

GOV-002-032: Ward Boundary Review Policy (New)**Report Purpose**

To bring forward GOV-002-032: Ward Boundary Review Policy for Council's consideration and to seek Council's direction on the completion of a ward boundary review prior to the 2017 Municipal Election.

Recommendations

1. THAT GOV-002-032: Ward Boundary Review Policy, be approved.
2. THAT Administration utilize internal resources to complete a Ward Boundary Review and report back to Council with ward boundary options that meet the criteria set out in GOV-002-032: Ward Boundary Review Policy on or before the May 24, 2016 Council meeting.

Council History

On March 25, 2003, Council approved the Ward Boundary Objectives and Guiding Principles.

On December 12, 2006, Council passed Bylaw 59-2006, a bylaw to establish the municipal ward boundaries and number of Councillors.

On October 13, 2015, the Priorities Committee passed Motion 2015/P48: THAT Administration bring a report forward to the Priorities Committee considering the Committee's comments on GOV-002-032: Ward Boundary Review Policy, by the end of the first quarter of 2016.

On January 26, 2016, the Priorities Committee passed Motion 2016/P4: THAT the January 26, 2016 Legislative and Legal Services Ward Boundary Review Policy Request for Further Information be referred to Council for discussion and debate on March 1, 2016.

On March 1, 2016, Council passed Motion 2016/82: That Administration prepare, for Council's Consideration, a Ward Boundary Policy for presentation at the April 5, 2016, Council meeting, based upon the following criteria:

1. To use a guideline standard of +/- 25% population deviation as a guideline (comparing urban to urban and rural to rural);
2. Provide effective representation for all residents of Strathcona County;
3. In determining effective representation, take into account community interests and minority representation, particularly in the context of the status of a specialized Municipality with a rural/ urban mix;
4. Use demographic information based on the most recent official Census data and projections;
5. Establish boundaries that will serve our residents for at least the next two elections, taking into account future population growth;
6. Keep neighbourhoods cohesive, insofar as possible (communities of interest);
7. To consider using geographical features as boundaries, when practical.

Strategic Plan Priority Areas

Economy: n/a

Governance: Voters have the right to both equal and effective representation. "Equal" representation requires that a single vote is equal to any other vote cast in the area regardless of location. "Effective" representation ensures that voters have the ability to access their elected representative equal in strength to the rest of the population.

Recognizing that truly 'equal' and 'effective' representation is impossible to achieve, the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that an allowable representation range of + or - 25% from the population mean is appropriate.

Social: Ward boundaries recognize and respect the importance of the urban and rural characteristics of Strathcona County and preserve communities of interest wherever possible.

Culture: n/a

Environment: n/a

Other Impacts

Policy: n/a

Legislative/Legal: The *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) and the *Local Authorities Election Act* (LAEA) govern processes associated with municipal elections. The legislation allows municipalities to establish electoral boundaries for municipal elections and to determine the number of councillors for each ward.

Interdepartmental: Information Technology Services, GIS Branch, Planning & Development Services, Communications

Summary

Enclosure 1 is the proposed Ward Boundary Review Policy which includes the criteria outlined in the motion that Council passed at the March 1, 2016 Council meeting.

In addition to the criteria identified by Council, Administration recommends and has included the following criteria within the proposed policy:

- Section 1) a) Population/Number of Electors
Both population and number of electors will be considered when designing ward boundaries. The population per ward will be the primary factor considered and will fall within the allowable range of +/- 25%. In addition, Administration will review the number of electors and try to maintain, where possible, a relatively equal number of electors in each ward.
- Section 1) f) Least Number of Changes
To provide stability in elected representation and to minimize voter confusion, it is desirable to ensure that the least number of changes from election to election are made to ward boundaries.
- Section 1) g) Block-Shaped Wards
To ensure that ward boundaries are drawn impartially and without the appearance of bias, designing block-shaped wards, insofar as possible, is important.

Enclosure 2 contains a breakdown of population and eligible voters by ward using the 2015 census data. The table on page one compares the five urban wards and the second table compares the three rural wards. Page 2 of Enclosure 2 has been provided for reference purposes only. This table compares the ward population and number of electors of all eight wards.

The proposed policy compares urban to urban and rural to rural populations. All of the ward populations fall within the +/- 25% deviation and therefore, Administration will not be recommending significant changes. However, a ward boundary review will still be needed to

address near-future growth projections and to align the urban service area boundaries with our urban ward boundaries.

Enclosure

- 1 GOV-002-032: Ward Boundary Review Policy
- 2 Ward Populations and Number of Electors Based on 2015 Census Data