CITY OF HAMILTON
PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT 2015-03
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK – AGENDA PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

The City's Legislative Services and Print & Mail sections are responsible for compiling, printing and distributing agendas for all Council and Standing Committee meetings and a selection of sub-committee, agency and board and tribunal meetings. Council and Standing Committee agendas are available electronically on the City's website. Paper copies are printed and provided to Members of Council, select staff and members of the public attending meetings. Agendas for sub-committee, agency, board and tribunal meetings are printed and provided to participants at the time of the meeting.

The following chart was compiled using information from the Print & Mail section and summarizes the number of pages printed for Council and Standing Committee meetings from October 1, 2013 to September 30, 2014. This provides one complete year of information as limited meetings were held from October to December, 2014 due to the municipal election.

Council or Standing Committee	Number of Meetings	Number of Pages (Double Sided)
Council	22	102,000
Audit, Finance and Administration	11	124,000
Board of Health	11	51,000
Emergency and Community Services	10	60,000
General Issues Committee	39	293,000
Planning	20	300,000
Public Works	15	70,000
Total	**128**	**1,000,000**

Due to high print volumes, cost savings may be realized if fewer paper agendas are provided to Members of Council, staff and the public.

AUDIT OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The purpose of this audit was to calculate how much it costs the City to print and distribute paper agendas, calculate possible cost savings by reducing the number of agendas provided to various recipients and identify challenges that may require attention to move toward a more electronic agenda process.

The audit included all Council and Standing Committee print volumes generated by the Print & Mail section for the period October 1, 2013 to September 30, 2014. Due to limited volume information, agendas for sub-committee, board, agency and tribunal meetings, private and confidential reports and items printed directly by the Legislative Services section or departmental staff were excluded from this scope of this audit.

On March 9, 2015 the Audit, Finance and Administration Committee directed Information Technology Division staff to investigate the implementation of an electronic means of publishing Standing Committee and Council agendas for Members of Council and City staff. In addition, staff are analyzing processes associated with how agendas are posted on the City's website as part of the web redevelopment project. As a result, information technology hardware and software requirements, and related processes, were excluded from the scope of this audit.

METHODOLOGY

The work performed by Audit Services involved:

A. **Documenting agenda processes** based on employee interviews and observations. Process descriptions include main activities such as compiling, printing and distributing agendas and calculating chargebacks for printing costs.

B. **Identifying and quantifying costs associated with printing and distributing paper agendas** by examining documentary evidence, observing processes and corroborating statements with other employees.

C. **Calculating the cost and environmental impact** of providing paper agendas to Members of Council, staff, the public and others, and quantifying cost and environmental savings by reducing print volumes.

D. **Calculating and comparing standard printing costs charged to departments** to actual printing costs.

E. **Surveying Members of Council and staff who receive at least one paper agenda** to understand the reasons why printed agendas are used, identify concerns with moving to an electronic agenda process and determine if available electronic tools are being utilized.

F. **Surveying other municipalities and regional governments** to compare agenda processes and use of technology to manage processes.

FINDINGS

Cost and Environmental Savings

It costs the City approximately $35,000 and 120 trees to print and distribute agendas to Members of Council, select staff and the public for Council and Standing Committee meetings. Cost calculations include direct materials and labour. Agendas are distributed to staff using the City's internal mail delivery service. As delivering fewer agendas would have no impact on delivery times or routes, these labour costs were excluded from the calculations. Cost savings may be realized if all or a portion of paper agendas are no longer printed. The following chart summarizes the cost and environmental savings that may be achieved if agendas are no longer printed for various recipient groups.

Recipient Type	Cost Savings	Environmental Savings
Members of Council	$7,000	31 trees
Staff	$9,000	38 trees
Public	$7,000	31 trees
Others	$4,000	19 trees
All Recipients*	$35,000	120 trees

*certain costs are incurred upon printing one agenda, regardless of how many copies are printed, therefore the total savings by recipient type does not total the savings from eliminating all paper agendas.

Audit Services identified waste with respect to the number of agenda copies made available to the public at Council and Standing Committee meetings. Currently, Legislative Services prints 17 to 33 agenda copies for public consumption based on past practices and professional judgement. Waste is not regularly tracked; however one meeting cycle was tracked for audit purposes, resulting in approximately 60% of printed agendas being unused and disposed of at the conclusion of the meeting. This figure is not necessarily reflective of all meetings but indicates that there is likely significant waste. Reducing the number of agendas printed for the public will reduce waste and save money.

Survey Results – Other Municipalities

Surveys were sent to 18 municipalities and regional governments to obtain information relating to agenda distribution processes and related technology. Eleven organizations responded to the survey request.

