

Subject: Updated Council Correspondence Policy S201-19

Recommendation:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receive Report #2024-0209 Updated Council Correspondence Policy S201-19, for information;

AND THAT Council approve the revisions to the Council Correspondence Policy S201-19, as appended.

Background:

The Council Correspondence Policy S201-19 was last presented to Council for review on April 15, 2019, with approval granted on May 6, 2019. This policy is designed to establish a clear and transparent procedure for managing correspondence directed to Council.

Analysis:

Given its nature, the Council Correspondence Policy requires continuous review and updates, as it is significantly impacted by advancements in technology, the need for greater efficiency and the emphasis on privacy. For instance, the pandemic led to a rapid adoption of new technology, influencing how the public, municipalities, and Council interact with each other.

At a high level, the revised policy includes additional content to document processes that were previously unrecorded, thereby increasing transparency in how the Clerk's office manages incoming correspondence.

Recently, there has been a noticeable increase in concerns regarding privacy. The Clerk's office has received numerous requests to retroactively amend agendas by redacting information, such as names and addresses, from correspondence or applications that were lawfully released. The updated policy now explicitly clarifies when information will be disclosed, and which elements will be redacted. This ensures correspondents are fully informed, and that staff consistently apply the policy.

A significant change to the policy is the recognition of technology in the petition process. Following the pandemic, the Clerk's Office began receiving petitions

through platforms like Change.org. Since electronic petitions were not previously permitted in the policy, the Clerk's Office developed a temporary workaround to accommodate them in a limited capacity. The policy revisions in Section 10 now officially recognize the legitimacy of electronic petitions while ensuring the privacy of individuals who sign these documents electronically.

While not procedurally outlined in Section 7, Council currently receives the Council Correspondence Listing (CCL) electronically via email. The Clerk's department is proposing an alternative process using the Town's agenda management system, eScribe. Through eScribe, the Clerk's office can compile the same CCL currently distributed by email and instead distribute it through eScribe, with the added benefit of publishing it to the Town's website.

This new process enhances transparency by allowing the public to view resolutions from municipalities and other government agencies, even if they are not selected for inclusion on a future Council agenda. The listing would be labeled "Council Correspondence Listing" and published bi-weekly through the Council Calendar. The proposed approach is less administratively burdensome and should present a more organized format for Members of Council. While this procedural adjustment does not require a formal Council resolution, feedback and direction from Council are welcome.

Financial Considerations:

None.

Alternatives Reviewed:

Recommended changes to the policy are highlighted in yellow. Council may choose to accept none, some, or all of the proposed amendments. While most of the proposed changes are administrative, the acceptance of electronic petitions is a significant update. Council could choose to accept only paper petitions moving forward; however, this approach would not align with the intent of embracing technological advancements.

Strategic Plan Relationship: Enhancing Capacity and Future Readiness

Enhancing the Council Correspondence Policy strengthens the Town's capacity and future readiness by improving both efficiency and transparency.

Key revisions include integrating technological advancements, such as the recognition of electronic petitions. This modernization acknowledges the evolving methods of public engagement.

Ongoing updates to the policy ensure that the Town remains adaptable to future changes and emerging technologies.

Consultation:

The Chief Administrative Officer and Town Clerk were consulted.

Other Pertinent Reports/Attachments:

Council Correspondence Policy S201-19

Proposed Council Correspondence Policy S201-19

- Information stricken is proposed to be removed
- Information highlighted in yellow is proposed to be added

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