

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Wednesday, October 14, 2020

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: REGISTERED RATEPAYER ASSOCIATION POLICY REVIEW

FROM:

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

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

The Office of the City Clerk has undertaken a comprehensive review and updates to the Registered Ratepayer/Community Association Policy as per Council's direction. This report provides a summary of the review and a revised Registered Ratepayer Association Policy for Council's consideration.

Report Highlights

- Council adopted a resolution on September 27, 2018 to refer the Registered Ratepayer/Community Association Policy to Staff for a comprehensive review and report back.
- LURA Consulting was retained by the City of Vaughan to implement various stakeholder engagement tactics from September to October of 2019 to obtain feedback from Staff, Council, Registered Ratepayer Associations (RRA) and members of the public.
- A revised policy is submitted for Council's consideration. If approved, the new policy will take effect immediately for new Registered Ratepayer Associations. For existing Registered Ratepayer Associations in good standing, the policy will take effect at the next renewal date in 2021.

Recommendations

1. That the Registered Ratepayer/ Community Association Policy (Policy No. 06.1.01) be replaced by the Registered Ratepayer Association Policy (Policy No. 06.C.02) as attached to this report (Attachment 1);
2. That the policy is effective immediately for new Registered Ratepayer Associations;
3. That for existing Registered Ratepayer Associations in good standing, the policy will take effect at the next renewal date in 2021; and
4. That Staff be directed to communicate any changes to the policy to existing Registered Ratepayer Associations and the public through Corporate Communication channels.

Background

At the June 12, 2019 Council Meeting, staff submitted a report regarding “Registered Ratepayer / Community Association Policy Review Update”. Staff was directed to “report back with the outcome of the review and any proposed changes to the current policy.”

1. Overview of Public Consultation and Engagement

LURA Consulting was retained by the City of Vaughan to implement a stakeholder engagement program to provide avenues for open dialogue, sharing of information and feedback with respect to the review.

The engagement program was implemented between September and October 2019. The target audiences for the engagement activities included: members of the general public, members of current Registered Ratepayer Associations, and Members of Council. The following table contains various engagement tactics implemented to achieve the engagement objectives and the number of participants involved.

Engagement Tactic	Implementation Timeline (2019)	Number of Participants
Public Online Survey	September 4 – September 25	84 participants
Interviews with Members of Council	September 23 - October 9	9 Mayor and Members of Council
Stakeholder Roundtable	October 3	9 participants
Public Forum	October 10	16 participants
118 participants total		

2. Communication Methods

All opportunities to participate in the engagement activities were promoted by City staff through various communication channels, except for the interviews with Members of Council. The communication tactics used included:

- Posts on the City of Vaughan's social media channels including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram;
- Paid social media advertisements on Facebook;
- Emails to main contacts of all 23 Registered Ratepayer Associations;
- Links to the survey provided to all City Councillors, with many sharing the survey in their e-newsletters; and
- Promotion of the public meeting on City Hall's electronic signs.

The participation rate of the engagement activities was very positive. Due to the volume of comments and materials received from the consultant, staff requested additional time to report back to Council in Q1 of 2020. Updated timeline was posted on the City's website and communicated to RRAs. In Q4 of 2019, a summary of the Public Online Survey Results was shared with the RRAs and posted on the City's website. In Q1 of 2020, the reporting process was further postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Previous Reports/Authority

June 4, 2019 Committee of the Whole, Item 36

[REGISTERED RATEPAYER / COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION POLICY REVIEW UPDATE](#)

Analysis and Options

1. Overview of the Existing Policy Framework

The existing Registered Ratepayer/ Community Association Policy (CCO-010) was last amended in 2004 as attached to this report for reference (**Attachment 2**). The 2020 renewal deadline for RRAs was extended from March 31, 2020 to May 1, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As of September 1, 2020, there are twenty-three (23) RRAs under the current policy. Highlight of current policy are as follows:

- As part of the initial registration requirement, the applicant must submit a list of membership, including a minimum of twenty-five (25) members for urban area and a minimum of ten (10) members for rural area.
- There are no restrictions on the size of association boundaries.

- For the annual renewal requirement, one (1) General Meeting must be held no less than once every three (3) years.
- The City does not recognize the formation of other Ratepayer Associations within the boundaries of an existing Association that is in good-standing.
- RRAs have the benefit of:
 - one (1) free meeting space to hold an annual general meeting at City/Library facility.
 - Consultation and Notices of various issues within the boundaries.
 - Qualify as Community Service Organization (C.S.O.) with service-in-kind opportunities.
 - Recognized Status as an Association at Committee Meetings.
 - Hard copies of Agendas and Minutes provided free of charge for pick up, upon written request.

