



MUNICIPAL CLERK'S OFFICE

TO: Council

DATE: October 27, 2020 **DIVISION:** N/A

FILE: 0195

SUBJECT: 2021 Council and Committee Meeting Dates

POLICY DIRECTION:

Section 193 of the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) allows Council to decide on the dates, times, and places for regular Council meetings.

Section 15(2) of the *Procedure Bylaw* states that Council establishes the dates and times for regular Council meetings and committee meetings at the annual organizational meeting.

Section 31 of the *Boards and Committees Bylaw* provides a list of the committees that Council establishes meeting dates and times for at the annual organizational meeting.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The purpose of this report is to provide recommendations for scheduling 2021 Council and committee meeting dates and times in accordance with the *Municipal Government Act*, *Procedure Bylaw*, and *Boards and Committees Bylaw*.

Attachment 'A' of this report includes suggested dates and times for meetings of Council, Municipal Planning Commission, Agricultural Service Board, ALUS Partnership Advisory Committee, Subdivision and Development Appeal Board, Enforcement Appeal Committee. The proposed dates and times align with those of previous years.

Also included in Attachment 'A' of this report are office closures, statutory holidays, and conferences attended by Council such as the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and provincial Agricultural Service Board.

This report also provides an analysis of afternoon or evening meetings in response to direction provided at the June 23, 2020 Council meeting. A discussion of how afternoon and evening meetings fit within Council's Strategic Plan is found later in this report, and estimated costs are provided in Attachment 'B' of this report.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION:

Administration recommends approval in accordance with Option #1.

2021 COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETING DATES:

Council Meetings

Rocky View County's *Procedure Bylaw* provides Council to establish the dates and times of regular Council meetings as it sees fit. In previous years, Council meetings are held every second and fourth Tuesday of the month starting at 9:00am, with the exception of August which has no scheduled meetings.

Administration Resources

Charlotte Satink and Tyler Andreasen, Municipal Clerk's Office



The proposed Council meeting dates provided in Attachment 'A' of this report is a continuation of that practice, with the exception of the second meeting in November being moved back a week due the Rural Municipalities of Alberta conference, as well as the December meeting dates being moved up a week due to Christmas holidays and office closures.

Given that 2020 is a municipal election year, Council may want consider removing the proposed Council meetings between the end of the nomination period prior to the election and the organizational meeting following the election. The nomination period for the next election ends on September 20, 2021 and election day is October 18, 2021.

Administration conducted a review of other municipalities and found that most municipalities still hold meetings between nomination day and election day, except for the City of Calgary and City of Edmonton which do not hold meetings in that period.

Municipal Planning Commission Meetings

The *Municipal Planning Commission Bylaw* states that Council determines the dates and times of its meetings at the annual organizational meeting. The Municipal Planning Commission originally held its meetings on the Mondays before Council meetings, but has since changed to holding its meetings on the Thursdays following Council meetings.

At its October 8, 2020 meeting, the Municipal Planning Commission passed a resolution recommending to Council that its meetings be held on Wednesdays following Council meetings in 2021. The proposed dates and times in Attachment 'A' of this report reflect this recommendation, aside from November where only one meeting is scheduled due to the Rural Municipalities of Alberta conference.

Recreation Governance Committee Meetings

The Recreation Governance Committee's terms of reference state that it will meet at least four times per year, with the dates and times of its meetings determined by the Committee at its first meeting following the organizational meeting. The proposed dates and times in Attachment 'A' of this report do not reflect meetings of the Recreation Governance Committee. Administration is requesting direction from Council to update the 2021 calendar once it is determined when those meetings will be held.

Agricultural Service Board and ALUS Partnership Advisory Committee Meetings

The Agricultural Service Board's terms of reference state that it will meet at least five times per year, with meetings usually held in February, March, May, September, and November. The proposed dates and times in Attachment 'A' of this report continues this practice. When ALUS Partnership Advisory Committee meetings are required, they are generally held following Agricultural Service Board meetings.

Subdivision and Development Appeal Board and Enforcement Appeal Committee Meetings

The Subdivision and Development Appeal Board meetings as needed to hear and decide on appeals, as there is a legislated 30-day timeline to hold hearings after an appeal has been received. To ensure that meetings are scheduled if appeals are received, the clerk of the Subdivision and Development Appeal board recommends that meetings be scheduled every third Thursday in 2021.

ANALYSIS OF AFTERNOON AND EVENING MEETINGS:

Administration was directed at the June 23, 2020 Council meeting to prepare an analysis of the costs associated with holding Council meetings in the afternoon or evening rather than in the morning. This portion of the staff report is in response to that direction and is meant to provide guidance if Council does consider changing the time of its meetings.



The discussion by Council began with whether to hold an additional Council meeting each month but evolved to whether holding afternoon or evening Council meetings would allow for more public attendance and participation at Council meetings, as well as how this would align with Council's Strategic Plan.

Administration does not have data on how many more people would attend or participate in meetings if they were held in the afternoon or evening rather than the morning, nor does it have any data on what the public's preference would be given the option. That said, there are certainly people who would have attended or participated in a meeting but were unable to do so because of work or other obligations during the day. It is, therefore, an option worth considering.

The direction provided at the June 23, 2020 Council meeting requested an analysis of afternoon or evening meetings but did not clarify what time of day constitutes the afternoon or evening. Administration has provided an analysis that shows the potential additional costs of holding a meeting later in the day by the hour. This is provided in Attachment 'B' of this report.

