

Aurora launches Town-wide review of service levels

Aurora is growing and changing, and, as demand for services increases due to growth and evolves as a result of demographic shifts, the Town will soon be looking at how services are delivered to residents into the future.

Council last week put the wheels in motion on a Municipal Service Level and Delivery Review.

Spurred by a motion from Councillor Michael Thompson, the review will task staff with looking at "more efficient and cost-effective service delivery, enhanced organizational and operation procedures, new revenue streams and potential savings."

"It is always important for us, as an organization, to continually evaluate and see how we can do things better," Councillor Thompson told his colleagues last week.

In his motion, the Councillor said it is always the wish of local lawmakers to "examine how to improve services, identify any new or rising service demands and evaluate service levels in the face of competing priorities and/or decreasing revenues and increasing costs to operate the municipality."

A review, he noted, helps set priorities, identify new ways to bring money into municipal coffers, reducing the cost of delivery, all the while "maintaining and/or improving services and service levels."

"A municipal service level and delivery review is a rigorous evaluation process that looks at the needs and expectations of the community, the performance and costs of the services provided, and may provide insight on best practices and/or alternative/better ways to deliver a service," Councillor Thompson said, noting in his motion that the Town last conducted a service level review in 2013.

"I think this is something that is needed and I am happy it is coming forward," said Councillor John Gallo in support of the motion.

Councillor Sandra Humfries also offered her support, "This is the right time. It has been nine years and I think it is a good time to get this on the table. When it comes back to us, I think we will come up with some different things we haven't seen before due to the circumstances and hopefully it will help us do more with less in different ways."

These words were echoed by Councillor Wendy Gaertner, who said, "We are in changing times and we need to look at how we might want to adapt to that."

In supporting the motion, Councillor Rachel Gilliland looked to the 2013 Service Level Review. Since then, we're now in a 'new normal,' she said, and looking at service levels now was particularly timely.

'Having this assessment right now may actually work to help find some efficiencies to our operating just based on connectivity and remote work,' she said. 'Who knows, maybe we can attract different employment that is not necessarily in Aurora and servicing the needs of the community.'

'You're seeing trends now of corporations who [are] maybe cutting some of their operational costs or finding efficiencies through this experience, which has forced us to be online. I really hope this report going forward will take a look at these opportunities in that way.'

Added Mayor Tom Mrakas: 'I think we're all about getting results for our community. Since last term with the development of the Finance Advisory Committee, I think we started down that path in how we can find efficiencies [and] we have always said our job is to provide the best possible service at the best possible price and that is exactly what this is going to bring to us, to be able to provide that for our residents.'

The Service Level Review is expected clear the last hurdle during budget talks scheduled to take place this fall.

By Brock Weir