

STAFF REPORT

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG



Report to:	Mayor and Council Members	Priority:	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low
Submitted by:	Brent Larmer, Director, Legislative Services/ Municipal Clerk Legislative Services Division blarmer@cobourg.ca	Meeting Type: Open Session <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Closed Session <input type="checkbox"/>	
Meeting Date:	January 24, 2022		
Report No.:	Legislative Services-003-22		
Submit comments to Council			

Subject/Title: **Advisory Committee, Local Board and Quasi-Judicial
Committee Input Results on the eventual return to In-Person
Meetings**

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council receive the report for information purposes; and

FURTHER THAT Council authorize the Clerk's Office to begin to prepare to allow for the use of a Hybrid Meeting format for Committee Meeting participation by Members that would allow for the combination of physical attendance and electronic attendance by Members in Council Chambers to continue provide equal opportunity for participation depending on comfort level during the fluid COVID-19 Pandemic; and

FURTHER THAT Council authorize the live streaming of Committee, Local Board, and Quasi-Judicial Committee meetings only, to allow for public viewing at the time of the meeting and Members of the Public and Delegates/Presenters shall only participate electronically; and

FURTHER THAT this return to modified in-person meetings, shall commence when Municipal Council starts to return to hybrid meetings, when it is safe to do so.

1. STRATEGIC PLAN

Not applicable.

2. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

This staff report contains survey results and feedback from Committee Members of various Town of Cobourg Advisory Committees, Boards and Quasi-Judicial Committees. The Town of Cobourg currently has a Volunteer Membership on these Committees of 52 Members. 45 Members completed the survey and provided feedback on the eventual return to in-person meetings.

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information on Committee, Local Board and Quasi-Judicial Committee Members input on the return to in-person meetings.

4. ORIGIN AND LEGISLATION

On September 20, 2021, Council approved the return to in-person Council Meetings through Hybrid Electronic Participation as well as approved changes to the Council Procedural By-law regarding electronic participation and approved the Policy on Electronic Hybrid Council Meetings. As part of that discussion and the Staff report, Council provided direction to Staff for all Council Advisory Committees to participate through electronic participation utilizing Zoom Video Conferencing for the remainder of the Municipal Council Term or until Council provides further direction to return to in person meeting. This report is to provide Council with information and input from Members who are going into the final year in this term of Council to participate on their respective Committee or Board, prior to having to reapply for the future term in 2023.

5. BACKGROUND

Since late October 2020, Town of Cobourg Advisory Committees, Local Boards and Quasi-Judicial Committees have been meeting remotely (or electronically) to continue to provide recommendations to Council to support decision making on specific matters during the constant changing pandemic environment. On September 12, 2021, Municipal Council approved a Hybrid Model for Municipal Council Meetings to start to transition back into Council Chambers to meet in person and via electronic participation. Council met from October 2021 to December 2021 effectively using this model. These methods of meeting proved to be successful and had a combination of 1 to 2 members at one time participating electronically while the rest of Council were physically present in Council Chambers.

6. ANALYSIS

The Town of Cobourg has several active Advisory Committees. Advisory committees are distinctly different from those Council Meetings covered above, primarily in that their recommendations are made to Council for consideration only with the potential of Council endorsement and direction.

These advisory committees generally carry out their mandate in a less formal manner with their minutes being presented to Council for information and recommendations provided to Council for consideration. While the open meeting

requirements in the Act do not specifically apply to advisory committees of Cobourg (i.e. Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Transportation Advisory Committee, etc.), Cobourg's Procedural By-law, Advisory Committees Policy, and the Committee specific Terms of Reference, do speak to:

- requiring the meetings be open to the public.
- meeting locations with the meetings generally being held at the Municipal Office on the third floor, although meetings may occasionally be held elsewhere in the Town of Cobourg if deemed necessary or appropriate.
- decisions reached by the Committee shall be based on a majority vote based on quorum, where the Chair will call for a formal vote by a show of hands.

Thus far, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Town's Advisory Committees have successfully enjoyed the convenience and ease of electronic meetings. Although, Staff and the Clerks Office has heard from most members requesting an option or timeline to return to in-person meetings. Thus, the Clerks Office implemented a survey for all Members of the various Advisory Committees, Local Boards and Quasi-Judicial Committees to gain a understand of their feelings and comments surrounding the eventual return to in-person meeting or a means or format to meeting.

