

# Information Report

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Service Area	Corporate Services
Date	Friday, July 24, 2020
Subject	<b>Council Composition and Employment Status, Ward Boundaries and Voting Systems and Methods Review Update</b>

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## Executive Summary

### Purpose of Report

To provide updated timelines for completion of the Council Composition and Employment Status, Ward Boundaries, and Voting Systems and Methods Review.

### Key Findings

The Council composition and employment status and ward boundaries reviews were paused in April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Staff have worked with the successful proponents, Watson and Associates Economists Ltd. in partnership with ICA Associates Inc., to develop a revised timeline for the Council composition and employment status and ward boundaries reviews which includes online community engagement in place of in-person community engagement. A summary of the revised timelines and associated deliverables is as follows:

### Phase One – Council Composition and Employment Status Review – Revised Timeline

August 17 – September 4, 2020 – online engagement period

August 25, 2020 – online engagement event

November 5, 2020 – Special City Council meeting to debate phase one recommendations

### Phase Two – Ward Boundary Review – Revised Timeline

January/February, 2021 – online engagement period

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

### Financial Implications

There has been no financial impact to the cost of the project due either to the COVID-19 pandemic delay or move to online community engagement.

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# Report

## Details

### Background

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 to deliver phase one and two (council composition and employment status and ward boundary review) of the project. The report also set out the timelines and deliverables for each phase of the project.

In April 2020, in response to COVID-19 restrictions on public gatherings, phase one of the project was paused prior to the commencement of in-person community engagement.

In an effort to move forward with the project prior to the 2022 municipal election, staff have worked with Watson and Associates Inc. to develop a revised timeline and online community engagement plan scheduled to begin in August 2020. A copy of the revised timeline is included as Attachment-1.

Changes to the project are noted below.

### **Phase One – Council Composition and Employment Status Review**

Timelines for phase one of the project have been adjusted with the objective that any changes to Council composition and ward boundaries be in place for the 2022 municipal election. To achieve this, the project will resume with a shift from traditional in-person community engagement to three weeks of online community engagement beginning August 17 and ending on September 4, 2020. In addition, a workshop/townhall virtual meeting will take place on August 25, 2020. Previously, community engagement was scheduled to avoid the traditional July and August summer vacation months. However, in order to keep the possibility of having changes in place for the 2022 municipal election, it is necessary that engagement begin as soon as possible.

Unlike traditional in-person engagement, online engagement tools will allow those interested in the project to engage with the City, including the virtual workshop/townhall, on their own time and in a remote manner (on-line or via telephone). A report outlining the results of the Council composition and employment status review will be brought forward to City Council in a report to be made available on [guelph.ca](http://guelph.ca) on October 22, 2020. City Council will meet at a Special City Council meeting on November 5, 2020 to debate the proposed changes.

### **Phase Two – Ward Boundary Review**

Phase two of the project, which includes a recommendation on revised ward boundaries that reflect City Council's decision made as part of phase one, will commence with online community engagement activities in January/February, 2021. A staff report outlining the results of the ward boundary review will be brought to City Council at a second dedicated Special City Council meeting in the second quarter of 2021.

## **Impacts on 2022 Municipal Election**

Changes to ward boundaries, as [per s. 222 \(4\) of the Municipal Act](#), are appealable to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT) within 45 days of the passing of a by-law which alters existing ward boundaries. Following City Council's approval of revised ward boundaries in the second quarter of 2021, the new timeline will permit six months to accommodate a potential LPAT appeal where previously there had been one year. Due to the lengthy time required for a ward boundary by-law to move through the appeal process, it would be preferable to allocate one year for the hearing of an appeal. Given that only six months can now be allotted for the LPAT appeal to take place, as a result of the delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a possibility that changes to Council composition and ward boundaries will not be in force for the 2022 municipal election, but rather the 2026 election.

## **Phase Three – Voting Systems and Methods**

Council must make a decision regarding voting systems and methods before May 1, 2021 to meet the requirements of [Section 42 \(1\) of the Municipal Elections Act](#). A review of the voting systems and methods will begin immediately following City Council's decision with respect to phase one in November, 2020.

Online community engagement will begin on November 9, 2020 and run for a three-week period ending November 27, 2020. A final report to City Council will be presented in the first quarter of 2021 and will include a staff recommendation regarding the use of voting systems (first-past-the-post or ranked balloting for City Council offices) and methods (tabulator, internet voting, vote-by-mail and/or telephone voting).

Phase three will be led by the City Clerk's Office. Staff in Corporate Communications and Customer Service and the City Clerk's Office will develop a comprehensive communication plan for all phases of the review.

## **Financial Implications**

There has been no financial impact to the cost of the project due either to the COVID-19 delay or move to online community engagement.

The full \$230,000 cost associated with phase one and two of the project is funded from the Tax Rate Operating Contingency Reserve on a one-time basis. Any costs associated with phase three will be funded from the Election Reserve.

Any future costs resulting from changes to Council composition, such as office equipment, support staff and furniture, will be identified as part of a Council remuneration and support review in 2021 and in preparation for the 2022-2026 term of Council.

## **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: Council Composition and Employment Status, Ward Boundaries, and Voting System and Methods Review Revised Timeline

## **Departmental Approval**

Jennifer Slater, Manager, Information, Privacy and Elections/Deputy City Clerk

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## **This report was recommended by:**

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