

Report

City of Merritt
REGULAR Council Meeting
September 15, 2020

File Number: 0530.20

To: Sean Smith, Chief Administrative Officer
From: Greg Lewis, Deputy Corporate Officer
Date: September 9, 2020
Subject: Review of council committees

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council instruct staff to bring forward recommendations on how the Committee Policy and City's Bylaws should be altered to improve the role of Committees at the City of Merritt

Background:

Council has, over time, set up a number of different committees with varying purposes and remits. In turn, these committees have met with varying frequency and regularity. Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, very few have met in any manner in 2020, although some activity continued for the BC Provincial Nomination Committee and the Finance and Audit Committee, first online and then in-person once socially-distanced meetings could be safely resumed.

When committee membership was sought, results have varied substantially. Although the Airport Committee in 2019 was oversubscribed with high-quality applicants, staff have repeatedly advertised for the Economic Development Committee and had limited public response.

The *Community Charter* allows for the creation of two different types of committees, Standing and Select, with slightly different purposes and compositions. Merritt has a number of Committees under both permissible types. In addition to legislation, committees are governed through the City's *Procedure Bylaw* and Committee Policy, and the *Delegation Bylaw* states they can have delegated functions. The Committees' Terms of Reference were each created at the time of the Committee's founding, and

currently provide for varying responsibilities and reporting structures. They are inconsistent with features such as to whether or not specific committees should be chaired by a member of Council, and whether or not there is any delegated authority.

There are outstanding requests from Council for staff to provide amendments to the Committee Policy about membership, and to the *Procedure Bylaw* about the method in which meetings can be held. While studying this request, staff have identified a number of changes which could be made to the *Procedure Bylaw* both for best practice for meeting operations (such as the working of motions and amendments), and to ensure consistency between Council and Committee meetings (such as notice periods, document provision, record keeping). Staff have also reviewed committee structures and delegations of authority across British Columbia

Since the 2018 election, Council has created a number of new committees, and appointed members to pre-existing ones. Nevertheless, with such limited Committee activity in recent months and the ongoing reduction in activity due to Covid-19, staff believe this is an opportune time to review the role of Committees in Merritt, to ensure they function well and provide value to Council, without interrupting ongoing work.

Staff propose bringing a report to Council which would provide a comprehensive review of Committee operations, and propose amendments to the Committee Policy and relevant Bylaws for Council to consider. This would be the first such review in many years, and would provide an opportunity for Merritt to have clear structures and expectations, to ensure committees contribute fully to Council's vision for Merritt. Staff believe this is an opportunity to strengthen Committees, and Merritt's governance generally, to provide additional impetus and direction, with a clear structure and intent.

Staff anticipate that any amendments will result in committees which continue to have variety, but which have all been reviewed for their purpose and structure, and draw from best practice across the Province. Alternatively, Council could request different changes, or reiterate its specific requests from 2019 and 2020.

Options / discussion

1. Council instruct staff to bring back recommendations on how Merritt's committee policies and Bylaws can be amended to improve the role of committees at the City of Merritt
2. Council receive this report for information

Respectfully submitted,

Greg Lowis
Deputy Corporate Officer