

Council Memo



To	City Council
Service Area	Corporate Services
Date	Monday, October 25, 2021
Subject	Public Petitions Policy

This memo was prepared in response to questions raised at the October 4, 2021 Committee of the Whole meeting regarding the placing of a petition from the Information Items onto a Committee of the Whole or City Council agenda being a faster way for a member of City Council to add an item onto an agenda than the notice of motion process.

Staff have proposed that petitions introducing new business, with a minimum signature threshold of 25, be placed on the Information Items where a member of City Council could add the petition to the appropriate Committee of the Whole or City Council agenda. This process was designed to balance transparency in the processing of public petitions without being overly onerous for members of the public.

The notice of motion process provides a mechanism for members of City Council to bring forward motions for discussion and debate which are not the result of staff recommendations or staff reporting to City Council. The notice of motion process was recently reviewed as part of the [2018-2022 Midterm Governance Review](#). At the March 22, 2021 Special City Council meeting, City Council approved amending the [Procedural By-law](#) to shorten the notice of motion process by removing the first notice that appeared on an agenda.

Prior to initiating the notice of motion process, a member of City Council must first submit the proposed motion to the relevant service area chair or Mayor for approval to place the matter on a Committee of the Whole or City Council agenda. This is the quickest route for members of City Council to add items directly to agendas – it bypasses the notice of motion process entirely.

An option for making the petition process follow a similar route as the notice of motion process could be to amend the Procedural By-law to specify that members of City Council may request a petition from the Information Items be placed on the appropriate Committee of the Whole or City Council agenda in the form of a referral to staff for an analysis of the petition request. To implement this option, City Council should pass the following motion:

1. That the Public Petitions Policy, included as Attachment-1 to the Public Petitions Policy report dated October 4, 2021, be approved, as amended, to require that a petition pulled from the Information Items is placed on an agenda in the form of a referral to staff.
2. That the Procedural By-law be amended as follows:

Insert Section 13.2 (d): Members of City Council may request a petition from the Information Items be placed on the appropriate Committee of the Whole or City Council agenda in the form of a referral to staff for an analysis of the petition request.

3. That staff be directed to bring forward an amended Procedural By-law to the November 22, 2021 City Council meeting.

City staff continue to support the process outlined in the [Public Petitions Policy](#) report presented to Committee of the Whole. Petitions are not designed as a means of bypassing the notice of motion process but rather to provide a complementary opportunity for members of the public to more directly impact and initiate local decision-making. The requirement that all petitions placed on the Information Items include 25 or more signatures, as well as a notice of motion process that allows chairs to add items directly to agendas, makes it unlikely that petitions could be used as a means of expediting what would traditionally be a notice of motion.

Attachments

None.

This memo was approved by:

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