

Report to Council

Report Title: Broadcasting Council Meetings Implementation

Prepared By: Fiona Hamilton, Clerk and Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk

Department: Clerk's

Date: July 13, 2021

Report Number: CLK2021-25 **File Number:** C11CL

Attachments: N/A

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number CLK2021-25 - Broadcasting Council Meetings Implementation, prepared by Fiona Hamilton, Clerk and Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk and in doing so approves Option _____.

Report:

Background:

On January 12, 2021 staff brought Report Number CLK2021-01 providing an update on the plan to broadcast Council Meetings in order to determine the preferred options and costs to consider as part of the 2021 Municipal Budget. Council approved proceeding with Option 2 (purchasing eScribe Webcasting Plus with the capability for hybrid meetings) with additional cost information to be presented during the budget deliberations.

Council further discussed the broadcasting project during 2021 Budget Meetings, approving that only six (6) months of the service in the budget and using the Zoom Video Conferencing for the beginning of the year. Council also agreed to proceed with Closed Captioning services to accommodate requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*.

On March 9, 2021 staff brought forward Report Number CAO2021-05 advising on projects that would be submitted under the Municipal Modernization Fund Intake II Grant, including the implementation of broadcasting meetings. It was noted that although funds have been allocated in the 2021 Budget to implement the webcasting software this year, staff applied for the full yearly amount of \$24,000 since the grant funding could be spent throughout 2022. The Municipality of Brockton was successful in the securing this grant. The proposal at this time would be to use the grant funding this year and into 2022, and to defer the funds allocated in the 2021 operating budget for use in the later portion of 2022.

Analysis:

In order to fully implement the webcasting software, staff require Council to decide on the location for future Council Meetings. As the Province has begun its reopening process, staff wish to have the broadcasting plan finalized and implemented by September 2021 in case hybrid meetings, and/or in-person meetings can begin to be arranged as part of the reopening roadmap. As the public has been used to viewing electronic Council Meetings over the past year, staff wish to provide a seamless transition to continue improving transparency and accessibility.

Staff have prepared the following options for Council's consideration on the location of the broadcasted meetings. This would be the permanent location for all future Council Meetings.

Option 1: County of Bruce Council Chambers

Staff have contacted the County of Bruce to determine when they would allow the Municipality access to their Council Chambers. At this time, the County of Bruce is planning on returning to a hybrid/in-person meeting schedule beginning in October of 2021. This timeline is partly in recognition of the provincial reopening plan and also to arrange for upgrades to the Council Chambers. New audio equipment is being installed along with additional television screens to improve accessibility in the facility.

The County has indicated that Brockton would be welcome to continue using the Council Chambers along the same timeline with an agreement coming forward in the near future. The current rent is \$200.00 per meeting.

With the improved audio equipment and television equipment, the Bruce County Chambers is a professional facility with a large enough size to accommodate large public meetings.

However, the only challenge with the County of Bruce Council Chambers is that it would not be used to accommodate the Committees of Council. At this time, most Committees are able to meet via Zoom, and the few Committees who have not used Zoom could begin to meet again at municipal facilities once the Province enters Step 3.

Option 2: Cargill Community Centre

The Cargill Community Centre is a municipally-owned facility, also providing the benefit of being fully accessible to residents and it could allow the E-scribe webcasting software to be used for Committee meetings as well.

However, the Cargill Community Centre would require additional investments in appropriate furniture and branding. In addition, the meeting room in the Centre is much smaller than the Bruce County Council Chambers. In order to accommodate the size, staff would likely need to remain remote and "zoom" in to the meetings.

Other Considerations to Note:

Appearance of Broadcasted Meetings

Since Council members are currently used to the Zoom Video Conferencing software, featuring headshots of each Council member, it should be noted that using the E-scribe software, the appearance of Council meetings

will only show a view of the entire room, and equipment would not zoom in on any particular members. This practice is common with other Municipalities who have already broadcasted meetings prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Vote Manager

Council agreed to purchase the Vote Manager module through E-scribe webcasting, which allows Council resolution votes to appear in real time on a screen to allow the public to view votes transparently. This process is currently used by the County of Bruce. Vote Manager may also provide comfort in displaying votes since the camera angle view does not accommodate the same way as the current Zoom setup which shows each Council member raise their hand individually.

Staff seek Council's direction on the location of the broadcasted Council Meetings in order to proceed to setup and install the software in preparation for October 2021.

Sustainability Checklist:

What aspect of the Brockton Sustainable Strategic Plan does the content/recommendations in this report help advance?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Do the recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision? | Yes |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Cultural Vibrancy? | Yes |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Prosperity? | Yes |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to Environmental Integrity? | Yes |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to the Social Equity? | Yes |

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:

- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective? Yes

Reviewed By:



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Respectfully Submitted by:



Fiona Hamilton, Clerk



Sarah Johnson, Jr. Deputy Clerk

Reviewed By:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sonya Watson", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer