



*A People Place, A Change of Pace*  
**SHELBURNE**  
ONTARIO, CANADA

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**Meeting Date:** Monday, December 12, 2022

**To:** Members of Council

**From:** Jennifer Willoughby, Director of Legislative Services/Clerk

**Report:** LS2022-22

**Subject:** **Return to In-Person Meetings**

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### Recommendation

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receives report #LS2022-22 from the Director of Legislative Services/Clerk for information;

AND THAT committee meetings continue using a virtual format for the 2023 calendar year;

AND THAT Council place \$2500 in the 2023 budget for purchase of additional sound system and audio-visual equipment to accommodate in-person meetings;

AND THAT Council

- 1) Return to in-person meetings being held in the Grace Tipling Hall with a reversion to virtual meetings should the hall be booked for an event;

Or

- 2) Remain in a virtual setting for Council meetings for the 2023 calendar year.

## Background

At the May 30, 2022, Council meeting, Council considered options for the remainder of the term and decided to remain in a virtual setting for the remainder of the 2022 calendar year.

## Analysis

### **Current Council Meeting Space and Options**

Prior to the pandemic, Council meetings were being held in-person in the current Council chambers. The size of Council chambers is approximately 400 sq ft and is considered very small, non-functional and cannot accommodate public seating in a spacious manner. Overall, it has been determined this space is not sufficient and that an alternative location is required.

The option to re-locate the Council Chamber to the main floor at Town Hall and in the space used previously by the Shelburne Police Service (SPS) was reviewed. It is approximately 700 square feet; usable space is further limited due to the supporting walls and pillars that cannot be removed. It is not a suitable location as an alternate Council Chambers. It would require significant capital costs to expand the space. To create the space needed would likely require an addition on the ground floor into the parking lot. This would be complicated given the new generator and electric vehicle charging stations that have been installed at the south side of Town Hall, while it could be reviewed, relocating these services would create significant additional costs.

Currently the former SPS office space has been repurposed for administration staff office space.

Relocating in-person Council meetings to the Grace Tipling Hall (GTH) as a permanent accommodation was reviewed. There are 195 theatre seats in the GTH to accommodate staff, presenters and members of the public. Council member seating will be on the stage, staff and members of the public can be accommodated within the theatre seating. As we move forward with revitalization of the GTH and the expectation that rentals, performances and other uses will increase, scheduling permanent in-person Council meetings will require an alternative approach. It is recommended that Council meetings be held virtually when there is a performance scheduled for the GTH.

## **Future Considerations for In-Person Hybrid Council meetings**

The Town of Shelburne, like many other municipalities, faces some unique challenges to adapting to in-person meetings while trying to include a hybrid meeting approach. A hybrid model will allow some members of Council and staff to connect to meetings from alternative locations as opposed to attending in-person.

Many municipalities are making significant investments and upgrades to facilitate hybrid meeting approaches in order to accommodate a mix of in-person and virtual processes.

Unfortunately, the opportunity to host hybrid meetings in GTH is not possible due to current technical and audio video limitations as well as the requirement for significant capital costs associated with this option.

## **Public Engagement and Live Streamed Meetings on YouTube**

Public engagement and participation have also been reviewed and compared, in-person Council meeting attendance versus the current live stream format on the Town's YouTube channel.

Live streaming of Council meetings has increased public engagement significantly and has proven to be a valuable tool. For example, public members attending a Council meeting (pre-pandemic) were approximately 4-15 people. Views noted on the Town's YouTube channel since live streaming commenced April 6, 2020, are on average approximately 119 views.

Live streaming of Council meetings has provided increased access and expanded public engagement and is barrier free. It also allows residents and members of the public the opportunity to safely watch proceedings of Council in their homes and at their leisure, on their own time.

The provision of live streaming in-person Council meetings can be accommodated going forward utilizing current equipment onsite.

## **Mask Friendly Approach**

Town staff has committed to voluntarily continue wearing masks and follow social distancing within the administration office as a precautionary approach and out of respect for colleagues. If there was a return to in-person Council meetings, it would be recommended that the same protocol would be followed.

## **Committee Meetings**

To provide for accessible barrier free access to meetings for volunteer members of the various Committee's of Council, it is recommended that these meetings remain in a virtual setting. To provide for accountability and transparency, Committee meetings will also be live-streamed and recorded. The newly drafted committee terms of reference, which will be recommended to Council in January 2023, will include these two requirements.

### **Policies and Implications**

Town of Shelburne Procedure By-law #15-2019 as amended by By-law#39-2020.

### **Financial Impact**

Financial consideration of \$2500 is being requested through 2023 budget discussion to allow for additional purchase of equipment to accommodate in-person meetings.

### **Consultation and Communications**

Senior Management Team.

### **Council Strategic Priorities**

Council's Strategic Priorities have three Goals - Sustainable, Engaged and Livable. There are a total of 12 targets with the three Goals.

This report aligns with the sustainable goals within the targets:

Target T5 – improve technology

Target T6 – promote more open communication

### **Supporting Documentation**

N/A

Respectfully Submitted and Prepared By:

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Reviewed By:

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