



LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

TO: Council

DATE: March 23, 2021 **DIVISION:** All

FILE: N/A **APPLICATION:** N/A

SUBJECT: Additional Special Council Meetings and Public Hearing Prioritization

POLICY DIRECTION:

Section 194(1)(a) of the *Municipal Government Act* allows the Reeve to call special Council meetings when he or she considers it appropriate to do so. This is reflected in section 22 of Rocky View County's *Procedure Bylaw*.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At the October 27, 2020, organizational meeting, Council established the dates and times for its regularly scheduled meetings in 2021. Council has since held three additional special Council meetings in 2021 due to the cancellation of public hearings in December 2020 as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. These special Council meetings have included:

- February 8, 2021 – Public hearing for the Scott Property land use redesignation and consideration of the associated Master Site Development Plan
- February 16, 2021 – Public hearing for the Municipal Development Plan, South Springbank Area Structure Plan, and North Springbank Area Structure Plan
- March 2, 2021 – Public hearing for the Summit Pit land use redesignation and consideration of the associated Master Site Development Plan

There is a significant number of planning applications with applicants who wish to proceed to public hearings in 2021, with many applicants also requesting that their applications be scheduled prior to the municipal election in October 2021. There are also a number of significant projects initiated by the County that require public hearings. As a result, Administration is experiencing challenges with scheduling the volume of hearings and with determining which items should receive priority.

Given the number of public hearings yet to be scheduled, the competing priorities with scheduling them, and the few remaining meetings left in this term of Council, Administration is seeking direction on how Council wishes to proceed on the following questions:

- Does Council wish to schedule additional special Council meetings between now and the municipal election?
- How does Council wish to prioritize the scheduling of public hearings at those special Council meetings?

Administration has proposed one additional special Council meeting per month on the dates and times provided further on in this report, as well as options for Council to consider to provide guidance with scheduling public hearings at these meetings.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION:

Administration recommends approval in accordance with Option 1.

Administration Resources

Tyler Andreasen, Legislative Services

Sean MacLean, Planning and Development Services



BACKGROUND:

The County has a number of projects requiring public hearings that could be heard between now and the municipal election in October 2021. These include six area structure plan projects initiated by this Council, as well as one intermunicipal development plan bylaw. There are also a number of planning applications made by third parties across the County, and many of those applicants have requested that their applications be scheduled prior to the municipal election.

Public hearings have been booked through April 20, 2021, which leaves nine regular Council meetings available for scheduling public hearings between now and the municipal election. As of March 5, 2021, there are 65 public hearing items currently requiring scheduling. Administration estimates that these public hearings would take approximately 181 in total hours to complete. The breakdown by application type is as follows:

Application Type	Number of Applications	Estimated Hours of Public Hearing Time
Land use and local plan applications	16	70
Statutory plans	7	50
Redesignations	36	55
Road closures	6	6
	65	181

For context, if Council considered nothing but public hearings at the remaining nine regular meetings, and if those meetings lasted 8.5 hours, there would be 67.5 hours (subtracting a one-hour lunch break) of public hearing time available in total.

- This would allow for completion of approximately 37% of the current public hearing demand.

For the nine remaining meetings, if Council considered nothing but public hearings, and if the meetings lasted for 12 hours each, there would be 94.5 hours (subtracting one-hour lunch breaks and half-hour dinner breaks) of public hearing time available.

- This would allow for completion of approximately 52% of the current public hearing demand.

It is important to note that these estimates do not include any time for Council to consider non-public hearing items, such as general business items, consideration of bylaws and policies, and other items requiring updates or decisions from Council.

Additional Special Council Meetings

Due to advertising deadlines, Administration has already worked with the Reeve to schedule an additional special Council meeting on April 20, 2021. Given the extensive workload that Council faces between now and the municipal election in October 2021, Administration is seeking direction from Council to work with the Reeve on scheduling four additional special Council meetings on the following dates and times:

- Tuesday, May, 4, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.
- Tuesday, June 1, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.
- Tuesday, July 6, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.
- Tuesday, September 7, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.



Based on the length of the public hearings held at the February 2, February 16, and March 2, 2021, special Council meetings, there are a number of public hearings that would likely require an entire day to be heard.

If Council is amenable to scheduling additional special meetings between now and the municipal election, Administration recommends that the additional special Council meetings be dedicated to public hearings of the following types:

- County-initiated projects and statutory plan applications, such as area structure plans, with complex policy considerations that may result in a number of amendments to consider.
 - There are six area structure plans that could potentially proceed prior to October.
- Land use and local plan applications with significant community interest and complex technical considerations, such as high-density, mixed-use developments, aggregate extraction, etc.
 - Administration has determined that there are five applications of this type.

Regardless of the direction received from Council on additional special Council meetings, Administration will continue to schedule regular Council meetings with as many public hearings as possible, while balancing the workload with non-public hearing items requiring decisions of Council.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:

There is always the possibility of budget implications with holding Council meetings, primarily in the form of overtime paid to employees, but also in lost opportunity costs. Due to the nature of the public hearings that would be scheduled for these additional special Council meetings, there may be additional overtime paid to employees for preparing for and attending these meetings.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN:

All public hearings are advertised in accordance with the *Municipal Government Act* and the County's *Public Notification Bylaw*. Any additional special Council meetings would be communicated through the County's website and other communication channels.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

Council's Strategic Plan includes the strategic objective of creating a culture of customer service. This objective falls under the strategic theme of service excellence, and one of its stated goals is to improve the processing times of applications.

The Strategic Plan also includes the strategic objective of guiding the County's growth pattern. This objective falls under the strategic theme of responsible growth, and one of its stated goals is to ensure that the County's plans are current.

CONCLUSION:

There are a number of significant internal and external applications requiring public hearings. There are only nine available regular Council meetings available to schedule them. Administration recommends that Council provide direction to work with the Reeve to schedule one additional special Council meeting per month until the municipal election in October 2021. Administration further recommends that statutory plans, complex land use redesignations, and aggregate extraction applications be prioritized for these additional meetings in accordance with Option 1.



OPTIONS:

- Option #1: Motion 1 THAT Administration be directed to work with the Reeve to schedule additional special Council meetings on the following dates and times:
- Tuesday, May, 4, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.
 - Tuesday, June 1, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.
 - Tuesday, July 6, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.
 - Tuesday, September 7, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.
- Motion 2 THAT the following types of public hearing be prioritized for the additional special Council meetings:
- Statutory Plans or amendments; and
 - Land use and local plan applications with significant public/stakeholder input received, and/or complex technical considerations, such as high-density, mixed-use developments, and aggregate extraction applications.
- Option #2: THAT alternative direction be provided.

Respectfully submitted,

Concurrence,

“Amy Zaluski”

“Al Hoggan”

Director, Legislative Services

Chief Administrative Officer

TA/rp