GOVERNANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Priorities Committee Bylaw 19-2015 Review

Report Purpose
To provide Council with the Governance Advisory Committee's recommendations on revising the mandate and structure of the Priorities Committee.

Recommendation
That the recommendations for Priorities Committee Mandate and Structure, as detailed below in this report*,* be approved; and that Administration prepare any necessary bylaw amendments for Council's consideration by the December 13, 2016 Council meeting.

Summary
At the June 21, 2016 Council meeting, Council approved a motion to have Administration prepare, in consultation with the Governance Advisory Committee, a revised Priorities Committee Bylaw (19-2015) for Council's consideration. This revised bylaw was due back to Council in October 2016.

Following this direction, Administration worked with the Governance Advisory Committee to look at some potential revisions and updates to the current Priorities Committee Bylaw. As a part of this review, the Governance Advisory Committee looked at the history of the "Committee of the Whole" and how this device is used by other municipalities. This research demonstrated that Committee of the Whole is primarily used by decision making bodies as a means for deliberation (i.e. discussion and debate).

Municipal examples of this type of committee vary in terms of mandate and structure. Some larger municipalities adopt the parliamentary practice of having Council dissolve into Committee of the Whole when Council wishes to have a less formal and fulsome discussion on a particular issue. In these instances, the Committee does not have a set schedule and the mandate remains flexible. Other municipalities, similar to Strathcona County, follow a standing committee structure. In these examples the standing committee includes all members of Council, has a set meeting schedule, and adheres to a less formal set of rules than those of a regular Council meeting. While the mandate for the committee seems to vary depending on the particular municipality in question, in general these types of committees are used for strategic conversations on issues that will ultimately be decided by the municipal Council.

In exploring this topic and considering Council's current context, the Governance Advisory Committee noted that Council agendas are often quite full and that ensuring opportunities for fulsome discussion of municipal issues can be challenging. The Governance Advisory Committee felt that having a dedicated venue for discussion and debate apart from the limited time in Council meetings would be valuable. Further, the Committee believes that the Priorities Committee meetings could be better leveraged to meet this need. The Governance Advisory Committee also believes that moving the Priorities Committee meetings to a less formal venue and incorporating a variety of discussion formats (such as round table discussions, breakout sessions, and workshops) would support Council's decision making process.

Recommendations for Priorities Committee Mandate and Structure

The Governance Advisory Committee recommends that, in addition to some required housekeeping changes to the Priorities Committee Bylaw, the following changes be considered:

1. Expand the Priorities Committee mandate so that the Committee becomes the main venue for debate and discussion on policy issues that are ultimately presented to Council for final approval.
2. Provide the Priorities Committee with the ability to debate and discuss policy issues, make recommendations to Council that specify proposed actions, and refer items to Administration with instructions and direction for further work as required.
3. Rotate the Chair duties according to the Deputy Mayor schedule to allow for more training and experience for Council members.
4. Keep Open House as a part of Priorities Committee but have all other public presentations (i.e. those by industry, community groups, etc.) appear at Priorities Committee or Council meetings as determined by the Mayor's Executive Committee.
5. Effective January 2017, move Priorities Committee meetings to Community Centre Room 2 to allow for a less formal meeting venue and to enable options for various types of discussion formats such as workshops and breakout sessions.
6. Equip Community Centre room 2 with the necessary audio and visual technology to meet the requirements of Priorities Committee meetings.

Community Centre Room 2

In order to ensure that the recommendation to move the Priorities Committee meeting out of Council Chamber to Community Centre room 2 is feasible, the Governance Advisory Committee asked Administration to explore this possibility and to prepare a cost estimate. Administration looked at the cost of the following items:

- Single camera (fixed wall mounted)
- Wireless conference units (24 total)
- Presentation PC
- Clerk PC for drafting motions
- Switcher (control system)
- Document camera (ELMO or equivalent)
- PC requirements for electronic meeting management
- 80 inch display for the north wall

The cost to equip Community Centre room 2 as noted above would be approximately $90,000.00 to $130,000.00. Please see enclosure 1 for an example of the configuration of the meeting space.

Additional Considerations

If Council supports the recommendations, the Governance Advisory Committee also recommends that consideration be given to a name change for the current "Priorities Committee" to better reflect its updated mandate and structure. Finally, the Governance Committee also notes that an evaluation of the current meeting frequency for both Council and Priorities Committee should be undertaken approximately 6 to 12 months after changes are implemented.

Enclosure

1   Community Centre 2 Space Configuration for Priorities Committee Meetings