

Special Committee on Governance: Public Consultation and Workplan Update

Date: September 11, 2019
To: Special Committee on Governance
From: City Manager
Wards: All

SUMMARY

The Special Committee on Governance was established by City Council at its meeting on December 4, 2018 with a mandate to consider the impacts on the City's governance structure and processes arising from the reduction in the size of Council, and make recommendations to City Council on any further changes to its governance structure.

This report provides information on the engagement activities that have been undertaken to support the work of the Special Committee on Governance. It provides a summary of the views and feedback received during the consultations to date and outlines three primary themes and additional sub-themes collected through the consultations.

The report also presents the workplan for the next two months as staff develop recommendations for the Committee's consideration at its November 2019 meeting. Further work will focus on consulting with neighbourhood associations - their relationship with each other, City Council, and local and city-wide decision-making - and consulting with members of Council on their views of the governance model adopted in December 2018.

As part of the workplan, staff will review Council and committee meeting data comparing this term and previous terms; confer with the City Clerk on input and suggestions related to the Procedure By-law; review issues identified by City divisions resulting from the implementation of new ward and Community Council boundaries, and Standing Committee mandates; and continue jurisdictional research arising from previous Committee directions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Manager recommends that:

1. The Special Committee on Governance receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial impacts resulting from the recommendation in this report.

The Chief Financial Officer & Treasurer has reviewed and agrees with this Financial Impact Statement.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on April 12, 2019, the Special Committee on Governance, adopted [GV2.2](#) "Special Committee on Governance Work Plan and Engagement Strategy". As part of the engagement strategy, the Committee directed staff to:

- focus on identifying and articulating problems, separate from solutions;
- provide outreach to engage neighbourhood associations; and,
- identify matters raised through consultation as:
 - a) within staff purview,
 - b) conventions,
 - c) relating to by-laws, and
 - d) relating to external authorities.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.GV2.2>

At its meeting on February 21, 2019, the Special Committee on Governance adopted [GV1.2](#) "Public Input on City Council's Governance System for 26 Members", which directed staff to develop a workplan and public consultation process, and consider the feasibility for the creation of an Office of Neighbourhoods.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.GV1.2>

At its meeting on December 4, 2018, City Council adopted [CC1.1](#) "Recalibrating City Council's Governance System for 26 Members", which included the establishment of a Special Committee on Governance with the mandate to "consider the impacts on the City's governance structure and processes arising from the reduction in the size of Council and make recommendations to City Council on any further changes to its governance structure".

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.CC1.1>

COMMENTS

Background

The mandate of the Special Committee on Governance is to consider the impacts on the City's governance structure and processes arising from the reduction in the size of Council and make recommendations to City Council on any further changes to its governance structure.

During public consultations, and through submissions made to the City Manager's Office and to the Committee in writing, presentations and by public speakers, the definition of "governance" applied by participants has been broad. Submissions included a range of suggestions such as changing the official salutation for the Mayor, new roles for elected officials, and a comprehensive overhaul of the City's relationship to the Provincial and Federal governments were raised.

The Committee's direction to staff at its April and February meetings has helped to categorize the input received to date. Staff have focussed on issues within the Committee's mandate and the City's jurisdiction, such as the impact of a smaller City Council and on issues participants raised as needing to be fixed. The objective of the consultation was to better understand public sentiment, interests and reasons behind proposed solutions and ideas, as well as look at concerns, questions or complaints. Staff reviewed all ideas whether they were submitted once or multiple times.

Most comments reflect ideas or concerns that have been previously raised prior to the change in the size of Council and the implementation of the current governance model. Three primary areas were identified for additional review issues related to 1) communication and engagement, 2) representation and 3) committee and meeting management.

1) Communication and engagement: This category included: suggestions for how the City and members of Council could better engage with residents, organizations, community groups and associations; the need to increase clear, timely information about how the city works and how to get involved; and easier access to information about council agendas and decisions, public appointments and the City's budget.

2) Representation: This category included: electoral reforms; commentary on diversity and equity of elected and unelected positions on Council, boards and committees; suggestions for additional structures to represent local, ward or neighbourhood interests; and the ability of Councillors to represent and become familiar with their larger geographic areas and constituencies. This category also included suggestions about the challenges of Councillors representing both local and constituent issues while also trying to achieve city-wide, strategic policy.

3) Committee and agenda management: This category included suggestions about: making meetings more accessible; organizing Committee items on agendas and public speakers differently; providing agendas further in advance of meetings; including clear language summaries in reports; and linking reports to information about outcomes and City services.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to conduct research and hold consultations with neighbourhood associations, City divisions and members of City Council. Staff will review all of the input and research once these consultations are complete and prepare a final report for the Committee's consideration at its meeting in November 2019.

Further work will focus on:

- Consulting with neighbourhood associations - their relationship with each other, City Council, and local and city-wide decision-making;
- Issues identified by Council members now that they have been working with the governance model including amended Standing Committee mandates, appointment processes, smaller Council and larger/new ward areas established in December 2018;
- Reviewing Council and committee meeting data comparing this term and previous terms;
- Conferring with the City Clerk on input and suggestions related to the Procedure By-law;
- Reviewing issues identified by City divisions resulting from the implementation of new ward and Community Council boundaries and Standing Committee mandates adopted by City Council December 2018; and
- Continuing research arising from previous Committee direction.

Process and Findings from Public Consultation

A number of engagement activities were undertaken to support the work of the Special Committee on Governance, resulting in three primary themes and a number of sub-themes.

Outreach and promotion

Members of the public were invited to provide their views and ideas on Council's governance structures and processes for local and city-wide decision-making through an online survey, at public meetings, at community and student-led sessions as well as through speakers, presentations and submissions to the City Manager's Office and the Committee. Additional details about the consultation and public input is provided in Attachment 1.

To support these activities, a website was created with information about the Committee, the City's governance, links to background reports, information about the public sessions and about how community groups could host their own sessions to gather input. A participant guide and online survey were posted and made available in 10 languages.

Information about the consultation was posted to Get Involved, the City's public engagement portal, on the City's main webpage, advertised online and through posters at civic centres, libraries, recreation centres and through the City's community networks and partners. Information was provided to City Councillors and divisional staff to promote the consultation and multiple city social media channels were used to encourage participation.

The term "governance" and issues related to municipal governance are complex. Participant and communication materials described the governance structures and processes used by the City and by Council, the scope of the consultation and mandate

of the committee so that participants who were very familiar with governance issues, and those who were not, could both participate as they were most interested and able.

Public Sessions: Open Houses and Discussions

Forty seven people attended the consultation's five public sessions. An open house was held an hour prior to each session with City staff from 311, City Clerks, Social Development Finance and Administration and the Open Data team available to answer questions and take input on ideas for improving information between residents, the City and Council. City staff then gave a brief presentation that included the mandate of the Committee with a focus on decision-making structures, processes and roles, followed by the opportunity for questions and comments from individual participants. The participants continued to provide their input in greater detail at small table discussions, facilitated by City staff. Session facilitators provided very brief summaries of the key topics of the table discussions at the end of each meeting, with closing remarks provided by the City Staff. Participants were also provided time to make a statement or summarize their input to all in attendance.

Sessions were held at the Etobicoke Olympium, Scarborough Civic Centre, North York Civic Centre, Metro Hall, and North Toronto Memorial Community Centre during the week of June 10, 2019. The displays and information from the City's programs and service areas that are involved in governance, as well as a number of external partners was available throughout the sessions.

Survey

A survey was created to gather public input and was made available in 10 languages online and in paper format at the public sessions, by post and e-mail. The online survey was visited 5,700 times, a total of 357 people partially completed and 251 people completed all questions. The survey was open from June 1 until July 27, 2019.

The survey asked respondents what they felt was working and what needed improvement with respect to Council's various decision-making bodies and processes, and City-led and Community-led civic engagement processes. The survey included multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions to seek respondents' top three ideas and comments on the City's local and city-wide decision-making processes and any additional feedback.

As with all of the consultation materials, the survey included an introduction and overview of how decisions are made by Council and the role of the public in the City's decision-making processes. Some participants expressed that this context was very informative, while others found it lengthy and difficult to understand.

Written and Email Submissions

The City Manager Office received 101 email submissions from May 10 to July 27, 2019. Most submissions supported proposals made to the Committee at its meetings, including recommendations for community boards and a City Planning Commission, a stronger role for residents associations and ranked ballots for municipal elections.

Neighbourhood Planning Tables

City staff worked with the City's Community Development Officers to coordinate a dedicated discussion with participants of the City's Neighbourhood Improvement Area (NIA) Planning Tables. Members of the Planning Tables facilitated the discussion and a common suggestion was that Councillors need to reach out to the most marginalized communities in order for them to feel included in decision making.

Youth Engagement Research

An instructor at University of Toronto reached out to City Staff with a request that his students use the consultation as the basis of a youth engagement research project for their Urban Studies course at Innis College. The Urban Studies course ran from July 2nd for 5 weeks, and the youth conducted four separate outreach and engagement activities during their consultations in the last two weeks of July.

Key Themes

The term "governance" was broadly interpreted by participants which resulted in a wide range of ideas, issues and topics being discussed. See Attachment 1 for a list of ideas received from all sources of consultation.

The themes which emerged from the analysis of the feedback are often interconnected. For example several participants suggested the City support or create a formal network of resident or neighbourhood associations with the objectives of assisting Councillors in reaching constituents, conducting or managing public input on behalf of the Councillor or the City, or reviewing Council reports and providing commentary on them to residents. This idea would fall into all three main themes of engagement, agenda management, and representation and some minor themes as well.

Theme 1: Communication and engagement:

This category included: suggestions for how the City and members of Council could better engage with residents, organizations, community groups and associations; the need to increase clear, timely information about how the city works and how to get involved; and, better access to information about council agendas and decisions, public appointments and the City's budget.

Currently the City uses a wide range of public engagement methods, from informal - such as providing information online or at public meetings, residents communicating directly with staff and Members of City Council, online surveys, and public consultations -- to more formal mechanisms such as polls, neighbourhood planning tables, and appointments to the boards of City agencies, corporations, adjudicative and advisory bodies.

The greatest number of comments indicated that residents would like the City and members of City Council to engage with the public more extensively, meaningfully and in a timelier manner. A significant number also described a desire for the City (staff and members of City Council) to engage more locally. Suggestions including increasing

community outreach, making information more easily accessible or creating more formal opportunities for residents to input into City decision-making.

Many of the submissions highlighted difficulties in accessing the local Councillor, finding out about how to be involved with the City and learn about the issues Council was discussing and making decisions on. Participants noted that the larger ward sizes following the reduction in the size of Council likely made it more difficult for residents and councillors to connect or meet at local events.

Communication and Engagement sub-themes include residents' suggestions to:

- Improve access and promotion of information (meeting agendas, services such as 311);
- Create or expand civic outreach and education programs, offer online and classroom education for residents, new board members and people interested in City governance;
- Provide greater opportunities for community level engagement such as enhancing the role of community development officers or creating community offices;
- Increase the ability of residents and neighbourhood associations to network and collaborate with City staff; and
- Formalize community based forums (participants used terms such as community boards, neighbourhood advisory groups, neighbourhood associations) to make them part of the City's governance framework in either a local advisory or decision making capacity. The general rationale for establishing or formalizing these types of bodies was to close the gap in communication and engagement between community and resident associations and the City's decision making process, and also to relieve local Councillors of some of their workload currently engaging communities within their wards. See next section for additional input on formal neighbourhood governance.

Theme 2 - Representation:

This category included: electoral reforms; commentary on diversity and equity of elected and unelected positions on Council, boards and committees; suggestions for additional structures to represent local, ward or neighbourhood interests; the ability of Councillors to represent larger geographic areas they are not yet familiar with or had time to meet with everyone. This category also included suggestions about the challenges of Councillors representing both local and constituent issues while also trying to achieve city-wide, strategic policy.

Sub-theme input on strategic decision-making:

- City Council and Members of Council should take a more strategic, City-wide lens to decision-making. For example, some focused on the role of the Mayor as Chief Executive of the City and proposed the Mayor should actively communicate the strategic priorities of the City at the beginning of the term.
- A few submissions suggested that the City seeks Charter City status to give it more autonomy over the provincial government and allow it to more strategically

focus on major, significant urban issues and funding. This suggestion, outside the jurisdiction and authority of City Council, would require changes to both provincial and federal legislation.

