
Subject: Sub-Committee and Advisory Committee Meetings

Report to: Corporate Services Committee

Report date: Wednesday, June 17, 2020

Recommendations

1. That Niagara Region advisory and sub-committees **BE PERMITTED** to hold meetings via electronic participation during the period of the emergency declared by the Province of Ontario effective September 2020, as may be required;
2. That the Joint Board of Management – Niagara Courts **BE PERMITTED** to resume their approved meeting schedule effective August 2020;
3. That the Procedural By-law **BE AMENDED** to permit advisory and sub-committees meetings to be held by electronic participation only during the period of the emergency declared by the Province of Ontario.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval to permit the advisory and sub-committee meetings to be held by electronic participation during the COVID-19 pandemic as required in consultation with staff.
- At its meeting held on March 26, 2020, Regional Council approved By-law 2020-16 to allow Standing Committees and Council meetings to be held by electronic participation only during the period of the emergency declared by the Province of Ontario.
- At that time, it was not contemplated to include provisions related to allowing the advisory and sub-committees to meet by electronic participation.
- In consideration of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the possible length of time for COVID-19 preventative measures to remain in place, staff is proposing to allow the advisory and sub-committees to meet by electronic participation.

Financial Considerations

There are no financial considerations to be contemplated with the resumption of advisory and sub-committee meetings as they will be accommodated within existing budgets.

Analysis

Bill 187, Municipal Emergency Act, 2020, allows municipalities to conduct meetings electronically during the period of the emergency declared by the Province of Ontario and provides for members to have the same rights and responsibilities as if he or she were in physical attendance, including the right to vote. At its meeting held on March 26, 2020, Regional Council amended Niagara Region's Procedural By-law to allow for electronic participation for Council and Standing Committee meetings only during the declared emergency.

At that time, not knowing how long the declared emergency would last, the advisory and sub-committees were not included in those meetings permitted to be held by electronic participation.

Now that staff have successfully executed Standing Committee and Council meetings through electronic participation, the advisory and sub-committees may be considered to return to their previously approved meeting schedules starting in September.

Since mid-March the Region has been operating within its Business Continuity Plan. In accordance with these plans, Regional staff have been focussing on delivering essential and key services. As a result, the resumption of advisory and sub-committees will be considered in coordination with the business continuity plan with an understanding that those staff responsible for facilitating these advisory and sub-committees may have been assigned to different roles through redeployment or are currently working on projects that are part of our essential service delivery. Staff liaisons responsible for specific committees will review each committee's mandate and determine if there are sufficient grounds to hold a meeting while considering staff availability to facilitate and balancing community engagement.

The Joint Board of Management – Niagara Courts, is a Board comprised of staff members from the Region and the cities of Niagara Falls, St. Catharines and Welland as well as three appointed staff members from the other nine municipalities on a revolving basis. The Board provides a forum for the local area municipalities to provide

input on court administration in accordance with the inter-municipal agreement that is in place regarding court services.

The Joint Board of Management- Niagara Courts is requesting to hold its scheduled August 13th meeting in order to have the Board consider financial information related to court administration that is time sensitive. As such, staff are recommending that the Joint Board of Management be permitted to resume its meetings in August.

Staff will provide notice of the Procedural By-law amendments at the June 25, 2020 Regional Council and the amending by-law will be put forward for Council's consideration at the July 23, 2020 Council meeting. This will allow staff the month of August to determine which committees must meet and allow outreach to Committee members in preparation for September resumption of advisory and sub-committee meetings as required.

Alternatives Reviewed

Council could decide to continue to only allow Standing Committees and Council meetings to be permitted by electronic participation.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

This report has been prepared as a response to the COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) pandemic; however, does align with Council's Strategic Priority of Sustainable and Engaging Government.

Other Pertinent Reports

CLK 5-2020 Procedural By-law Update for Electronic Meeting Participation

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