

Staff Report



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| To | City Council |
| Service Area | Corporate Services |
| Date | Thursday, November 5, 2020 |
| Subject | City Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review, Phase One – Composition and Employment Status |

Recommendation

The following recommendations have been provided by Watson and Associates Economists Ltd., the independent third-party expert contracted by the City of Guelph to complete the City Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review:

1. That Guelph City councillors be elected in a ward system.
2. That one City councillor be elected per ward.
3. That Guelph City Council be comprised of eight councillors plus the Mayor.
4. That the employment status of City councillors be full time.

The following recommendations have been provided by City staff:

5. That phase two of the City Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review, being the Ward Boundary Review, proceed based on the establishment of eight wards.
 6. That staff be directed to bring forward a City Council composition by-law prior to the 2022 municipal election following the adoption of a ward boundary by-law and the expiration of the ward boundary by-law appeal period.
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Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To present the findings of the independent review on phase one of the City Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review project, City Council composition and employment status.

Key Findings

The independent team reviewing City Council composition and employment status is recommending the following:

- That the number of City councillors be reduced to eight.
 - That the number of City councillors elected per ward be reduced to one.
 - That the employment status of City councillors be changed to full time.
 - That, as part of the ward boundary review coming before City Council in the second quarter of 2021, City Council establish eight wards.
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Project Connections and Dependencies

The ward boundary review phase is based directly on the recommendations passed by City Council regarding Council composition.

If by the December 31, 2021 legislated deadline for the passing of a ward boundary by-law for the 2022 municipal election, a ward boundary by-law has not been passed by City Council, or is under appeal at the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT), City staff will bring forward a report seeking to align City Council composition and ward boundaries.

If City Council adopts the recommendations of Watson and Associates Economists Ltd., and a ward boundary by-law is not approved by December 31, 2021, City staff will recommend maintaining the existing City Council composition and ward boundaries for the 2022 municipal election.

If City Council adopts a composition structure other than the one recommended in this report which can be accommodated in the existing six wards, City staff will recommend moving forward with revisions to composition while maintaining the current six wards for the 2022 municipal election.

Financial Implications

A shift to eight full-time City councillors would cost an estimated \$212,700 in additional annual salary and benefits above the \$578,300 currently provided to councillors.

Assuming that eight full-time City councillors will require at least one additional administrative support staff person in addition to the two-existing staff in the Mayor and City Council Office, the additional annual cost in salary and benefits for support staff would be an estimated \$90,350.

Providing offices, meeting space and furniture for eight full-time councillors in City Hall will cost an estimated \$198,000 - \$237,000 in one-time expenses.

The total cost of adopting the recommendations of Watson and Associates Economists Ltd. would be an estimated \$303,050 in additional salary and benefits annually as well as a one-time cost of \$198,000 - \$237,000 to provide offices and meeting spaces in City Hall.

Final recommendations from the City Council Remuneration Advisory Committee regarding salary and benefits for the Mayor and City councillors, and the role and number of support staff for City Council, will be brought forward in 2022. The final costs of a change in City Council composition will be determined by City Council at that time.

Report

Background

On November 26, 2012 [City Council directed staff](#) to prepare a report with respect to the options and implications of conducting an employment status and composition review for City Council to be in effect for the 2018-2022 term of office.

On December 3, 2013 City staff [brought forward a report to the Governance Committee](#) recommending that an independent third-party subject matter expert

conduct a review of City Council composition and employment status. At that time, City Council approved the following recommendations:

1. That a Council Composition and Employment Status Review be conducted by a third-party subject-matter expert during the 2014-2018 term of Council with the intent that any proposed changes to be subsequently approved by Council take effect for the 2018-2022 term of office.
2. That all costs associated with the review be referred to the 2015 budget process for Council approval.
3. That the Terms of Reference for the Council Composition and Employment Status Review come back to the Governance Committee for approval.

At its July 8, 2014 meeting, the Governance Committee received [report CHR 2014-46 Council Composition and Employment Status Review – Terms of Reference](#). This report identified the scope of the project and reiterated the need for the use of an independent third-party subject matter expert to complete the work.

At its June 30, 2015 Governance Standing Committee meeting, City Council received [report CS-2015-58 Council and Employment Status Review – Update](#) that defined the detailed scope of work, including timelines and milestones, to be conducted as part of the project.

During the 2016 budget process, funding for the project was not approved. Section 222 of the Municipal Act establishes legislated timelines related to the passing of ward boundary by-laws. These timelines prevented consideration of the project during the remainder of the 2014–2018 term of City Council.

Following the 2018 election, on July 22, 2019, City Council again [directed staff to engage an independent third-party subject matter expert](#) to conduct a City Council Composition and Employment Status Review during the 2018-2022 term of City Council.

On December 13, 2019, an information report titled [Council Composition, Ward Boundaries and Voting Systems and Methods Review Update](#) identified Watson and Associates Economists Ltd., partnered with ICA Associates Inc., Dr. Robert J. Williams and Dr. David T. Siegel, as the successful proponents engaged, through a formal request for proposals process, to complete the project.