2. Summary of Public Consultation and Engagement

A summary of findings and analysis of the feedback received are contained in the report provided by from LURA Consulting. The results were posted online and shared with the Registered Ratepayer Associations ([Link to Summary Report](#)). We received a total of 84 survey responses with representation from all wards. Majority (57%) were not aware of the policy prior to taking the survey, 27% of respondents were general members of the public or former RRA members, and 11% respondents were from existing RRA members. The following are highlights of concerns and suggestions for consideration:

- Need for online RRA registration and renewal process.
- Majority of existing RRA members support geographic exclusivity. Former RRA members and the general public were neither strongly against nor supportive.
- Review or limit association boundaries to ensure effective representation.
- Expand current policy for more clarity, accountability, transparency and support for RRAs.
- Interest from the general public to start an RRA dropped from 31% to 24% after presented with existing registration requirements.
- Remove outdated provisions regarding delivery of paper Agendas and Minutes.
- More transparency and information on the City's website about RRAs.
- More training and education from City Staff for RRAs regarding planning and LPAT process.
- Clarify the purpose of RRAs and their relationship with the City.
- Single-issue groups that become inactive once the issue is resolved. Concern that some associations are not active.
- Strong support for more free and subsidized meeting space.

3. Municipal Best Practices

Staff has conducted a jurisdictional scan for best practices from other municipalities. Only four (4) other Ontario municipalities have a similar policy: Aurora, Markham, Oakville and Toronto. A high-level summary of the characteristics of each policy is included as **Attachment 3** of this report.

4. Proposed Policy Framework

Staff is proposing a revised policy framework to address concerns by Members of Council, existing RRA members and members of the public:

4.1. Summary of Key Changes

	Current	Proposed
Eligibility Requirements	Minimum of 25 members in an urban area and 10 in a rural area	Minimum of 25 members within each Concession Block covered by the Association's boundary, regardless of urban or rural area.
Renewal Requirements	A meeting held no less than once <u>every three (3) years</u>	A meeting held no less than once <u>every twelve (12) months</u>
Renewal Deadline	Not specified (current practice is March 31 of each year)	March 31 of each year
Rights	One free meeting room space at City Facility/ Library per year	One free meeting room space at City Facility/ Library <u>twice</u> per year

- Geographic exclusivity provision remains status quo.
- Policy Statement includes recognition of the value of RRAs. It also clarifies that the City does not prohibit or regulate non-registered Ratepayer Associations in the community.
- The purpose of this policy is to maintain a record of active RRAs for public and corporate access; and to provide a platform to encourage neighbourhood engagement and involvement.
- Definition section is added.
- The *Planning Act* provides that appeals to Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT) may be filed by "persons". Groups or associations, such as residents or ratepayer groups that are not incorporated, may not be considered "persons" for purposes of the appeals made under the *Act*. The policy provides greater clarity that the City does not provide any advice on LPAT appeals or anything related to

incorporation for Registered Ratepayer Associations. As well, registration with the City as a Registered Ratepayer Association does not confer status before the LPAT, which is governed by other legislation.

5. Proposed Policy Implementation

If Council approves the revised policy proposed by Staff, it is recommended that the new policy becomes effective immediately for any new Registered Ratepayer Associations. To allow existing RRAs to transition and adjust to the new policy, it is recommended that the current policy will continue to govern existing RRAs that are in good standing. However, all RRAs must comply with the provisions of the new policy by the next renewal date in 2021, being March 31, 2021.

6. Other Actions

To address public feedback on improving online registration and renewal, Office of the City Clerk has re-designed and simplified prescribed forms to streamline the process. The City's webpage on Registered Ratepayer Association has also been updated to include a list of contact information of all RRAs.

For long term actions, Office of the City Clerk will work with Corporate and Strategic Communications; and Planning and Growth Management to organize and provide Education Sessions regarding general municipal governance, planning process and Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT) appeals to RRAs and members of the public.

Financial Impact

None.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

None.

Conclusion

Based on the comprehensive review by staff and LURA Consulting, the proposed policy addresses concerns about the size of association boundaries, effective representation, inactive Associations, more free meeting room spaces, and online registration/ renewal processes. Proposed changes help to define a clear purpose, policy statement and renewal deadline. It removes outdated provisions about hard copies of Agendas and Minutes. The provision of geographic exclusivity remains status quo based on public feedback.

Staff also identified other actions outside of the policy framework to improve transparency, public education and community engagement to encourage more effective public participation of RRAs. If the proposed policy is approved, Office of the City Clerk staff will work with Corporate Communications to ensure all RRAs and members of the public are informed of the policy changes and implementation strategy.

For more information, please contact Todd Coles, City Clerk x 8281

Attachments

1. Proposed Registered Ratepayer Association Policy (Policy No. 06.C.02)
2. Existing Registered Ratepayer/ Community Association Policy (Policy No. 06.1.01)
3. Comparison Chart of Municipal Best Practices

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