



CITIZEN COMMITTEE REPORT

To:	Emergency and Community Services Committee
From:	LGBTQ Advisory Committee <hr style="width: 20%; margin-left: auto; margin-right: 0;"/> Cameron Kroetsch, Chair
Date:	December 21, 2021
Re:	Monthly Finance Updates from City Staff

Recommendation

That City Council direct City of Hamilton staff to provide -

- monthly current and historical financial updates to the LGBTQ Advisory Committee;
- training on the information provided in these updates (including the budget form that the Committee is asked to submit each year); and
- a member of the City's finance staff who can come to meetings, at least once during each calendar year, to present financial information and be available to answer questions of the Committee about its budget and expenditures.

Background

The LGBTQ Advisory Committee (LGBTQAC), for at least the last 2 years, has begun to face financial challenges related to expenditures and reserve amounts. For instance, though the Committee asked for an amount to be withdrawn from its reserves in 2021, Council did not approve this request.

That decision was not reported to the Committee until November 2021, despite it being made in December 2020.

There were also expenditures that were earmarked to come from the Committee's 2020 budget that were taken from the Committee's 2021 budget.

The result of these decisions, outside the Committee's jurisdiction, and without its knowledge, has been to return portions of "unspent" funds to the City.

If the Committee had known about these decisions, it may have been able to allocate the funds as outlined in its budget submissions.

It's also been the experience of the Committee that decisions around budgets are either arbitrary, or that they change from time to time without notice.

For instance, even though the LGBTQAC had Council's consent, in 2020, to provide assistance to programs that supported members of Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ communities, in line with its budget submissions, when the same attempt was made to do this in 2021, it was met with some resistance.

Analysis / Rationale

The budgeting process for Advisory Committees is too opaque. In order for members of the LGBTQAC to get information about their budget, so that it can prepare budget submissions for the end of the calendar year, it must ask its Staff Liaison to get the information from those who control the City's finances.

The information presented is often late, slightly confusing, at times inaccurate, or contains new information that the Committee was not aware of. In the Committee's experience, neither its members nor its Staff Liaisons have received any specific training on dealing with these financial instruments.

When this information comes to the Committee it is only upon request of the Committee and only just in time for budget submissions to the Standing Committee to which the LGBTQAC reports.

The LGBTQAC firmly believes that monthly reporting from the Staff Liaison, in addition to an annual presentation from finance staff, would help the Committee to manage its finances more appropriately and in a much more transparent and timely manner.

Of course, we think this kind of support should be available to all Advisory Committees and we recommend that City Council consider providing it.

That being said, we have neither consulted with other Advisory Committees nor are we aware of their unique needs nor if those needs are being met.

We encourage City Council to direct staff to follow up, through a formal survey, and a report back, to determine what those needs may be and if they're being met.