Phase one of the City Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review project, the City Council Composition and Employment Status Review, was initiated in December 2019.

In April 2020, in response to COVID-19 restrictions on public gatherings, the City Council Composition and Employment Status Review was paused prior to the start of in-person community engagement. On July 24, 2020, an information report titled [Council Composition and Employment Status, Ward Boundaries and Voting Systems and Methods Review Update](#) identified that work on the project would resume in August 2020 with a shift from in-person community engagement to online and virtual community engagement. The switch from in-person to online/virtual community engagement required several elements of the project timeline be changed. Those changes are outlined below and summarized in [Attachment-1 of the July 24, 2020 information report](#).

The online engagement plan was developed by leaders in civic engagement from ICA Associates Inc., in consultation with and supported by the City's community

engagement team. While online and virtual engagement was not originally anticipated for this project, the engagement plan was consistent with Guelph's [Community Engagement Framework](#) and the number of residents engaged was consistent with anticipated numbers for in-person engagement. Details on the total number of residents engaged is included in the consultation section of this report. Detailed analysis of the feedback received through the community engagement is outlined in Attachment-1. The feedback provided through the online survey is included in Appendix-G of Attachment-1.

The results of the independent review, including all supporting documents and community engagement results, are included in Attachment-1. The recommendations included in the report are independent and provided directly by Watson and Associates Economists Ltd.

Project Timelines

The decisions made by City Council regarding City Council composition and employment status are the culmination of phase one of the Council Composition and Employment Status and Ward Boundary Review.

Phase two of the project, the ward boundary review, will begin immediately following a City Council decision regarding composition and employment status. As the number of wards is directly dependent upon the number of councillors, ward versus at-large elections and the number of councillors elected per ward, work cannot begin on phase two until final decisions are made as part of phase one. Any delay in decision making regarding the phase one recommendations will cause a delay to phase two.

Phase Two Project Timelines

January/February, 2021: online engagement period.

May/June, 2021: Special City Council meeting to debate phase two recommendations.

May/June – December 31, 2021: six months to allow for a possible appeal of a ward boundary by-law to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT).

December 31, 2021: legislated deadline for the passage of a ward boundary by-law to be in effect for the 2022 municipal election.

Prior to the delay caused by COVID-19, one year was allotted for the hearing of a possible ward boundary by-law appeal to the LPAT. While one year is considered a best practice, it is still possible that appeals (which can vary considerably in size and scope) will be heard by the LPAT and decisions rendered within the six months allotted. A further reduction of this time would reduce the possibility of appeals working through the LPAT prior to December 31, 2021. As the legislated deadline for ward boundary changes in advance of the 2022 municipal election is December 31, 2021, this could result in revised ward boundaries not being in place for the 2022 municipal election.

Project Connections and Dependencies

City Council Composition and Ward Boundaries

If a ward boundary by-law is not passed by City Council by the legislated December 31, 2021 deadline (with no active appeals), then the current ward boundary by-law establishing Guelph's six wards would remain in place.

If the recommendations provided by Watson and Associates Economists Ltd. are approved by City Council, but by December 31, 2021 a ward boundary by-law is not approved (or is pending appeal at the LPAT), staff would bring forward a report seeking to maintain the current composition of City Council for the 2022 municipal election with changes to City Council composition, employment status and ward boundaries delayed until the 2026 municipal election.

If City Council passes resolutions regarding City Council composition which differ from those provided by Watson and Associates Economists Ltd., but which align with a six-ward system, they could be implemented for the 2022 municipal election regardless of the status of the ward boundary by-law.

Voting Systems and Voting Methods

Alternative voting systems, first-past-the-post or ranked ballot, and voting methods, including in-person and remote voting options, can be implemented with the current composition of City Council or with any of the recommendations proposed by Watson and Associates Economists Ltd.

The recommendation that the number of City councillors elected per ward be one, if approved, would make the administration of a ranked ballot election easier in that single-member contests allow for a clear 50 per cent plus one threshold to be elected across all Council offices on the ballot and is likely easier to understand for the public. However, while the [multi-member threshold calculation is more complex and would require a differing calculation consideration for councillor versus Mayoral contests on the ballot](#), it does not make the move to a ranked ballot system impossible.

While there are parts of this review that depend on the outcome of others, it is recommended that City Council decide on composition independent of voting systems and voting methods considerations. City Council composition is a foundational governance structure that lasts for decades, well beyond the voting systems and voting methods which may fluctuate each term before the next municipal election. Based on the composition decision made, a thorough review of options will be provided prior to the legislated May 1, 2021 deadline for voting systems and methods. This work is already underway.

Next Steps

A review of ward boundaries in Guelph will begin immediately following a decision regarding City Council composition. The ward boundary review will only consider options which align ward boundaries with the decisions made by City Council regarding composition. Council will receive a report from Watson and Associates Economists Ltd., and the consultant team, in regards the ward boundary review. This report will be informed by community engagement and by expert knowledge relating to ward boundary reviews in Ontario. City Council will play a role in passing a ward boundary by-law based on input received through engagement and expert recommendations.

