

Recommendation:

That the Clerk's Office-2023-24 report, dated September 5, 2023 regarding a request for a public comment period at Council meetings be received and that Staff be requested to prepared an Amending By-law for Council approval at the next regular meeting.

Overview:

At the June 6th, 2023 Council meeting, a request for procedural changes dated May 29th, 2023 was received from Lynn McCabe, Marie Howran, Pat Smallman and Susan Field. In the letter they outline three changes they would like to be considered:

- 1) That draft minutes be released within 48 hours of the occurrence of a Council meeting.
- 2) That the Agenda be published in draft form seven days prior to a Council meeting.
- 3) That the public be allowed to ask questions and make statements during the meeting.

In response to the requests, Council passed the following Resolution:

June 6, 2023

Resolution Number 191-2023

Moved by: Councillor Johnston

Seconded by: Deputy Mayor Nelson

That the letter from Lynn McCabe, Marie Howran, Pat Smallman and Susan Field dated May 29th, 2023, regarding requests for various policy change be received and staff be requested to bring back a report on the request to a future Council meeting. Carried

At the August 1, 2023 Council meeting staff presented a report regarding the three requests and provided recommendations to Council. Council passed the following recommendation:

Resolution Number 240-2023

Moved by: Councillor Vervoort

Seconded by: Councillor Johnston

That the report, dated August 1, 2023 regarding a response to a request for Procedural Change be deferred and that staff be requested to bring forward a draft proposal to implement a Comment Period in the Procedural By-law for Council's review. Carried

This report outlines a concept for Council's review of changes to the Procedural By-law to allow for the implementation of a public Comment Period.

Staff are suggesting that a Comment Period be created after "Item 8. Delegations, Petitions, Presentation or Public Meetings" on the Agenda. This new item would be "9. Public Comment Period – No debate or Decision". All other items on the agenda will be renumbered to follow suit.

This new item will provide a maximum of 30 minutes for any members of the public to request to make a five (5) minute deputation to Council regarding an item listed on the agenda. Requests to be listed as a deputation in Item 9. Public Comments, shall be received by the Clerk, no later than the Monday at noon prior to the Council meeting date. For example, if the Council meeting is to be held on Tuesday, September 5th, the deadline to apply for Public Comment is Monday, September 4th, at noon. All requests will be in writing on the Public Comment Request Form. A draft copy of the Form is attached to this report and if approved would be added as "Schedule C- Public Comment Form" to the Procedural By-law.

On Monday afternoon, Staff will compile the submitted requests and provide them to Council via email. A copy of the list will also be posted as an addendum to the Agenda on the Township website at the same time. The name of the person and the item on which they provided a comment on will appear in the minutes of the meeting.

To set out the expectations and regulations for "Public Comment Period" a new Part shall be inserted as "Part 15 – Public Comment Period" all other parts of the By-law will be renumbered accordingly. This new part will be similar to Part 14 in that it will speak to the following items:

- How to file a request and the deadline to do so – See explanation above
- Time Limit for the Comment – Five (5) Minutes
- Restrictions and Permissions – Can only speak to the matter listed on their request form and that it must be an item already listed on the Agenda
- Number of Public Comments per Meeting – Six (6), five (5) minute public comments for a maximum of 30 minutes.
- Limits on Repetition to allow for a diversity of points of view and best use of limited time
- Delegations Deemed Inappropriate for Council
- No Debate or Decision shall be made on Public Comments. They can be discussed when the item they referred to appears on the Agenda

Further to the changes above, to allow the public more time to view the Agenda and submit a request for Public Comment, Item 4.2 in the Procedural By-law shall be amendment to read that the Agenda shall be released to Council and the public on the Thursday prior to the Council meeting by 4:30 p.m.

Conclusion:

As per Council's request Staff have created a mechanism to allow for public comments at Council meetings while also protecting the requirements to have open, accessible and transparent Council meetings.

Financial Impact:

There is no anticipated financial impact with this proposed change.

Strategic Plan Applicability: To ensure and enable an effective and efficient municipal administration.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Requested Changes to Procedural By-law.docx
Attachments:	- 2022-21 - Procedural By-law.pdf - Draft - Schedule C.docx
Final Approval Date:	Aug 28, 2023

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Elana Arthurs