

OPEN FOR BUSINESS SUB-COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Mandate

To review the City of Hamilton's overall "Open for Business" effectiveness, with the goal of improving development and business approval processes within the Planning and Economic Development and Public Works Departments and other City Departments to create consistent, predictable, and customer-focused services that encourage development and small and medium sized businesses in the City of Hamilton.

Sub-Committee Objectives

1. To minimize and improve the City of Hamilton's approval, permitting and licensing processes that are administered by the various Departments and Divisions;
2. To ensure the City of Hamilton's "One-Stop" for Business Services is meeting the needs and concerns of small and medium sized businesses;
3. To ensure that the City of Hamilton's approval, permits, licensing processes and all other applicable policies lead to an overall "Open for Business" environment in both the urban and rural areas of the City, with particular emphasis in our established and developed Business Improvement Areas.
4. To ensure that the City is well-positioned, and has appropriate processes in place, to achieve its population and employment growth targets, with a particular emphasis on growing the City's non-residential assessment base.

General Scope of Committee Work and Deliverables

1. Review the current business services structure, staffing resources, core functions, and key services, as they relate to small and medium sized businesses, and identify specific issues that need enhancements or improvements that would lead to a more effective "Open for Business" and customer-focused experience.
2. Examine the integration between the various Divisions within the Planning and Economic Development and Public Works Departments, as well as the roles and integration between all other Departments of the City of Hamilton; identifying any potential gaps and issues, and recommend improvements, to ensure that the needs of the client are provided in a seamless and integrated fashion, and improving upon the "One-Stop-Shopping" principle.

3. Review, analyze and implement improvements to the current development approvals processes. The review should be conducted with special attention paid to the issues that arise in frequency, with improvements being recommended to provide consistent, predictable, and creative solutions for all business clients.

The following detailed approval processes are to be reviewed, as well as the interface with by-law enforcement practices and issues related to these processes:

- Subdivisions
 - Formal Consultation/Development Review Team
 - Site Plans
 - Zoning Verification
 - Building Permit
 - Licenses
 - Sign Permits
 - Variances
4. Ensure a quality, comprehensive system is in place that advises business and entrepreneurs of all City requirements, fees and timing, at the start of consultation.
 5. Review and analyze the current fee structures of all relevant applications, and licensing fees, identifying gaps and/or duplication that may exist, and recommend any improvements, including possible reductions, elimination of fees, or combining of fees.
 6. Review, analyze and test the City of Hamilton's website for the current information that is available to small and medium sized enterprises regarding the City's Business Services, identifying key gaps, and recommend any improvements.
 7. Review and analyze existing measurements and/or indicators being used to evaluate the success of the City's approvals processes, and recommend improvements and metrics. Special focus should also be placed on how the City communicates the services it offers and the successes that are reported.
 8. Oversee the implementation of the Development Applications Approval Processes Review and Open for Business Action Plan.

Sub-Committee Staff Support

With the objectives of the Committee being specific to the current processes, a close working relationship between staff and the Sub-Committee will be important. Therefore, the General Manager of Planning and Economic Development will assign a member of City staff to act as the lead resource to the Sub-Committee. As well, they will ensure that key staff members relevant to the objectives of the Sub-Committee are regularly made available to assist and support the Sub-Committee's work.

Consultation

Ongoing consultation with small and medium sized business and development sectors will be vitally important to the Sub-Committee achieving its objectives.

Opportunities for delegations will be made on the agendas of Sub-Committee meetings.

As the business sector and business districts within the City of Hamilton are varied and spread throughout urban, and rural areas, consultation should ensure that all aspects of business and land development, both large and small, are taken into consideration. Particular attention should be paid to the established and older Business Improvement Areas within the City. These areas tend to be where new businesses face the most complications and frustrations in the City's approval process.

It is also expected that there will be ongoing consultation specific to local business, real estate, developer, and land/property owner stakeholders, including but not limited to the Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), the Hamilton, Stoney Creek, and Flamborough Chambers of Commerce, the Hamilton Burlington Real Estate Board, the Hamilton Construction Association, and the Hamilton-Halton Home Builders' Association, as well as other broadly or industry focused business groups.

Membership and Reporting Structure

Sub-Committee membership will consist of six (6) members of Council, with the Chair being appointed by the Sub-Committee at its first meeting. It is recommended that Council membership take into consideration the differing needs of the older developed business areas, the suburban business areas, and the rural area of the City.

Representatives from the Hamilton-Halton Home Builders Association and the Hamilton, Flamborough and Stoney Creek Chambers of Commerce, the Business Improvement Area Advisory Committee (BIACC) and the Realtors Association of Hamilton-Burlington will also participate as ex-officio, non-voting key advisors of the Sub-Committee.

The Sub-Committee shall report back to General Issues Committee (GIC) periodically at the discretion of the Committee.

Meetings

To be scheduled monthly or at the call of the Chair.

Open for Business Sub-Committee established by Council on October 12, 2011.