- Regular reviews of Agencies and Corporations, to ensure that they are meeting and advancing the strategic priorities of City Council.

Sub-theme input on election reform:

- Staff received a number of emails (88 out of a total of 101) requesting that ranked ballots be put in place in time for the next general election in 2022. A few participants at the public sessions and online also proposed implementation of ranked ballots for elections.
- In addition to ranked ballots, a few submissions supported term limits for the City, a decision outside authority of City Council requiring changes to provincial legislation. At its meeting of February 21, 2019, the Special Committee on Governance deferred consideration of this item indefinitely.

Sub-theme input on neighbourhood governance models

- A few participants brought forward detailed plans for the City to implement formal Community Boards based on a model in New York City, where the public assumes some communication and engagement functions that currently are filled by Councillors and City staff. The proposal includes community and Council appointments (approximately 50 from each ward) who would serve as a conduit between residents and City Council, presenting neighbourhood priorities and reviewing development, and local decisions in the ward for Council.
- Other participants raised questions and concerns about models in which any group, or board were given the role of representing residents' interests. Specific questions included the impact of another layer of governance, including the potential for creating additional barriers to participation and interaction between residents and their Councillor, Community Council or Council, how to ensure access, equity and representation, and how costs, differences across the city and political perspectives would be addressed.
- Other participants suggested their neighbourhood groups could support the City and City Councillors to engage local communities while maintaining their independence and autonomy, and not be a formal part of the City's governance framework.

Theme 3 - Committee and agenda management:

This category included suggestions about: making meetings more accessible; organizing Committee items on agendas and public speakers differently; providing agendas further in advance of meetings; including clear language summaries in reports; and, linking reports to information about outcomes and City services.

Participant suggestions included:

- ideas for how Standing Committees and City Council could improve the efficiency of meetings by amending the Procedure By-law to allow meetings to "flow" better, timing items and making changes to how motions are introduced at meetings;

- looking at ways to improve the information and decision flow between City Council, Community Councils and Standing Committees;
- reviewing the mandates of the Standing Committees to make sure they are strategically aligned for effective debates and decision making; and
- improving the deputation process to make it more accessible and impactful.

Additional research and workplan items

In addition to the major themes above, there were a number of minor themes that emerged from the consultations to date.

Staff will review all of the input following the completion of the upcoming neighbourhood association consultation, consultations with Members of Council, and divisional staff and prior to drafting the final report to the Committee. All input will be posted to the City's Open Data site and ideas will also be forwarded to City divisions and agencies for their information.

As themes emerge from the public input, staff will undertake additional research including a review of Council's decision history, jurisdictional research and a review of submissions to the Special Committee and previous governance reviews. This research will help to contextualize the concerns, ideas and suggestions from the consultation and any legal, legislative and jurisdictional considerations, along with public and political social sentiment and opinion as staff prepare final recommendations for the Committee's consideration.

At its previous meetings, City Council and the Special Committee also directed staff to report back on a number of items. This work will continue in the next 2 months and includes:

- Prepare a recommendation for the final report for the City to partner with a post-secondary institute to research the efficacy of community impacts of the Committee of Adjustment system,
- Request to the City Manager to research best practices and case studies and report on the feasibility of creating of an Office of Neighbourhoods,
- A report from the City Clerk on research of other jurisdictions and the feasibility of transcription of meetings of City Council and the various committees, boards, agencies and special committees including cost, possible technological solutions and an analysis of the equity impact of transcription services, and
- Consider reviewing the process for establishing Council Advisory Bodies to ensure that they are appropriately constituted to support Council term priorities.

Next Steps

In September and October 2019, staff will consult with neighbourhood and community associations to more deeply explore their role in the City's governance framework. Staff will also be consulting with Members of City Council to seek their feedback on how the reduction in the size of Council has affected them and their role. Finally, input from the

consultations and findings from staff research will be reviewed with City officials to consider legal, legislative, equity and financial impacts.

A final report will be prepared for the November 2019 meeting of the Special Committee on Governance.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Details on Public Engagement Activities