Below are the results from the Advisory Committee Member Survey:

1. Which one of the following options describes your feelings about in-person meetings right now?

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- Absolutely comfortable with i... 29
- Slightly uncomfortable, I prefe... 12
- Uncomfortable, I absolutely pr... 3
- Not care either way 1

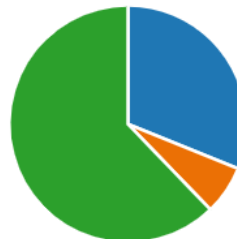


2. What is your meeting preference when attending a Committee/Board Meeting in 2022?

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- In-Person Only 14
- Virtual Only (Zoom Participati... 3
- Hybrid Meeting (Virtual and In... 28



3. Please provide details if you wish as to why you choose your meeting preference

	Responses:
1	In person can be far more productive if we wear masks
2	In person allows for a more full discussion of issues and a better sense of any nuances involved.
3	Hybrid offers different experiences
4	I am fine with in-person meetings as long as all participants are fully vaccinated. That wasn't given as a choice in either question 1 or question 2, which made it difficult to answer.
5	Although I personally would prefer full attendance at in-person meetings, hybrid meetings give people who are uncomfortable with gatherings due to health concerns the option of attending
6	I am primary caregiver to vulnerable family member and I wish to minimize my exposure to others, especially since committee meetings tend to be almost two hours in length and the location (likely Victoria Hall) does not permit ventilation via opening of windows. I believe spring time earliest may be a viable time to return to in-person meetings. Also, consider that access via zoom is a benefit with regard to accessibility and inclusion of the public
7	Hopefully by the beginning of next year, the number of new cases will have decreased. With proper distancing and proof of full vaccination we should be fine
8	I don't like Zoom
9	A hybrid meeting would allow someone making a delegation, for example, to take part without increasing number of participants in the meeting space or if they are uncomfortable with in-person meetings
10	Virtual is very convenient
11	I prefer in person meetings and would be comfortable doing so if all participants were double vaccinated
12	It would be unlikely to have public attendance at COA meetings as meeting rooms are too small to conform with covid protocols
13	I wish to respect the comfort zone of my Committee colleagues. While I'm fully vaccinated, I'm aware that there is a statistical possibility that I may yet be a virus carrier
14	I think a hybrid model could provide people the opportunity to participate in meetings in way that works for them.
15	I am in Toronto for school and would not be able to make any in-person meetings
16	As the chairperson the virtual meeting is easier and more efficient. No need to carry documents to a meeting and organize them. Also saves time - no travel time to and from a meeting.
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18	I'm very comfortable and wish to have in person but some people may not be comfortable with in person. Also I do not wish to meet with unvaccinated persons.
19	Infection rates are significantly on the rise right now and about a third of hospitalizations are fully vaxxed people. I'd prefer to limit my indoor exposure to others until we know whether we're entering yet another intense wave of Covid-19

20	As long as masks are worn, I have no problem with an in-person meeting. It's time to try to get back to something that close to normal.
21	Due to a disability, I may not be able to attend the in person. But can virtually.
22	My discomfort level with in-person meetings refers to a concern of having sufficient space between each participant. I believe the councillors have expanded space from what they had before COVID. Would committees also have this or would we be meeting around one big table as before? If it's around one big table, I'd prefer Zoom. If it's in expanded space, I am fine with in-person and feel that in-person is more conducive to a fuller discussion of issues. I would also feel better knowing that everyone was fully vaccinated. If not a requirement, then I'd prefer virtual meetings (Hybrid meetings could accommodate people who are not vaccinated.
23	Hybrid allows us to accommodate anyone
24	I feel we are at a point that in- person meetings are safe. Individuals are doubled vaccinated. In- person meeting is more productive and inclusive
25	With masks and spacing and jabs, I am comfortable in meeting with other CofA board members.
26	Depends on the covid number
27	With everyone needed to show proof of being vaccinated I am okay meeting in person. I like the flexibility that hybrid meetings would offer, this also allows persons who may not be vaccinated to attend without needing to disclose their status
28	By keeping 2 meters apart and everyone wearing a mask, I feel I am safe. I have not heard of a large number of local folks coming down with Covid. But it's all around us and we need to keep aware. Its nice to get the non voice communications with in person meetings, but not essential.
29	In person for those that want to attend and virtual for those that prefer to be remote
30	I would like in person meetings once this Omicron wave subsides

