

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, November 12, 2024 **WARD(S):** ALL

TITLE: **COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETING SAFETY POLICY
AND PUBLIC CODE OF MEETING CONDUCT POLICY**

FROM:

Wendy Law, Deputy City Manager, Legal and Administrative Services & City Solicitor

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

The Office of the City Clerk, in consultation with partner departments and the City's Policy Committee, has undertaken a comprehensive assessment for the implementation of a "Council and Committee Meeting Safety" policy and a "Public Code of Meeting Conduct" policy.

Report Highlights

- Through a coordinated consultation process, two new corporate policies are proposed to provide governance around Council and Committee Meeting Safety and Public Code of Meeting Conduct.
- The Council and Committee Meeting Safety policy establishes the City's responsibilities and measures for public access and participation during City Council and Committee meetings, to ensure the safety of all attendees and proper decorum during meetings.
- The Public Code of Meeting Conduct policy provides a set of shared expectations and values to encourage and support a safe and welcoming environment during Council, Committee Meetings and Town Halls.

Recommendations

1. That Council approve the Council and Committee Meeting Safety (06.C.04) policy, substantially in the form set out in Attachment 1 of this report; and

2. That Council approve the Public Code of Meeting Conduct (06.C.05) policy, substantially in the form set out in Attachment 2 of this report.

Background

Various departments at the City of Vaughan are, from time to time, required to manage difficult or inappropriate behaviour exhibited by members of the public. Such behaviour can occur in-person, electronically, or by phone interactions and can be directed towards City staff, appointed committee members or Members of Council. There have been incidents where difficult or inappropriate behaviour has been observed or reported during meetings of Statutory Committee, Ad Hoc Committees, Sub-Committees and Council, which has created a need for policies to manage these occurrences.

Currently, the City refers to the Procedure By-law 7-2011 (as amended) as the governance tool to assist Members of Council and staff in managing meetings and the behaviour of participants. The proposed policies provide more prescriptive details, roles, responsibilities and responses, further enhancing the Procedure By-law and further empowering Members of Council and staff with the ultimate objective of creating a safe and welcoming environment while supporting the democratic process.

In preparing the Council and Committee Meeting Safety and Public Code of Meeting Conduct policies, staff reviewed court decisions, ombudsman reports, and similar policies and by-laws from other Ontario and Canadian municipalities. Additionally, internal consultations were conducted across a variety of City departments, including Legal Services, Facility Management, the Office of the City Clerk, Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer and Recreation Services.

Previous Reports/Authority

None.

Analysis and Options

At present, the City has existing sources of authority, such as the *Trespass to Property Act*, upon which it can rely on when issuing restrictions or consequences to members of the public. However, implementing the recommended corporate policies will increase consistency and fairness when staff have to address or respond to inappropriate behaviour by providing clear definitions, response protocols and a set of shared expectations during the City's Council, Committee Meetings and Town Halls.

Council and Committee Meeting Safety Policy

The proposed Council and Committee Meeting Safety policy will apply to any Council or Committee meeting that is conducted, either in person or by electronic participation, and applies to Members of Council, staff, residents and meeting participants.

The intent of the policy is to emphasize the City's commitment to support public participation at Council and Committee meetings, while welcoming debate of public matters in a safe and welcoming environment based on principles of respect, accountability, dedication, integrity and inclusiveness.

This policy establishes the roles, responsibilities and measures for the City to effectively manage and deliver safety and security for all meeting participants, and in extenuating circumstances, execute on the Chairs direction to expel an individual(s). Once unreasonable behaviour or prohibited items have been identified or reported, the policy describes the role that various staff are to take in addressing the unreasonable behaviour or prohibited item. The policy makes it clear that under no circumstances are staff to put themselves at risk or jeopardize their safety or the safety of others. Where there is an immediate threat, staff are to contact the police and, if applicable, follow all emergency procedures.

Corporate Security will be arranged as needed and will be readily available and responsive for Meetings in accordance with the Policy.

Public Code of Meeting Conduct Policy

The proposed Public Code of Meeting Conduct policy will apply to the conduct of meeting participants attending a Council, Committee Meeting or Town Hall at any City-owned property or facility, either in person or by electronic participation, and works in conjunction with the proposed Council and Committee Meeting Safety policy.

The behaviour and decorum of Members of Council is guided under the City's Procedural By-law 7-2011 (as amended) as well as the Code of Ethical Conduct for Members of Council policy (CL-011). Equally, the behaviour and decorum of staff is outlined in the Employee Code of Conduct policy (13.A.02), Respectful Workplace policy (13.C.01), Workplace Violence policy (13.A.03) and accompanying Procedures.

The purpose of this policy is to establish a set of shared expectations for the conduct, decorum and behaviour of all individuals participating in Council, Committee Meetings or Town Halls. It outlines clear expectations for behaviour with the aim of preventing harassment, disrespect and other forms of misconduct that can create a hostile or unwelcoming environment. Overall, defining a set of shared expectations and

behaviours allows for the facilitation of meaningful public meeting engagement and upholds the integrity of the democratic process.

Similar to the Council and Committee Meeting Safety policy, clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of public meeting participants ensures that meeting rules and procedures are adhered to and that deliberations of public matters are undertaken in a safe and welcoming environment.

Financial Impact

The costs associated with the presence of security at Council and Committee meetings as required in accordance with the policies criteria, are captured within existing budgets.

Operational Impact

This report was written in consultation with partner departments including the City's Policy Committee. There are no operational impacts associated with this report.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

There are no regional impacts associated with this report.

Conclusion

Together, the Council and Committee Meeting Safety and Public Code of Meeting Conduct policies provide for a foundation built upon respect, accountability, dedication and inclusiveness with the goal of active and engaged civic participation in a safe and welcoming environment.

For more information, please contact: Todd Coles, City Clerk

Attachments

1. Council and Committee Meeting Safety policy (06.C.04)
2. Public Code of Meeting Conduct policy (06.C.05)

Prepared by

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