

Council & Standing Committees Proposed Meeting Schedule for September – December, 2015

General Committee Meeting
Monday, May 26, 2015

Presented by M. Pettit, Deputy City Clerk

Background

- In November, 2014, Markham City Council approved the 2015 Council & Standing Committee meeting schedule for January to June, 2015
- Staff requested to review meeting schedules in other municipalities & report back on same prior to Council approving the schedule for the remainder of 2015
- Staff will be reporting back in September on proposed Procedural By-law amendments

Municipal Context – Meeting Schedules

- Staff reviewed the meeting practices of the following 10 Ontario municipalities:

- Aurora
- Brampton
- Burlington
- London
- Mississauga
- Oakville
- Oshawa
- Richmond Hill
- Vaughan
- Waterloo

Research Results

- **Number of Standing Committees**
 - Ranges from 2 – 5 Standing Committees
 - Larger Cities have more – with specific mandates (i.e., Audit or Finance or Budget Committee)
 - London & Mississauga each have 5 Standing Committees

Research Results (Cont'd)

- **How often do Standing Committees meet?**
 - Dependent on the number of Standing Committees
 - Ranges from every second week to once per month
 - Specialized Committees may meet only once per year
i.e., Audit Committee
- **How often does Council meet?**
 - Half meet once per month, half meet twice per month

Research Results (Cont'd)

- **What day do Standing Committees meet on?**
 - Majority meet on a Monday or Tuesday
 - Those with more Standing Committees range from Monday to Thursday
- **What day does Council meet on?**
 - Half surveyed meet on a Monday night, others on a Tuesday night, & two meet on Wednesdays during the day (Mississauga & Brampton)

Research Results (Cont'd)

- **What time do Standing Committees meet?**
 - Ranges from 9:30 AM start time to evening start times
 - Some meet in the afternoon with start times ranging between 1:30 PM & 4 PM
- **What time does Council meeting start?**
 - Majority in the evenings or late afternoon start (4 PM)
 - Mississauga starts at 9:00 AM; Brampton starts at 1 PM



Research Results (Cont'd)

- **What is composition of Standing Committees?**
 - Majority are comprised of Mayor and All Members of Council
 - London and Oakville have partial Council composition on Standing Committees

Research Results (Cont'd)

- **Average length of Council meetings for comparators:**
 - Ranges from 1 to 3 hours
- **Average length* of Council meeting for Markham = 2.5 hrs**
- **Average length of Standing Committee meetings for comparators:**
 - Ranges from 1 to 7 hours
- **Average length* of Standing Committee meeting for Markham = General Committee 3.7 hrs & Development Services Committee 3.6 hrs**

* based on 2014 meeting stats

Research Results (Cont'd)

- **Are meetings televised?**
 - Majority of those surveyed have Council meetings televised by local cable network
 - Standing Committees are web-streamed live
- City of Markham investigating live web streaming as part of the e-agenda project*

*project currently on hold until outcome of e-Plan project has been determined

Interviews with Council Members

- Opportunity to interview Council Members in the context of Procedural By-law review exercise:
 - Majority of Members surveyed indicated they are **satisfied with current scheduling cycle** of Council & Standing Committees i.e., General Committee on Mondays, Development Services Committee on Tuesdays, and Council on alternate Tuesdays
 - Majority of Members surveyed indicated a **preference for a later start time for Standing Committees**
 - Some suggested 9:30 am or afternoon start time with a hard stop time e.g., 1-5 pm

Interviews with Council Members (Cont'd)

- Members surveyed indicated that duration of meetings could be shortened if Councillors didn't speak more than once on an issue
- This matter can be addressed as part of the Procedural By-law Review Report in the Fall

Development Services Committee – Part A & Part B

- DSC suggested staff review whether to return to Part A & Part B meeting schedule:
 - Previous system of rotating Part A presentations with Part B reports every other week often resulted in very light Agendas or meeting cancellations
 - Two week cycle is appropriate for typical volume of policy items and development applications
 - Combining presentations and development items (Part A and Part B items) is not problematic

Council Recognition Meetings (CRMs)

- Staff were asked to report back on the following in response to a lack of quorum that was experienced at the May 7th Community Recognition Meeting(CRM):
 - Do CRMs have to be held as official Council Meetings?
 - Have there been quorum issues in the past?
 - Does missing a CRM count towards the absence requirements under the Act?

Background on CRMs

- CRMs were initiated in November 2012 in an effort to streamline regular Council meetings & are scheduled once a quarter (12 CRMs held to date)
- Since their inception, they have been well received and heavily attended by the public.
- **658*** deserving individuals have been honoured to date

* Including May 7, 2015 CRM

Are CRMs Official Meetings?

- In accordance with the Municipal Act, a meeting is defined as “any regular, special, or other, meeting of a Council or a local board or of a committee of either of them.”
- This has been interpreted in case law to mean that where there is at least 50% of the Members present & they are together for the purpose of conducting Council business - it is a meeting
- Staff's opinion is that CRMs **are** Council Meetings

Have There Been Quorum Issues at CRMs?

- No quorum issues have been experienced since the implementation of CRMs, save & except the recent May 7th meeting date
- Dates for CRMs are set as part of the Council & Standing Committee meeting schedule & meeting invitations sent via Outlook

CRMs & Vacancy Requirements

- Pursuant to the Municipal Act, regarding vacancies, the office of a member becomes vacant if the member, “is absent from the meetings of council for three successive **months** without being authorized to do so by a resolution of council”*
- Failure to attend a CRM held only once a quarter by a Member of Council should have minimal impact

*S. 259 of the Municipal Act

Conclusions

- Markham's current Council & Standing Committee scheduling practices are consistent with our Municipal comparators
- Feedback received from Council Members indicates they are mostly satisfied with current structure of meeting schedule

Staff Recommendations

1. That status quo for scheduling Council & Standing Committees be maintained:
 - General Committee on Mondays
 - Development Services Committee & DSC Public on Tuesdays daytime and evening, respectively
 - Council Meetings on alternate Tuesdays
 - No regular Council & Standing Committee meetings be scheduled in July & August

Staff Recommendations (Cont'd)

2. That the start time for DSC Public & Council Meetings remain at 7 PM
3. That the current structure & schedule of CRMs be maintained
4. That Members of Council be reminded to provide the Clerks Dept with regrets in advance if they are unable to attend these or any other Council/Standing Committee meetings

Staff Recommendations (Cont'd)

5. That staff continue to endeavour to avoid scheduling statutory meetings on religious high holidays
6. That the proposed meeting schedule for [July–December 2015](#) be approved.



Building Markham's Future Together
Journey to Excellence

Questions?