



City of Moose Jaw

COMMUNICATION # EC-2019-0056

TITLE: Review of Boards, Committees and Commissions

TO: Executive Committee

FROM: City Clerk/Solicitor Department

DATE: June 5, 2019

PUBLIC: This is a public document.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Administration be directed to undertake a review of the City's Board, Committee and Commission structure and appointments with a view to rationalization; eliminating duplication with other community groups undertaking similar work; eliminating any that may have lost a clear need, or combining committees such that they function in a manner to optimize resource allocation and member time commitment; and

THAT the review include a determination of which committees need to retain elected member representation as well as whether additional reporting mechanisms could strengthen monitoring of third-party boards receiving City funding; and

THAT the review include addressing alternative means of engaging public input on specific topics and/or creation of single purpose Ad Hoc Committees with a finite mandate; and

THAT a report be provided to Executive Committee by the end of October, 2019; and further

THAT any Committee, Board or Commission member whose term expires on August 31, 2019, be approached to allow their appointment to be extended to December 31, 2019.

TOPIC AND PURPOSE

Over the years, the City of Moose Jaw has maintained a broad range of Committees, Boards and Commissions as an avenue for receiving public input and providing advice to Council. It is timely to undertake a review of the structure in place to determine if it continues to meet the City's needs and consider whether there are additional and/or alternative methods for engaging the public.

BACKGROUND

The City of Moose Jaw has historically maintained a very substantial formal consultation process with a large number of Boards, Committees, Commissions, and appointments to third-party funded Boards. This structure is administratively burdensome and requires a minimum equivalent full-time secretarial position to manage the agenda, minutes and associated work related to the Committees. There is also a requirement for other staff time, generally at the Director level to be Chief Advisor to the Committees. This takes them away from their core duty of managing their respective department. In addition, there are some Committees which are not supported by subject matter experts in Administration and as a result function in isolation from Administration.

The purpose of a review at this point is to take stock of which committees remain relevant, function in an optimal manner, and/or whether public input in these areas can be approached from a different vantage point.

The City of Moose Jaw's current Boards, Committees and Commissions are listed below:

Advisory Committees:

- Cultural Diversity Advisory Committee
- Economic Development Commission
- Environment Advisory Committee
- Heritage Advisory Committee
- Housing Advisory Committee
- Municipal Planning Commission
- Murals Project Management Committee
- Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee
- Special Needs Advisory Committee
- Transportation Services Advisory Committee
- Youth Advisory Committee

Third-Party Boards/Committees:

- Moose Jaw Museum & Art Gallery
- Tourism Moose Jaw
- Moose Jaw Cultural Centre
- Moose Jaw Exhibition Board
- Moose Jaw Humane Society
- South Central Transportation Planning Committee
- South Central Regional Intersectoral Committee
- SUMA

The City also maintains Leases with Organizations for use of City Facilities

- Fifth Avenue Collection Ltd.
- Gymtastiks of Moose Jaw Inc.
- YM-YWCA

- Cosmo Senior Citizen's Centre Inc.
- Moose Jaw Ladies Slo-Pitch Inc.
- Moose Jaw Kosekian Judo Club
- W.J. Jones & Son Ltd.
- Moose Jaw & District Senior's Association Inc.
- Moose Jaw Lawn Bowling Club Inc.
- Hillcrest Golf Course

DISCUSSION

Public consultation can take many forms and can be directed to those specific issues that require public input rather than maintain so extensive a system as currently exists. The time and resources may be better spent on value added projects. Many cities have moved to other models including utilizing public Open Houses on particular subjects. For example, potential changes to a Zoning Bylaw or expansion of subdivisions (Westheath). There is also a shift to maximizing the use of digital platforms for receiving the input of residents on single issue matters. This was recently the case with consultations around changes to the Traffic Bylaw and the Smoking Bylaw. Many communities have moved away from use of committees as they have experienced a decline in the interest of community members to commit to a one or two year term of volunteer service and where the purpose of the Committee's work often lacks on-going impact, hence failure of meetings due to lack of quorum.

It should be noted that until 2015, the City did not have a Communications Manager position; hence, there was no available resource to coordinate more flexible forms of communicating, consultation and engagement. The City missed the opportunity to become involved in the rapidly developing area of social media communications. This is now certainly a focus of the Communications position going forward.

