

Staff Report



To	City Council
Service Area	Corporate Services
Date	Wednesday, September 6, 2023
Subject	2024- 2027 City Council and Committee Meeting Schedule

Recommendation

1. That the 2024-2027 City Council and Committee Meeting Schedule, included as Attachment-1 to report 2024-2027 City Council and Committee Meeting Schedule dated September 6, 2023, be approved.
-

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To move to a four-year calendar schedule to align with the multi-year budget and strategic plan and to approve the 2024-2027 City Council and Committee Meeting Schedule.

Key Findings

The Council and Committee Meeting Schedule, included as Attachment-1, is based on best practices, guiding principles, meeting statistics, qualitative information collected through the agenda forecast review process, community engagement data and stakeholder feedback from staff.

City staff are recommending the following with regards in the 2024-2027 meeting schedule:

- that the calendar continues to reflect significant cultural and religious dates beyond those recognized as statutory holidays;
- that the calendar reflects the years 2024-2027 in alignment with the multi-year budget and Future Guelph Strategic Plan;
- that Committee of the Whole meeting start times be set at 2:00 p.m.;
- that Council Planning and City Council meeting start times be set at 6:00 p.m.
- that Council Orientation and Education Workshop meeting start times be set at 10:00 a.m.;
- that Special City Council budget meeting (excluding budget meetings where the purpose of the meeting is exclusively public delegations) start times be set at 9:00 a.m.;
- that all other City Council meeting start times be set for 6:00 p.m., and;
- that regularly scheduled Council and committee meetings continue to be held on Tuesday with additional meetings scheduled on Wednesday or as determined by the Mayor and City Clerk based on City Council availability.

Strategic Plan Alignment

Approving an annual City Council and Committee meeting schedule aligns with the strategic plan priority of Working Together for Our Future by ensuring that City Council decision-making remains accountable and transparent to the public.

Financial Implications

None.

Report

Pursuant to the City of Guelph's Procedure By-law, City Council is required to approve a City Council and committee meeting schedule.

Key Considerations

Four-Year Schedule

Shifting to a four-year schedule aligns the Council calendar with the multi-year budget and the Future Guelph Strategic Plan while reducing the staff time required to prepare and manage the Council schedule annually. The timing of the cycle also enables a newly elected City Council to set the schedule for the remainder of their term in their first year in office.

Significant Cultural and Religious Dates

In the process of creating the 2023 calendar, the City Clerk's Office worked collaboratively with the City's Senior Advisor for Equity, Anti-Racism, and Indigenous Initiatives to include significant cultural and religious dates and events that are important to the Guelph community. A list of dates was compiled which recognizes that some would necessitate a complete rescheduling of meetings, whereas others require only a shift in start time or an acknowledgment from the Mayor or the meeting chair at the start of a meeting.

City Council unanimously approved the inclusion of cultural and religious dates, which were implemented without issue in 2023. The list of dates is a living document and is updated periodically to reflect the changing needs of the community. As we learn more about the impact of these and other significant dates, we will continue to adjust this list to better inform the development of future Council and committee meeting schedules. For example, International Women's Day was added to the list in 2023 following feedback from members of City Council and the community.

The full list of cultural and religious dates is included as Attachment-4. This document was created by the Senior Advisor, Equity, Anti-Racism, and Indigenous Initiatives, and it applies to all City departments. Staff will be acknowledging these dates in various ways, as outlined in the document.

Meeting Start Times

As part of the 2023 calendar, a recommendation was made to move all meeting start times to 10 a.m. City Council did not support this recommendation and direction was given to staff to conduct community engagement on various meeting start times before presenting the 2024 calendar.

When preparing the 2024-2027 calendar, the City Clerk's Office surveyed members of City Council regarding preferred days and start times for meetings. The City

Clerk's Office and the Community Engagement staff also conducted a public survey and attended in-person pop-up engagements at community events. Full results of the Council survey and engagement data are available in Attachments 2 and 3.

The Council survey results were divided, making it difficult to draw any specific conclusions. The morning meeting time (9-11 a.m.) was the most popular option, however, it also had the most results for "does not work for me". Meetings starting at 5 p.m. or later had the fewest "does not work for me" responses. The preferred day of the week was Tuesday by far. As a result, staff recommend that Tuesday continues as the primary meeting day for Committee of the Whole, Council Planning and City Council meetings.

The results from the public survey indicated that the preferred meeting start time for community members would be later in the day, with 6 or 7:30 p.m. being the most popular option. The start times did not consider the length of meetings, and this could potentially change results if the public recognized that starting at 7:30 p.m. could mean meeting end times approaching midnight. Additionally, community members preferred Saturday or Sunday mornings.

