

Subject: Council Meeting Location

Recommendation:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receive Report #2024-0059 - Council Meeting Location, for information;

AND FURTHER be it resolved that Council continue its regular meetings in Council Chambers at Pelham Town Hall.

Background:

For approximately six months in 2023, Council conducted its meetings in the Accursi Room of the MCC. This was done as a Covid-19 pandemic protocol because the MCC has excellent accessibility, excellent air flow and a larger seating capacity so as to allow for better social-distancing. For the past six months, Council has been meeting in Council Chambers at Town Hall.

The CAO provided an undertaking to report back to Council on the staff and administrative perspective of how well each space functioned as a Council chamber and to make recommendations. This report is written in satisfaction of said undertaking.

Analysis:

The Accursi Room is entirely functional for Council or other types of public meetings. It was not purpose built, and as such has required the installation of broadcasting equipment and other technology, which was completed in 2023. The stage upon which Council tables were arranged provided for good visibility to the viewing public, but also made it difficult for Council members to look at each other when in dialogue or debate. Depending upon which of the two room configurations is utilized, the Accursi Room can hold hundreds of people and is the largest public or private meeting space in the Town.

By way of contrast, Council Chambers in Town Hall are purpose built, have excellent sight lines for elected officials and good sight lines for members of the viewing public and is well served by viewing screens and recording devices. Council Chambers are small and allow for only about twenty members of the viewing public

to physically attend at any point in time, and there is also a deficiency of adequate space for all senior staff to attend meetings. This is accommodated by having select staff watch the meetings electronically from their offices and then either participate electronically or attend and speak at the podium when appropriate to do so. This is entirely viable from an ongoing, operations perspective.

The Accursi Room has served admirably well for both public meetings and for Council meetings, but is widely regarded as being the second best choice. The Town is fortunate to have a back-up/alternative location for meetings, should such be necessary.

Financial Considerations:

At present, there are no associated financial considerations with the decision to continue holding Council meetings at Town Hall. Any costs associated with a potential future renovation of facilities will be addressed at the appropriate time.

Alternatives Reviewed:

Council has three fundamental choices in how it conducts meetings: electronically, physically or in a hybrid format. The Town has successfully utilized the hybrid model since 2020 to favourable results. With respect to the physical component of meetings, the only two viable locations are the Accursi Room at the MCC and Council Chambers. Should Council wish to make any changes to the status quo, the best path forward would be by way of Notice of Motion so as to allow both staff and the community time to respond to any potential change.

Strategic Plan Relationship: Enhancing Capacity and Future Readiness

Future growth of the municipality, and thereby of municipal staff, will require a reconsideration of space utilization, but likely not for a decade or so. In the interim, the municipality will have other options to accommodate space demands with the anticipated construction of a new fire station and potential upgrade to public works facilities. Council chambers can theoretically be repurposed into more office and meeting spaces should demand for same exceed the value of holding meetings in Council Chambers. At present, the status quo is the best and most cost-effective option for the municipality.

Consultation:

Informal, individual feedback has been received from most elected officials. All senior staff have provided their personal preferences and opinions.

Other Pertinent Reports/Attachments:

None.

Prepared and Submitted by:

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