In the recent Budget and City Services survey, one of the questions asked was "What methods should the City undertake to solicit input from Moose Jaw residents when major decisions are being contemplated?"

Online surveys were the overwhelming choice, with 85% of respondents preferring that engagement method. It's worth noting that the largest share of all survey participants (26%) came from the 55-64 age bracket, and 19% were 65+. Those statistics should quell any concerns that an older demographic would not be "heard" through an online engagement practice.

Through that survey and the 2018 Transportation Services survey on potential bylaw changes, a wealth of community feedback was solicited for Council to have at their disposal on those respective issues.

The number of municipalities transitioning to online public engagement is rapidly expanding and the City of Moose Jaw could easily make this transition as well, generating significant time and cost savings.

The Communications Office could manage this process via a new page on the City's website and utilize local media and social media to promote this new engagement service. It would also be possible to conduct surveys on multiple issues within the same time periods.

New technologies make the process of public consultation, that used to be solely addressed through advisory committees, much more effective and include the population as a whole compared to select appointees.

As regards to third-party organizations with Council member appointees, a further issue is that Council members may feel required to advocate for the committee yet represent the City. It is difficult to serve two masters. A Council member's role on the advisory or other committees should be as a liaison between City Council providing a conduit, however, never as the chief spokesperson for the committee. The presence of Council member appointees on these organizations creates an awkward conflict of duties particularly in the case of budget allocations from the City. At the same time, there is a clear interest by the City to ensure appropriate communication from groups relying on City funding. As a possible alternative, attention should be given to examining more rigorous reporting processes such that an appropriate level of monitoring and financial information can be maintained.

In terms of monitoring, there are numerous enhancements to reporting from third party organizations, which might give Council, and the public, greater confidence. These could include receiving previous years' financial statements, current budget, strategic plan (if there is one), reporting on how requested funds will be used and how they have been used in the past, and an annual update on capital maintenance to buildings (where appropriate).

OPTIONS TO RECOMMENDATION

No review be undertaken.

PUBLIC AND/OR STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

An individual survey of all existing Committee members would be undertaken. Each member would be asked about the strengths and weaknesses of their existing Committee, whether they believe their existing mandates ought to be maintained, and/or could be delivered in a different format or meeting frequency. Also, whether the degree of volunteer commitment is appropriate to the functioning of their committee.

Members of Administration associated with various committees would be asked for feedback with respect to the relative impact and/or challenges faced by their specific committee.

The public would also be invited to provide input.

COMMUNICATION PLAN

On approval of the review by Council, a news release would be issued to advise the public of the review. The City's website and social media would be utilized to disseminate information. Individual letters would be directed to all existing committee members seeking their input.

STRATEGIC PLAN

The Vision Statement establishes a strategic focus for City Government's work and priorities. As well, it is intended to engage others – committees, community groups, businesses, institutions and residents – and it invites everyone to work together toward a shared and intentional future for the City. The guiding principle is a collaborative future to share a commitment of thinking and working together with the citizens of Moose Jaw to achieve our vision of the future.

BYLAW OR POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Most Advisory Committees, Boards and Commissions are created by Bylaw. Any changes to mandates, composition or functioning of these committees would require either an amendment or repeal of a bylaw.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The review would be conducted by City staff as part of their normal duties. Any long-term recommendations from the review could potentially result in the reallocation of resources.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

There are no Privacy or Official Community Plan implications to this report.

As this Review and consultation will take some time to complete, it is recommended that all current Committee members whose terms expire on August 31, 2019 be contacted to determine if they would allow their appointment to be extended to December 31, 2019.

One additional consideration that has been raised is to return to a schedule where all City Committees, Boards and Committees are appointed on a calendar year basis, commencing January 1 annually.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public Notice pursuant to the Public Notice Policy is not required.

PRESENTATION

The City Clerk/Solicitor will provide a verbal overview of this report.

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments to this report.

REPORT APPROVAL

Written by: Myron Gulka-Tiechko, City Clerk/Solicitor

Reviewed by: Tracy Wittke, Assistant City Clerk

Approved by: Jim Puffalt, City Manager

Approved by: Fraser Tolmie, Mayor

To be completed by the Clerk's Department only.

Presented to Regular Council or Executive Committee on _____.

No. _____ Resolution No. _____