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Committee will look at pros and cons of ward system

By Brock Weir

Aurora's Governance Review Committee will look at the pros and cons of adopting a ward system over the next four years, according to terms of reference approved by Council.

Council, at its first formal meeting of the 2018-2022 term, formally approved the re-establishment of several citizen-led advisory committees which will provide review and input on many issues facing this community, providing further information to elected representatives during the decision-making process.

In addition to committees mandated by the Province ? the Aurora Public Library Board, the Committee of Adjustment and the Accessibility Committee ? Council approved the establishment of the Heritage Advisory Committee, Finance Advisory Committee, the Community Recognition Review Advisory Committee, the Governance Ad-Hoc Committee, and the Community Advisory Committee, the latter of which amalgamates three committees operating in the previous term of Council: the Parks, Recreation & Culture, Environmental, and Trails & Active Transportation Committees.

In addition to Council members seeking re-assurances that the Governance Ad-Hoc Committee would offer recommendations on how to implement a ward system, both for and against, the composition of this amalgamated committee garnered significant chatter at the previous week's General Committee Meeting.

As some Council members expressed concern that combining three committees into one five-member body would limit public participation, Councillor Michael Thompson moved a change the following week that this Committee be expanded to up to nine members. This was endorsed by Council.

Councillors, in particular Councillor Wendy Gaertner, also pressed for further changes in how the committee minutes are taken, calling on the Clerk's Office to note for the record questions posed by committee members to staff and their responses.

While Clerk Michael De Rond said the Municipal Act did not allow minutes to be taken ?with comment,? Councillor Gaertner argued this was another matter altogether.

?It is in the provisions of the Municipal Act that it is the intent that the Clerk record the minutes without any comment, but in this case it is not the Clerk that is making comment, it is staff that is making a comment in response to a committee member's question and the reason why that is important is those questions and answers could be information that?could be a benefit to Council,? she said. ?When the minutes come forward, I think it would just add clarification for Council and residents. I don't see why it can't be changed.?

This was, said Mr. De Rond, something that could be considered going forward.

?Under the Municipal Act, we will try to provide more of these answers as best we can without breaking [how] we see the provisions of the Act,? he said. ?Maybe I can meet with [Councillor Gaertner] in three or four months to see if [she] is satisfied with how the minutes are. It is the intent that members don't get to interject their own comments; the minutes are meant to capture committee and Council decisions and not much else.?

This was a step in the right direction, she agreed.

?I don't think that reporting the minutes those ways is going to break the requirement that the Clerk doesn't make his or her own personal comment,? she said. ?Let's see how it works out because I guess it could be up to the Chair of each committee to provide a companion to the minutes to say this is what happened. I think it is important that Council have that information.?

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS TO DATE:

Aurora Public Library Board: John Clement, Tom Connor, Adam Mobbs, Marie Rankel, Ken Turriff, Councillor Sandra Humfryes and Councillor Harold Kim

Committee of Adjustment, Property Standards Committee, Aurora Appeal Tribunal: Michele Boyer, Steve D'Angeli, Daniel Lajeunesse, Clarence Lui, and Tom Plamondon

Accessibility Advisory Committee: Matthew Abas, Gordon Barnes, Max Le Moine, John Lenchak, Hailey Reiss, Jo-anne Spitzer, Councillor Rachel Gilliland

Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority Board: Councillor Wendy Gaertner, representing the Town of Aurora

Joint Council Committee (A committee of Aurora and Newmarket Councillors overseeing Central York Fire Services): Mayor Tom Mrakas, Councillor John Gallo, Councillor Rachel Gilliland