions for possible amendments.
- Staff have conducted a jurisdictional scan and are suggesting amendments in order to provide clarity with regard to some of the policy provisions and implement best practices.

Financial Considerations

The Flag Raising and Niagara Sign Lighting Policy requests are administered by staff within existing budget guidelines; therefore, there are no direct financial implications associated with the proposed amendments.

Analysis

Regional Council approved Corporate Policy C-A-027 Flag Raising and "Niagara" Sign Lighting, on June 25, 2020. With the International Plaza being able to accommodate community requests for both flag raisings and lighting of the Niagara sign, the Region required a policy to ensure requests are appropriately approved and properly administered. This policy was implemented to ensure that flags are displayed in a consistent and appropriate manner across all Regional facilities and properties and provides protocols for the displaying and half-masting of flags, as well as the framework to govern requests for community flag raisings and the lighting of the Niagara sign.

In creating the initial policy, a scan of comparable policies from various municipalities and universities across Ontario was completed. The scan provided an overview of best practices for inclusion in the policy and incorporated feedback from multiple internal parties including Legal, Facilities Management, Planning and Development Services, Clerks, Corporate Services, Regional Chair's Office, as well as the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT).

This comprehensive review resulted in a policy that includes details on how flags are to be displayed across Regional facilities and properties and establishes a guideline to recognize occasions and events where a flag should be at half-mast. The policy also includes criteria for community flag and lighting requests to ensure that requests are processed fairly and in alignment with the policy provisions.

At its meeting held on March 6, 2024, the Corporate Services Committee directed staff to undertake a review of the current policy and provide suggestions for possible amendments. Staff conducted a scan of policies from both the local area municipalities and approximately 15 other municipalities and reviewed problematic areas within the policy and are proposing a number of amendments. Overall this review demonstrated that the Niagara Region policy language is in alignment with other jurisdictions.

Staff are recommending the following amendments as provided in Appendix 1:

- Remove the option to fly nation flags
- Include language that specifies community flag raising and lighting requests are for organizations in Niagara Region
- Provide additional clarity around community requests (time frame to request, responsibility for the flag, when flag raising and lowerings can be conducted)
- Improved language that stipulates sign lighting requests will be reviewed using the same criteria as flag raising requests
- Housekeeping changes

Staff believe that the proposed amendments will not only strengthen the policy but will also provide clarity around the provisions of the policy and how it is administered. The proposed amendments will have minimal impact on requesters as the Region does not frequently receive requests for the raising of nation flags or requests for community flag raisings from groups outside the region, but feel it is important to include language that specifies requests should be for Niagara based organizations.

Further, the recommended amendments contained in this report also serve to clarify portions of the policy that were previously open to interpretation. These previous provisions could unintentionally place staff in a difficult position when called upon to decide the outcome of a flag or sign-lighting request. It is staff's position that these amendments provide the appropriate language and mechanisms necessary to ensure that the interpretation and application of the policy is simplified and equitable.

Alternatives Reviewed

Council could decide to not approve some or all of the proposed amendments; however, staff do not recommend this as the suggested changes provide clarity and will reduce confusion for those requesting flag raisings and sign lightings.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

These policy amendments align with Council's strategic priority of Equitable Region in that they reinforce the provision of opportunities for a safe and inclusive Niagara.

Other Pertinent Reports

CLK 6-2020	Flag Raising and "Niagara" Sign Lighting Policy
CSC-C 3-2024	Flag Raising and Niagara Sign Lighting Policy

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This report was prepared in consultation with Daryl Barnhart, Chief of Staff, Office of the Regional Chair.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Proposed Amended Policy