Registered Ratepayer Association Policy Review Update

Committee of the Whole (Working Session)

October 6, 2021

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Background

Timeline	Events
1986	Registered Ratepayer/Community Association Policy was established.
2004	Last time the policy was amended.
2012 – 2014	City Clerk conducted a comprehensive review of the policy. Council considered the report, no further actions were taken.
2018	Council referred the policy to the Policy Review Committee for a comprehensive review and report back.
2019	Staff Report outlined the framework of the review, scope and timeline. Council directed staff to report back by end of 2019. Extensive public consultation was conducted in Q4 of 2019.
2020	Staff reported back with a draft revised policy in October 2020. Council directed this matter be deferred to a future Working Session.

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Background
Existing Policy Framework

22 Registered Ratepayers Associations (RRA)

Initial Registration Requirements

- Completed Registration Form
- A list of membership (min. 25 for urban area, min. 10 for rural area)
- Statement of Purpose and a copy of Constitution and/or By-law
- Boundaries that the Association represents
- A list of the Executive Officers
- Minutes of the General Meeting which the Executive Officers were elected

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Background
Existing Policy Framework

Annual Renewal Requirements
- Completed Renewal Form
- 1 General Meeting must be held no less than once every 3 years
- Minutes of the General Meeting, if applicable
- Notify Changes to Membership, Statement of Purpose, Boundaries and Executive Officers, if applicable

Geographic Exclusivity
- The City does not recognize the formation of other ratepayer associations within the boundaries of an existing Association that is in good-standing.

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Background
Existing Policy Framework

Benefits of RRAs

- 1 free meeting space per year 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
- Use of City and Library space at C.S.O. preferred rate
- Deputation Status as an Association at Committee Meetings
- Hard copies of Agendas and Minutes provided free of charge for pick up, upon written request

COMMUNITY & RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATIONS

1. Kleinburg & Area
2. Millwood Woodend
3. Carrying Place / Sonoma
4. West Woodbridge Homeowners
5. Pinewood Estates
6. Vellore Woods
7. Concord West
8. Beverley Glen
9. Brownridge
10. Lakeview Estates
11. Vaughanwood
12. MacKenzie Ridge
13. Preserve Thornhill Woods
14. Village of Woodbridge
15. Springfarm
16. National Estates
17. Greater Woodbridge
18. Carrville Mills
19. Upper Thornhill & Area Community
20. South Maple
21. Weston Downs
22. Flamingo

Ward Boundaries
Block Boundaries

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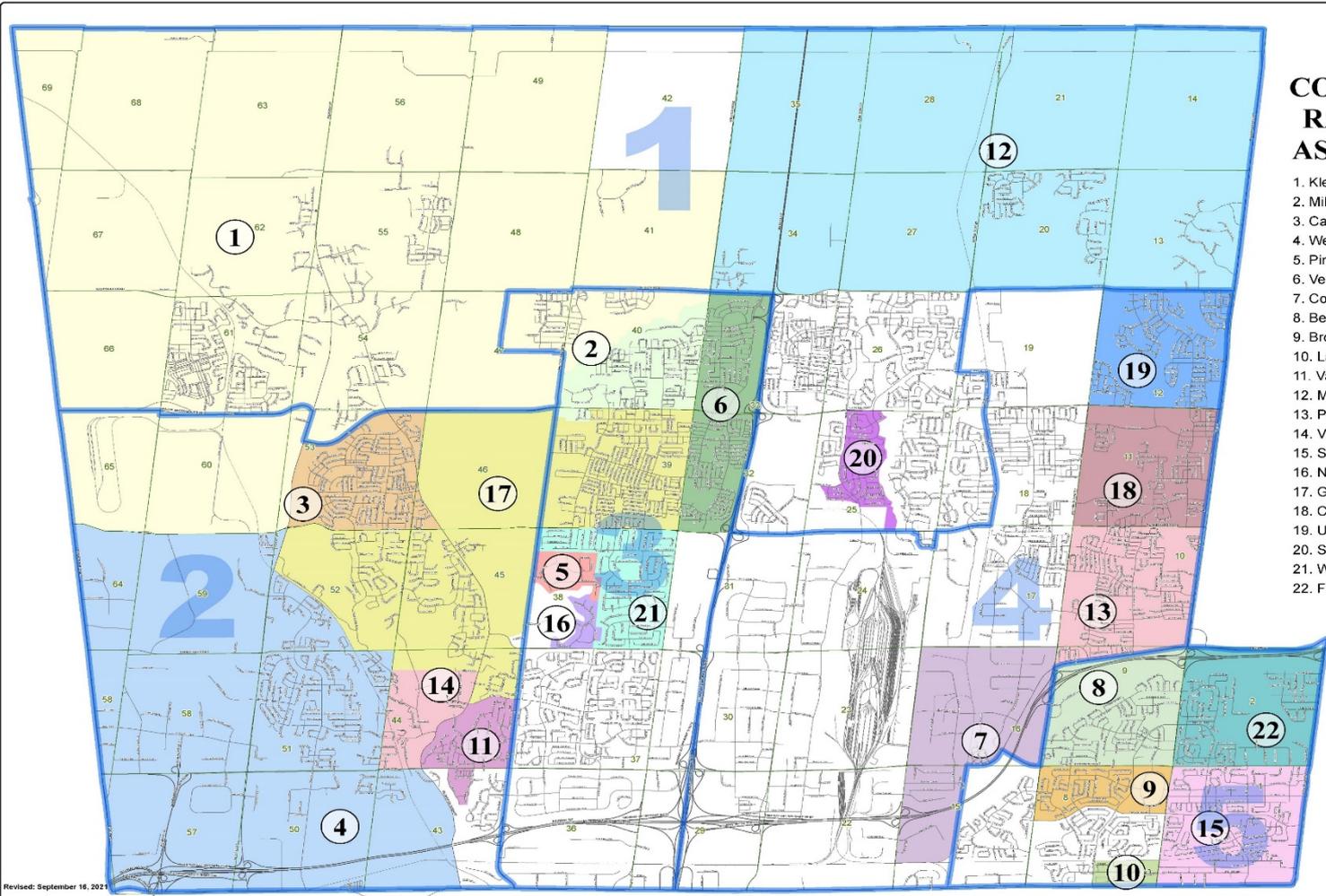
Revised: September 16, 2021