City Staff recommend that a ward boundary review be done even if City Council decides to keep the six wards as the current wards have not been comprehensively reviewed since they were created in 1990. Further information on the need to complete a ward boundary review is included as part of section 8, page 34, in Attachment-1.

Financial Implications

Councillor Remuneration

The pay and benefits of City Councillors and the Mayor is set by City Council (as per [Section 283 of the Municipal Act](#)) and, in the case of the City of Guelph, based on the advice of the [City Council Remuneration Advisory Committee](#). For the 2022-2026 term of City Council, the [mandate of the City Council Remuneration Advisory Committee](#) will be expanded to consider the appropriate level of staff support provided to City Council. Final City Council salaries, whether part-time to full-time, will be decided by City Council in 2022 and in advance of the 2022 municipal and school board election. The information provided below is an estimate to ensure the approximate cost of decisions related to City Council composition are known. More complete and accurate costs will be presented and determined by City Council based on the report of the City Council Remuneration Advisory Committee.

A shift to eight full-time City councillors would cost an estimated \$212,700 in additional salary and benefits above the \$578,300 currently provided to Guelph's 12 part-time City councillors.

Current City councillor salaries are \$41,528 + \$6,700 in benefits. To estimate the cost of switching to full-time City councillors, the salaries have been doubled to \$83,056 + \$15,800 in benefits.

The additional cost in benefits would align the benefits package offered to the Mayor with those of City councillors.

Support Staff and Considerations

Full-time City councillors will require support staff. It is contemplated that City Council support staff would fulfill an important role in supporting full-time councillors including scheduling, supporting meeting logistics and booking of travel and accommodations at conferences and education sessions. Customer service, through the ongoing implementation of the [Service Simplified strategy](#) and the [Working Together for our Future](#) priority area of the Strategic Plan, would continue to be supported, delivered and evolved through existing service delivery teams in City departments.

The role and number of support staff has a significant impact on total cost associated with changes to City Council composition. The City Council Remuneration Advisory Committee will provide a recommendation to City Council on the appropriate role and number of support staff in 2022.

The salary and benefit information for three different support positions is provided below as an estimate of the possible future cost of support staffing for full-time councillors.

Executive Assistant: \$86,000 + \$25,800 in benefits

Policy Analyst: \$86,000 + \$25,800 in benefits

Administrative Assistant: \$69,500 + \$20,850 in benefits

Assuming that eight full-time City councillors will require at least one additional administrative support staff person in addition to the two-existing staff in the Mayor and City Council Office, the additional annual cost in salaries and benefits would be \$90,350. Additional support staff, or support staff in roles with higher salaries than administrative assistants, would add to this cost at the rates identified above.

City Facility and Office Space Considerations

It is assumed that full-time councillors would need office space to meet the requirements of their position and host small meetings within the office. Councillors would also likely require two to three meeting rooms for their use to meet with constituents or in larger groups. The meeting rooms have been assumed to be mixed between formal and informal settings with space for six to eight people. Space for support staff has also been contemplated, located in a common area with cubicles. At a maximum, it is expected that approximately 278 - 418 square meters of space would be required for the dedicated use of councillors and support staff. The layout, format and configuration of office space will need to be aware of and informed by the ever-changing landscape of workspaces including telecommuting, hoteling space and shared/co-located workspaces.

Assuming changes in the next two years allow space to be found in City Hall (due to departmental movements, telecommuting or other), a one-time cost ranging from \$198,000 - \$237,000 would be required depending on which of the above mentioned formats or models are identified as the best option and put into place.

Consultations

A robust and City-wide community engagement plan, developed by leaders in civic engagement from ICA Associates Inc., in consultation with and supported by the City's community engagement team, was implemented for this project. The details of that plan, as well as the results and feedback gathered from the community, are included in Attachment-1.

Statistics regarding participation in the community engagement period are included below.

Media Coverage

1. 19 stories in local media outlets.
2. Seven of those 19 stories were letters to the editor or opinion pieces.

haveyoursay.guelph.ca

1. 670 surveys completed.
2. 2,200 visits to the page.
3. 524 total downloads of the project background documents.

[Project Website](#)

1. 241 unique visitors to the page and 321 if you count those that returned multiple times.

Social Media

1. 44,485 reached on Twitter.
2. 45,975 reached on Facebook.

3. Organic reach on both platforms (excluding boosted/paid content) was 85,664 people.
4. Total reach between Twitter, Facebook and Instagram (Instagram was added to reach student populations), both boosted and organic, was 99,418.
5. The virtual town hall video on Facebook has over 2,700 views.

Strategic Plan Alignment

This project aligns with the strategic plan priority of Working Together for Our Future by ensuring that Guelph's governance model effectively represents the needs of residents and the Corporation of the City of Guelph.

Attachments

Attachment-1 Watson and Associates Economists Ltd. City Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review – Phase One Report

Attachment-2 – Watson and Associates Economists Ltd. City Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review – Phase One Presentation

Departmental Approval

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