It is important to note that much of the administrative costs associated with holding a Council meeting would be the same whether it is held in the morning, afternoon, or evening. Things like preparing advertisements and circulations, drafting and editing reports, and compiling and publishing agendas would happen in much the same way regardless of when the meeting is held.

That said, the costs associated with staff attendance at Council meetings would be greater with afternoon or evening meetings. As Attachment 'B' of this report demonstrates, those costs are greater, or have the potential to be greater, the later in the day a meeting is held.

Analysis of Costs and Impacts

Council meetings begin at 9:00am and usually end sometime around 3pm, which means that the time spent attending Council meetings is usually absorbed into the County's normal business hours of 8:00am to 4:30pm. The average length of a meeting for this term of Council (2017 – present) is 5 hours and 41 minutes.

When meetings are held during regular hours, staff would be at the County Hall regardless, making it easier to arrange for staff to present reports, respond to questions, provide advice, and otherwise support Council during meetings. When meetings are held outside of normal hours, it becomes more difficult and costly to make these arrangements, as staff would be either extending shifts beyond normal business hours or changing the hours of their shifts around Council meetings. In general, there are two ways that these may be managed:

- Employees work their regular shifts and stay late to attend Council meetings—with this, staff attending meetings would be compensated for their overtime, resulting in either higher costs due to paying out that time or reduced service levels if time off in lieu is provided; or
- Employees change their regular shifts in order to attend Council meetings—with this, staff attending meetings would not be accruing overtime. Instead, staff would flex their schedules around attending Council meetings, resulting in reduced service levels during regular business hours.

Many of the staff who attend Council meetings are also required to attend other board and committee meetings such as the Municipal Planning Commission and Subdivision and Development Appeal Board. With the proposal to hold Municipal Planning Commission meetings on the Wednesdays following Council meetings starting in 2021, staff could be required to stay late in the evening to attend a Council meeting and then must also attend a Municipal Planning Commission meeting the following morning.

It is important to note that the *Alberta Employment Standards Code* limits the maximum number of hours worked to 12 hours per day and requires at least eight hours of rest between shifts. These



regulations do not apply to management or supervisory positions. Depending on the time a meeting begins, the *Alberta Employment Standards Code* would need to be considered.

Public Attendance at Meetings

Sections 197 and 198 of the *Municipal Government Act* establish that Council meetings are open to the public and that people have the right to attend those meetings. Although these sections of the *MGA* only provide the right to *physically* attend meetings, many municipalities are going beyond this minimum standard by allowing people to watch meetings *electronically* through livestreaming.

Rocky View County has been livestreaming its Council meetings since 2018, and has made improvements in this regard in 2020. If people are unable to attend in person, they are able to watch Council meetings as they occur from home, from work, or from anywhere else with an internet connection. In addition, Administration also provides the meeting minutes and detailed summaries of decisions following each meeting, resulting in a number of different ways to observe and stay informed of Council meetings.

When it comes to providing opportunities for people to observe Council meetings, it is Administration's view that the County already provides service excellence and has enhanced transparency and communication in accordance with Council's Strategic Plan.

Public Participation at Meetings

The sections of the *Municipal Government Act* discussed above, however, do not establish a right for the public to *participate* in Council meetings. That is provided under section 230 of the *Municipal Government Act* through the public hearing process, as well as under various sections of the County's *Procedure Bylaw* through the public presentation process.

Public hearings begin at either 9:00am or 1:00pm. When arranging public hearings, Administration generally schedules more complex matters and matters with more community interest in the afternoon rather than in the morning. When Administration has a number of public hearings scheduled for the same Council meeting, generally only two are scheduled in the morning and the rest are scheduled for the afternoon.

When it comes to public presentations, sometimes they are scheduled in the morning and sometimes for the afternoon, depending on other matters on the agenda and the availability of the presenters. When a presentation request is received, Administration works with the presenters to schedule a date and time for the presentation that works best for them.

Given that consideration is made when scheduling public hearings and presentations, it is Administration's view that the County is already providing service excellence in accordance with Council's Strategic Plan.

Conclusion

While holding meetings in the afternoon or evening would provide more opportunity for the public to attend and participate in meetings, it is Administration's view there would be a reduction in service delivery from the staff attending those meetings. Although the exact costs are difficult to determine and would be dependent on the items included on the agenda even if determined, they would generally be higher the later in the day the meeting is held.

It is Administration's recommendation that meeting continue to be held starting at 9:00am. If Council wishes to pursue afternoon or evenings further, Administration recommends that the scope be limited to matters involving participation by the public, such as public hearings, on a case-by-case basis. This direction may be provided following first reading of bylaws requiring public hearings.



BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:

N/A

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

A discussion of Council's Strategic Plan can be found in the afternoon or evening meeting analysis earlier in this report.

OPTIONS:

- Option #1: Motion #1: THAT the 2021 Rocky View County Council and Committee meeting dates be approved as per Attachment 'A'.
- Motion #2: THAT Administration be directed to include Recreation Governance Committee meetings on the 2021 calendar once they are determined by the Committee.
- Option #2: THAT alternative direction be provided.

Respectfully submitted,

Concurrence,

"Kent Robinson"

"Al Hoggan"

Executive Director
Corporate Services

Chief Administrative Officer

CS/TA

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT 'A': Proposed 2021 Council and Committee Meeting Calendar

ATTACHMENT 'B': Estimated Costs and Impacts of Afternoon or Evening Meetings