Similar to the City of Hamilton, ten respondents are currently distributing agenda materials using a combination of paper and electronic formats. Five organizations are in the process of or considering moving to electronic agenda distribution. One respondent distributes its meeting agendas only in electronic format.

Other organizations were able to reduce agenda print volumes and costs by:

- Limiting copies to only Members of Council and/or the senior management team;

- Providing copies of only the table of contents and/or specific agenda items rather than the full agenda; and

- Promoting the use of online agendas and no longer printing copies for the public.

Respondents transitioning to an electronic-only agenda distribution identified the following conversion challenges:

- Investments in hardware (e.g. network and server infrastructure, tablets and notebooks) and software programs to enable efficient and effective use of electronic agendas;

- Management and security of private and confidential items;

- Investments in coaching and training initiatives to build computer skills; and

- Constant communication to effectively manage the transition and user expectations.

Surveys Results – Members of Council and Staff

Surveys were sent to 16 Members of Council and 56 staff, primarily in management positions, to obtain information on the use of paper and online agendas in the organization and to identify concerns users may have transitioning to electronic agendas. 50% of Members of Council and 55% of staff responded to the survey request.

Over 80% of survey respondents have a City-issued laptop or tablet that can be used to access agendas electronically. Over half of the respondents have used their devices to access current or previous agendas online. Approximately 40% of staff and 50% of Council Member respondents did not identify concerns or limitations if the City adopted the use of only electronic agendas. The remaining respondents identified the following challenges and concerns that would need to be addressed in order to buy into an electronic agenda solution:

- Provide users with the ability to tag pages, highlight information and make comments or notes electronically;
- Provide users with the ability to search and locate agenda reports and notes easily and quickly during meetings; and
- Provide access to laptops or tablets in Council Chambers for those without their own portable device.

It is important that user concerns and needs are factored into any initiatives undertaken to transition to a paperless or paper-reduced agenda process. Approximately 45% of staff respondents indicated that they use the majority of information contained in the agenda. If their concerns are not met, staff may print agendas themselves at the departmental level which will increase printing costs by 25% compared to current Print & Mail section rates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The implementation of the following recommendations may result in opportunities for cost savings by reducing overall costs associated with printing Council and Standing Committee agendas.

1. *That consistent with the motion put forth by the Audit, Finance and Administration Committee on March 9, 2015, the Information Technology Division review survey results and consider the challenges and concerns identified by other municipalities, Members of Council and staff in their investigation of publishing agendas electronically.*

   Management Response:
   Agreed. The City Clerk's Office will be responsible for reviewing survey results and take into consideration the challenges and concerns identified by other municipalities, Members of Council and staff in their investigation of publishing agendas electronically. A report will be prepared by the City Clerk's Office with input from the IT Division for the Audit, Finance & Administration Committee in Q4, 2015.

2. *That the City Clerk and Information Technology Divisions assess the overall cost savings, taking into consideration technology-related costs in the adoption of electronic or paper-reduced agenda distribution processes or strategies and report alternatives back to the Audit, Finance and Administration Committee.*

   Management Response:
   Agreed. The City Clerk's Office will work with the Information Technology Division to assess the overall costs, taking into consideration technology-related costs in the adoption of electronic or paper-reduced agenda distribution process. A report will be prepared by the City Clerk's Office for the Audit, Finance and Administration Committee in Q4, 2015 with input from Information Technology with a strategy for the implementation of an electronic or paper-reduced agenda distribution process prior to the 2018-2022 Term of Council.

3. *That Council consider the options put forth by Audit Services and the information to be received from the Information Technology Division. Direction should be provided to staff if the decision is made to move forward with an electronic agenda process.*

Management Response:
Agreed. Upon being directed by Council to move forward with an electronic agenda process, the City Clerk's Office will engage the Information Technology Division to implement the Council-preferred electronic or paper-reduced agenda distribution process prior to the 2018-2022 Term of Council.

4. That the City Clerk track the number of agendas printed and distributed for use by the public and proactively reduce the quantity printed to minimize unused copies.

Management Response:
Agreed. The City Clerk's Office will re-examine the number of agendas for use by the public and will proactively reduce the quantities printed to minimize unused copies on an ongoing basis. Anticipated completion: Q4, 2015.

CONCLUSION

It costs the City $35,000 annually to provide paper copies of agendas for Council and Standing Committee meetings. Cost and environmental savings may be achieved by reducing print volumes. Audit Services identified a number of opportunities to reduce the number of paper agendas distributed to Members of Council, staff, the public and others.

If the Committee chooses to adopt electronic or paper-reduced agenda distribution processes or strategies, identified challenges and concerns should be addressed to gain buy-in from stakeholders. Potential technology costs to move to an electronic agenda process are unknown at this time and will be provided by the Information Technology Division.