



STAFF REPORT

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG

Strategic Priorities and Policy Standing Committee

Report to: Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillors
From: Kristina Lepik, Deputy Clerk/Manager, Legislative Services
Standing Committee Date: June 4, 2024
Report Number: LS-2024-015
Council Meeting Date: June 26, 2024
Subject: **Public Notice Policy Update**

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1. Recommendation:

THAT Council receive this report for information purposes; and

FURTHER THAT Council approve the amended Public Notice Policy as required pursuant to Section 270 (1) (4) of the *Municipal Act, 2001* as amended.

2. Executive Summary:

Staff are recommending that Council approve the updates to the Public Notice Policy, as shown in Attachment 2. The updates are recommended to ensure the Policy is flexible and remains relevant. The Policy is a minimum standard for notice, Staff and Council are able to go beyond the minimum requirements as deemed necessary.

3. Background

Subsection 270 (1)(4) of the Municipal Act, 2001, provides that a municipality shall adopt and maintain a Policy with respect to the circumstances in which the municipality shall provide notice to the public and if notice is to be provided, the form, manner, and times notice shall be given.

The Town's current Public Notice Policy was brought into effect on July 14, 2014. In the past ten (10) years there have been many changes, especially in the manner of which notice is provided. Most notably there has been discussion around notice that is to be provided by publishing in a local newspaper with circulation in the municipality. With the recent announcement of Metroland Media ceasing print media, many communities, across Ontario, including the Town of Cobourg, were left with no newspaper options.

4. Discussion:

The updates to the Public Notice Policy have been suggested to ensure the Policy is flexible and remains relevant, considering the recent changes to the notice landscape.

Some sections of the current Policy require that notice be included in a newspaper. However, this is not a legislated requirement, rather a requirement that was determined by the Town. Reflecting that newspapers are no longer being circulated in hardcopy to the community, all references to non-statutory notice being included in a newspaper have been revised to indicate notice be communicated on the municipal website.

Moreover, there is a recognition that notice requirements may differ depending on the project. It is important to note that this Policy includes the minimum requirements for providing notice, Council or Staff may exceed these requirements as deemed appropriate.

Additional changes include the removal of public meeting requirements when not statutorily required. With the recent changes to the Procedural By-law members of the public have an opportunity to attend Standing Committee meetings and Council meetings and address Council directly regarding any items on the agenda. Standing Committee agendas are posted three (3) weeks prior to Council Meetings and the Policy has been updated to require Staff to provide notice of the items noted on the website two (2) weeks prior to the Standing Committee meeting. This gives the public five (5) weeks' notice for items being considered by Council. Furthermore, if an item is brought forward for Council's consideration and Council feels more public consultation is required, they may direct staff to schedule a public meeting to receive feedback from the public or defer the item to a future meeting to allow for more time prior to Council making a decision on the matter.

The Town is committed to openness and transparency and providing notice to the public in accordance with legislative requirements or when deemed necessary by Council or Staff. These changes ensure that Staff can meet the requirements of the Policy while also ensuring that notice requirements are flexible and provide the most effective and efficient way to provide notice.

5. Financial Impact and Budget

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6. Relationship to Council's Strategic Plan Priorities 2023 to 2027 and beyond:

☐ Thriving Community

☒ Service Excellence

The proposed updates to the Public Notice Policy ensure that Council, staff, and the public are aware of the minimum requirements for giving notice, as well as where the details of such notice can be found.

☒ Sustainability

The proposed updates to the Public Notice Policy are in accordance with statutory requirements to alleviate the need to review the Policy prior to the recommended four year review timeline in the Policy.

7. Public Engagement:

The Public is invited to submit feedback on the proposed changes to the Public Notice Policy at the Standing Committee or Council Meeting. Comments may also be provided in written form between the two meetings to be included on the Council Agenda for Council's consideration.

8. Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Current Public Notice Policy
Attachment 2 – Updated Public Notice Policy

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Public Notice Policy Update.docx
Attachments:	- Attachment 1 - Current Public Notice Policy.pdf - Attachment 2 - Proposed Public Notice Policy.docx
Final Approval Date:	May 27, 2024

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

Brent Larmer, Municipal Clerk / Director of Legislative Services - May 25, 2024 - 6:11 PM

Tracey Vaughan, Chief Administrative Officer - May 27, 2024 - 12:40 PM