With the divisive nature of the results from both surveys, one recommended meeting start time for all meeting types is unlikely to be acceptable to all stakeholders. Given the divided opinions of City Council and the community, as well as staff's desire for more daytime meetings, City Clerk's Office staff are recommending varying start times for different meeting types. Orientation and Education Workshops which do not permit delegations would be held at 10 a.m., while City Council and Council Planning meetings would move 30 minutes earlier to 6 p.m. This position respects the results of the engagement data while acknowledging that meetings which extend late into the evening hours are problematic and should be avoided.

The shift to 10 a.m. Council Orientation and Education Workshops should appeal to the members of City Council that prefer morning meetings, without affecting the public as delegations are not permitted at these meetings. Shifting other meeting start times forward by 30 minutes to 6 p.m. reflects the reality that late-night meetings should be avoided while recognizing generally that the public preference is still in favour of evening meetings. It is also important to note that in the current model there has not been any noticeable impact on public participation at Committee of the Whole meetings which have a start time of 2:00 p.m. compared to City Council meetings held in the evening.

The continued use of hybrid meetings also mitigates the impact of evening meetings on staff and the public. Staff with reports on consent, for example, can join a meeting remotely given the lower likelihood of questions and debate. Assuming the hybrid style of meetings is continued, this would also be true for the public; allowing them to log into the meeting from home or work, reducing the impact of childcare costs, or the use of a personal day from work, and making it easier for delegates regardless of the meeting start time.

Guiding Principles

The following principles guide the initial development of the meeting schedule. There are situations every year in which these rules cannot be perfectly followed, in those cases, staff seek to align the calendar as closely as possible to these principles.

1. Agendas are published a minimum of ten days prior to a meeting.

2. Committee of the Whole meetings are generally scheduled on the first Tuesday of the month at 2:00 p.m.
3. City Council Planning meetings are generally scheduled on the second Tuesday of the month at 6:00 p.m.
4. Special City Council and meeting placeholders are generally scheduled for the second Wednesday, third Tuesday and third Wednesday of the month at 6:00 pm.
5. Regular City Council meetings are generally scheduled on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 6:00 p.m.
6. Committee of the Whole meetings consist of two or three service areas reporting on alternating months with exceptions made for matters of a timely nature.
7. Committee of the Whole meetings and regular City Council meetings are generally scheduled three weeks apart.
8. Closed City Council and Closed Committee of the Whole meetings are scheduled immediately prior to the corresponding open meeting (start times of closed meetings are based on agenda content).
9. Changes to the meeting calendar are posted publicly as soon as possible.
10. No meetings are scheduled during the week of March break and the month of August.
11. No meetings are scheduled on the next business day following conference opportunities from external organizations such as the Association of Municipalities of Ontario or the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.
12. Committee of Management for the Elliot meetings are scheduled at the end of each quarter and precede the monthly Committee of the Whole meeting.
13. Guelph Municipal Holdings Incorporated and Guelph Junction Railway Annual General Meetings are required to be held prior to June 30 of each year.
14. Meetings dates and times are adjusted so as to not conflict with significant cultural and religious dates. Adjustments can include updates to the meeting start times and/or meeting dates, or in-meeting adjustments such as scheduled breaks or acknowledgement of the event within the meeting.
15. Special City Council budget meetings are scheduled based on feedback from Finance staff and provincial legislation governing the approval of the annual budget.

Financial Implications

None.

Consultations

Members of City Council were engaged through an online survey, the results of which can be found in Attachment-2.

Members of the public were engaged through online surveys and three pop-up locations at community events. The results of this engagement can be found in Attachment-3.

Work on the Notable Dates Matrix occurred between City Clerk's Office Staff and Sara Sayyed, Senior Advisor, Equity, Anti-Racism and Indigenous Initiatives, and Scott McNair, Advisor, Strategic Communication and Community Engagement. The Notable Dates Matrix, 2024 can be found in Attachment-4.

Attachments

Attachment 1 – 2024-2027 City Council and Committee Meeting Schedule

Attachment 2 – Members of City Council Survey Results

Attachment 3 – Public Survey Results – Meeting Start Times

Attachment 4 – Notable Dates Matrix – 2024

Departmental Approval

Stephanie Devost, Senior Corporate Analyst

Dylan McMahon, Manager, Legislative Services/Deputy City Clerk

Report Author

Carrie Murray-Sprague, Council and Committee Coordinator

This report was approved by:

Stephen O'Brien

General Manager, City Clerk's Office / City Clerk

Corporate Services

519-822-1260 extension 5644

stephen.obrien@guelph.ca

This report was recommended by:

Trevor Lee

Deputy CAO, Corporate Services

Corporate Services

519-822-1260 extension 2281

trevor.lee@guelph.ca