

Dear City Clerk Holland,

The LGBTQ Advisory Committee reviewed the letter you submitted as correspondence to its December 15, 2020 meeting entitled "Clarifying the Committee Structure and the Streamlining of Advisory Committee Processes" and had the following general and specific concerns about it.

The Committee is, however, grateful that the City Clerk has organized the Committee Listing page to more accurately reflect the listing of the City of Hamilton's Advisory Committees and notes that this increases the total number from 13 to 14 (with the addition of the Waste Management Advisory Committee). The Committee is also happy to see that all Advisory Committees will be included in the feedback collected about the Advisory Committee Handbook in advance of any changes that will be made and approved by City Council.

In general, the Committee is concerned that the policies outlined in your letter will curtail its democratic freedoms, especially its ability to make recommendations to City Council and to author its own documents.

The Committee is also concerned that some of these policies do not appear in the Advisory Committee Handbook and that it and other Advisory Committees were not consulted about changes in advance.

More specifically, the following wording is of concern to the Committee on the bases outlined above (presented in the order it appears in the letter).

1. "Advisory Committee minutes are now being reviewed by one designated Legislative Coordinator, to ensure that all Advisory Committees are following a standard format."

The Committee's Chair, in cooperation with the City Clerk and Legislative Coordinator Angela McRae, went through an exhaustive process of revising the formatting of its Minutes. It is disappointing that the Committee is not being consulted as part of this process and the Committee asks that its Chair be included and consulted.

2. "A Citizen Committee Report should contain some background information and the motion that was approved by the Advisory Committee and are prepared by the Staff Liaison. Once completed, they should be sent to the designated Legislative Coordinator for review. Once reviewed the Citizen Committee Report

is signed by the Chair and forwarded to their respective Standing Committee in a timely fashion, as these requests are usually time-sensitive requests."

The suggestion here appears to be that the Chair of the Committee, and no member of the Committee for that matter, would be involved in preparing or writing any part of a Citizen Committee Report. This seems to go against the very idea of a report that is meant to be written and submitted by and on behalf of citizens. The suggestion that the report "is signed" by the Chair also gives an extraordinary and undemocratic amount of power to the Chair of an Advisory Committee. Our Chair, for instance, has stated publicly that he will not sign on to Citizen Committee Reports that have not been duly approved by the LGBTQ Advisory Committee at one of its meetings. The Committee agrees that it would be undemocratic of the Chair to do so.

It is the LGBTQAC's view that all Citizen Committee Reports and correspondence should be reviewed and approved by all members of the Committee before they are disseminated, unless otherwise decided by the Committee.

These clauses erode the ability of the Advisory Committee to effectively provide advice to City Council and place the discretion over its recommendations in the hands of City of Hamilton staff, who are not members of Advisory Committees and should not be authoring Citizen Committee Reports without the expressed permission of Advisory Committees.

3. "Delegations to other Advisory Committees, Sub-Committees and Standing Committees on behalf of the Advisory Committee"

This section outlines "when a Citizen Committee Report is required". The above is not being implemented in the manner consistent with the way that Advisory Committees can correspond with these same groups. According to these new policies, and as previously explained to the Committee, correspondence to other Advisory Committees, Sub-Committees and Standing Committees is permitted. It does not follow that there should be a restriction on delegations. In no other forum are there separate limits placed on these 2 kinds of communication, except when it comes to Advisory Committees.

This limits the impact that Advisory Committees can have in attempting to give their advice to City Council through its various committees. If the Committee is permitted to communicate with these bodies through correspondence it should

be permitted to do so through delegation.

4. "Advisory Committees can expect to be contacted by the Clerk's Office for feedback on the changes to the Handbook prior to going to Governance Committee for adoption."

The Committee appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback and asks that it be given ample notice, with an email copied to the Committee Chair, so that there is time to submit comments in advance and in time for adoption keeping in mind, and with respect for, that the Committee meets monthly. It would be preferable for this information to be circulated 2 months in advance of its potential adoption by City Council, at least, and definitely so that every Advisory Committee has an opportunity to fully review and respond to the materials.

We are asking for a response to this letter, by email to the Chair for inclusion at our next meeting is suitable, and to the items listed above and for any clarification that you could provide that might alleviate our concerns.

Best,

Cameron Kroetsch, Chair
on behalf of the LGBTQ Advisory Committee