4. Would you be willing to provide Proof of Vaccination via the Ontario COVID-19 QR Code to attend a Municipally owned Building to participate in a in-person meeting?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)



5. Would you be willing to attend a Committee/Board Meeting at a different scheduled time than your normally scheduled meeting time in order to assist municipal staff in organizing in-person meetings pursuant to COVID-19 Protocols?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)



6. All Advisory/Board Meetings are open to the public to attend as observers, due to meeting room capacity, would you agree to have your meeting livestreamed on the Town of Cobourg Website to allow for the public to view at home?

[More Details](#)



7. Any other comments or feedback you'd like to share for what you expect or hope to see from the Town as you begin to meet in person again?

	Responses
	Hope to see masking and sanitation areas to wash hands.
	All participants at in-person meetings should be fully vaccinated.
	I think that the proof of vaccination could be either the QR code or the printout proof of having the proper vaccines
	As a volunteer advisory committee member I am neither a paid employee nor covered by Town staff health insurance. Therefore I need to make decisions based on personal risk assessment. If meeting in person I would wear PPE including appropriate mask and eye covering. Or I would attend by conference call if Town policy permits it. Or if no viable option is available I would retire. However exposure to other people for extended periods of time like a meeting, whether they are vaccinated or not, does not reduce risk for me or family members dependent upon me.
	Hope all participants for in person meeting are double Vax and proof is required to enter Town owned facility
	In person meetings in my opinion are more productive, allow much more interaction amongst committee members, staff and public. Given everyone's current experiences in dealing with covid, there should be no

	reason that in person meetings cannot be conducted safely going forward
	Thank you for engaging us in this process. I really appreciate the opportunity
	I'd rather not be recorded as part of my volunteer role for the town
	I believe we must have more normalcy in our interactions. I support the town's actions
	I am sure the Town will do the right things necessary for our health and safety

In summary of the survey results received, 87% of members filled out and completed the survey and provided input to Staff. It should be noted that this survey was circulated near the end of 2021 and at a time where COVID-19 case numbers and rate of transmission were considerably lower than today's situation. These results should be taken as answers when numbers and restrictions are in the Phase Three opening Regulations under the *Reopening Ontario Act*.

Quick highlights:

- 64% of Members said they were comfortable with in person meetings and 27% said they were slightly comfortable with in-person meetings. While 7% were only comfortable meeting virtually.
- 62% believe that a Hybrid Model (electronic and in-person) meetings would be a meeting preference if in-person meetings were to continue back up.
- 93% of Members agreed to be flexible to change a meeting date and time if there was a need to enhance staff resources during the day to help screen and perform extra health and extra technology measures.
- 93% of Members agreed to have meeting livestreamed on the Town of Cobourg Website to allow for the public to view at home in order to accommodate the public to view these open Committee and Board Meetings.

As a result of the survey, Staff are recommending that Council allow for Staff to start and plan for the resumption of Hybrid Meetings for Committee, Local Board and Quasi-Judicial meetings, and implement these types of meetings once it is safe to do so and Council Starts to meet in person once again.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/BUDGET IMPACTS

There are no financial implications or budget impacts related to this Staff Report. Staff will utilize current set up that is being used to conduct and stream Municipal Council Meetings.

8. CONCLUSION

In summary and as outlined in the action recommended, staff is recommending that Council authorize the Clerk's Office to begin to prepare to allow for the use of a Hybrid Meeting format for Committee Meeting participation by Committee Members that would allow for the combination of physical attendance and

electronic attendance by Members in Council Chambers to continue provide equal opportunity for participation depending on comfort level during the fluid COVID-19 Pandemic; and

FURTHER THAT Council authorize the live streaming of Committee, Local Board, and Quasi-Judicial Committee meetings only, to allow for public viewing at the time of the meeting and Members of the Public and Delegates/Presenters shall only participate electronically; and

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Advisory Committee, Local Board and Quasi-Judicial Committee Input Results on the eventual return to In-Person Meetings.
Attachments:	-
Final Approval Date:	January 14, 2022

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Tracey Vaughan, Chief Administrative Officer – Jan 14, 2021 - 2:23 PM