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Public Engagement

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	8 Councillors 1 Mayor
Stakeholder Roundtable	October 3	9 participants
Public Forum	October 10	16 participants
	TOTAL	118 participants

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Public Engagement
Results from Online Survey

Online Survey Participants

- 84 survey responses in total, representation from all wards

- Majority (57%) were not aware of the policy prior to taking the survey
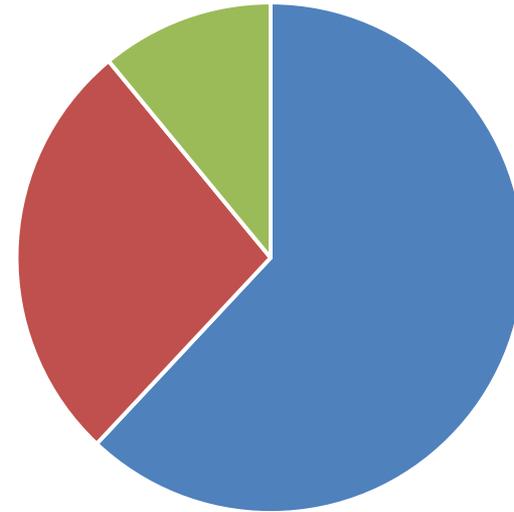
- General public - never involved in a RRA (62%)
- Member of a former RRA or non-registered group (27%)
- Member of existing RRA (11%)

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Public Engagement
Key Themes – Online Survey

- Interest from General Public to start a RRA dropped from 31% to 24% after presented with registration requirements.
- Review or limit boundaries to ensure effective representation.
- Expand current policy for more clarity, accountability, transparency and support for RRAs.
- Need for online registration process.
- Majority of existing RRA members support geographic exclusivity. Former RRA members and the general public were neither strongly against or for.
- Support for more free and subsidized meeting space.

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Public Engagement
Key Themes – Stakeholder Roundtable, Public Forum and Council Interviews

- Remove outdated provisions, re: paper Agendas and Minutes.
- More free meeting spaces.
- Review association boundaries to ensure effective representation.
- More transparency and information on the City's website about RRAs.
- More training and education from City Staff, especially on planning and OLT process.
- Clarify the purpose of RRAs and their relationship with the City.
- Single-issue groups that become inactive once the issue is resolved.

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Jurisdictional Scan

Only 4 other Ontario municipalities have a similar policy
Aurora, Markham, Oakville and Toronto

- Registration Process - All require completed application form, including a list of executive officers, membership list, statement of purpose, and a map or description of boundaries that the group represents.
- All provide public listing in Resident's Guide, municipal website and other relevant communication channels.
- None have geographic exclusivity provision.
- Town of Aurora restricts that each Association Catchment area does not exceed one concession block in size.

