

Council Meeting_Jul18_2017

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AND UPDATE**Options for Open House and Public Presentations at Priorities Committee Meetings****Report Purpose**

To seek input on possible changes to the current processes and parameters for the Priorities Committee Open House and Public Presentations.

Council History

July 11, 2017 - Priorities Committee referred report to Council for debate and decision.

February 21, 2017 Council approved: THAT the Governance Advisory Committee work with Administration to provide a report, by July 11, 2017, on the Open House process that provides options for a more efficient and effective process; and options for parameters around public presentations at the Priorities Committee.

Strategic Plan Priority Areas

Economy: N/A

Governance: An effective Priorities Committee helps ensure a strong and efficient decision-making process that includes public involvement and supports communication with the community on issues affecting the County's future.

Social: An effective Priorities Committee helps support diverse community needs.

Culture: N/A

Environment: N/A

Other Impacts

Policy: N/A

Legislative/Legal: The Municipal Government Act (section 145) allows a council to establish council committees and their functions as well as to prescribe the procedure and conduct of council committees.

Interdepartmental: N/A

Summary

At the February 21, 2017 Council meeting, Council approved a number of changes to the Priorities Committee:

- THAT the Priorities Committee mandate be expanded to include debate on reports and the ability to make recommendations to Council that specify proposed actions.
- THAT the Priorities Committee Chair duties be rotated according to the Deputy Mayor schedule.
- THAT in addition to the current Open House, all other public presentations (i.e. those by industry, community groups, etc.) appear at a Priorities Committee meeting, unless the Mayor's Executive Committee determines that a presentation should be included as part of a Council meeting agenda.
- THAT Administration prepare an amendment to the Priorities Committee bylaw that includes both the housekeeping changes identified by the Governance Advisory Committee and the substantive changes approved by Council at the February 21, 2017 meeting; and that the updated bylaw be presented to Council for consideration by the third quarter of 2017.

In addition to these changes, Council also directed Administration to work with the Governance Advisory Committee (GAC) to provide options on process changes for the Priorities Committee Open house as well as possible changes to the parameters for Public Presentations at Priorities Committee meetings.

Administration worked with the GAC to review these components of the Priorities Committee bylaw and the recommendations and options discussed are provided below under three headings: Public Presentations, Non-statutory public hearings, and Open House. Each of the three sections has some recommended changes or options. These are provided for discussion purposes. Input from the Priorities Committee discussion will help guide the work that Administration is carrying out on the amendment bylaw for the Priorities Committee.

Public Presentations:

Currently, the Priorities Committee Bylaw (section 9.5) allows presentations from the “public” to Priorities Committee for the “special recognition of persons, organizations and events; award presentations; or reports from outside agencies.” Who is permitted to apply to make a public presentation is not well defined and the current bylaw does not address presentations from political parties or political representatives.

In order to add more clarity around public presentations, better parameters on who is permitted to make a public presentation to Priorities Committee are required. In terms of Administration’s role in preparing Priorities Committee agendas and materials, it would be beneficial to ensure that presentation materials are provided in a timely fashion so that they may be reviewed and included in the agenda package. Such a practice also means that the public has the opportunity to review such materials.

Recommendations:

1. Political parties or political representatives are to be excluded from making public presentations to the Priorities Committee.
2. Public presentations must be limited to topics within the municipality’s jurisdiction.
3. Public presentations have a maximum time limit of 15 minutes.
4. Require presentation materials to be provided to the Director at least 10 business days prior to the Priorities Committee meeting.
5. Ensure procedures related to public presentations are clear and concise.

Non-statutory Public Hearings:

Currently, the Priorities Committee Bylaw allows for non-statutory hearings (section 9.3). This section of the bylaw enables the Committee “to agree to hear from a person in attendance at the meeting who wishes to speak to the committee on any matter that is on the agenda.”

While this section of the bylaw also allows the Committee to refuse to hear from a person, the parameters are quite wide. In contrast, the Open House section of the bylaw has a number of exemptions in terms of topics that are off limits (i.e. matters going to a public hearing, matters that are to be addressed by way of SDAB or ARB hearing, etc.).

In practice, the non-statutory public hearing is rarely used.

Recommendation:

1. Eliminate non-statutory public hearings.

Open House:

Currently, the Open House is a standing item on the Priorities Committee agenda, regardless of whether or not there are registered speakers. This means that currently any member of the public (individual or group) may simply appear at an Open House and make an *ad hoc* request to speak. While this mechanism seems to have been intended to ensure that the public has ample opportunities to interface with Priorities Committee and by extension members of Council, in practice this system may lead to an inefficient use of time for both elected officials and Administration. There are a number of changes that could address this issue without unfairly impeding the public's access to Priorities Committee.

Recommendations:

1. Limit the opportunity to speak to Open House to Strathcona County residents or groups.
2. Require that Open House presentations be limited to topics within the municipality's jurisdiction.
3. Clarify the meaning of the term "group."
4. Require any materials to be distributed or displayed (e.g. PPT, handouts, video files, etc.) to be provided to the Director at least by 4pm the day before the Open House.
5. Limit speaking time to 5 minutes for individuals and 15 minutes for groups and require a majority vote for extensions to the time limit.
6. Ensure procedures related to Open House are clear and concise.

Option	Pros	Cons
Include a mandatory registration by 4pm the day before the Open House. In the event that there are no registered speakers, the Open House would simply be canceled.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater efficiency and use of resources (e.g. PC meeting can adjourn once regular business is addressed regardless of time)• Aligns with Council's interest in ensuring that Council and PC meetings are aligned with best practices• Allows Administration to effectively manage Open House procedures (e.g. ensuring that the provisions of the bylaw are explained to registrants)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Less flexibility for <i>ad hoc</i> speeches and less perceived accessibility of Priorities Committee
Status quo – no registration for Open House required	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most flexibility for citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Citizens may not be as prepared and may not understand limitations• Less efficient use of County resources• Does not align with Council's interest in following best practices for Council and PC meeting efficiency

Enclosures

- 1 Priorities Committee Bylaw 19-2015
- 2 Priorities Committee Presentation