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	Eligibility Requirements	Annual Renewal Requirements	Rights
Aurora	• Represent min. of 10 households, or at least 20 individual members • The name is reflective of the area or concern being represented	• Held one meeting in the preceding 12-month period • Submit completed Renewal Form confirming requirements have been met	• Recognition of Ratepayer Association Status at Council/ Committee meetings • One free meeting space per year
Markham	Represent a min. of 10 households	• Not Specified • Associations should commit to their Articles of Incorporation and agreed upon with the City	• Recognition of Ratepayer Association Status at Council/ Committee meetings • One free meeting space per year • Free hard copy Agenda, Minutes and/or reports
Oakville	None	• Not Specified • Will be notified by email of the annual renewal requirements	• Included on town notification mailing lists, • Appropriate town staff may be made available to speak at public information meetings of residents' and community associations
Toronto	Represent min. of 25 households	• Hold a general meeting at least once every 12 months • Hold an annual general election of officers	All correspondence received are stamped to indicate they are a "Registered Ratepayer Association"

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Guiding Principles

- The goal of Ratepayer Associations is to encourage neighbourhood engagement and involvement in the local decision-making process.
- The City recognizes the value of Ratepayer Associations and supports them by the provision of various services.
- Registration with the City does not provide special status for the purposes of Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) appeals made under the *Planning Act*.
- The Registered Ratepayer Associations Policy does not in any way limit individuals from organizing informal or formal (incorporated) neighborhood associations, nor does it limit the ability of individuals or associations from delegating to Committee regarding matters of interest.
- There is no legislative requirement or authority to establish a policy to govern local ratepayers' associations.

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Option 1 – Status Quo

- Registered Ratepayer Associations are recognized as a category of Community Service Organization (CSO) under the current CSO policy.
- Many similarities in terms of registration, renewal requirements and benefits between the RRA policy and the CSO policy.
- Registered Ratepayer Association Status can still be achieved and maintained under a CSO policy, but it will be more equitable, fair and effective to apply the same policy framework to all community associations in the City.
- Staff recommend pausing revisions to the RRA policy pending outcome of the CSO policy review, to be completed by **Q1 of 2022**. It presents an opportunity to incorporate the directions of this RRA policy review into the new CSO policy.

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Option 2 – Less Restrictive Policy

- To remove barriers and encourage more ratepayer or community associations to form in the City by simplifying registration and renewal requirements.
- The advancement of digital tools and social media have changed the operation and interaction of many community associations and advocacy groups.
- New organizations may focus on mobilizing and facilitating participation of their supporters through online platforms and petitions, which may not be limited to a defined geographic area in a traditional sense.
- Geographic Exclusivity is removed.
- Shifting the City's role in providing a more robust platform to facilitate RRAs to reach out to larger audiences for input on civic matters.

Option 2 – Less Restrictive Policy

Eligibility Requirements	• Completed Registration Form with name of association, executive list and contact information, and boundary lines, if applicable • A list of a minimum of 25 members, include names, addresses, and signatures
Renewal Requirements	• Renew their registration annually by submitting a completed renewal form no later than March 31 of each year
Geographic exclusivity	• None
Rights	• Listing on the City's website, publication, and any other corporate communication channels • Recognition of Ratepayer Association Status at Council/ Committee meetings • Two (2) free meeting spaces to hold meetings at City/ Library facility each year, based on availability • Consultation and Notices of various issues within the boundaries, if applicable • Qualify as Community Service Organization (C.S.O.) with service-in-kind opportunities

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Option 3 – Streamlined Version of Existing Policy

- Revisions to the existing policy framework for a more streamlined approach based on public feedback and consultation.
- Key proposed changes include:
  - For initial registration, submission of a list of the Association's membership showing a minimum of 25 members within each Concession Block covered by the Association's boundaries
    - May address concerns of effective representation across the Association's boundaries.
  - For annual renewal, must have held at least one (1) meeting in the preceding 12-month period.
    - May address concerns of single-issue and inactive groups.
- **Council's direction is required for Geographic Exclusivity**.

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Option 3 – Streamlined Version of Existing Policy

Eligibility Requirements	• A completed Ratepayer/Community Associations Registration Form • A list of the Association's membership showing a minimum of 25 members within each Concession Block covered by the Association's boundaries, and that the list include names, addresses, and signatures • A statement of purpose • The boundaries of the area that the Association represents
Renewal Requirements	• Renew their registration annually by submitting a completed renewal form no later than March 31 of each year • Have held one (1) meeting in the preceding 12-month period
Geographic exclusivity	• **Council's direction is required**
Rights	• Listing on the City's website, publication, and any other corporate communication channels • Recognition of Ratepayer Association Status at Council/ Committee meetings • Two (2) free meeting spaces to hold meetings at City/ Library facility each year, based on availability • Consultation and Notices of various issues within the boundaries, if applicable • Qualify as Community Service Organization (C.S.O.) with service-in-kind opportunities

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Next Steps

- A comparison chart is included in the report for the three options:
  - Option 1 – Status Quo
  - Option 2 – Less Restrictive Policy
  - Option 3 – More streamlined version of existing policy

- If Option 1 is selected → No changes to the existing policy at this time. Staff will report back pending outcome of the CSO Policy Review.

- If Option 2 or 3 is selected → A revised draft policy will be submitted at the next CW meeting with an implementation plan for approval.

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