



CITIZEN COMMITTEE REPORT

To:	Emergency and Community Services Committee
From:	LGBTQ Advisory Committee _____ Cameron Kroetsch, Chair
Date:	December 21, 2021
Re:	Advisory Committee Integration into Staff Workplans

Recommendation

That City Council direct staff to consult with relevant City of Hamilton Advisory Committees and include that consultation in their workplans.

Background

During this and previous terms of Council, the LGBTQ Advisory Committee (LGBTQAC) has been consulted, from time to time, on City decisions by City staff.

That consultation has, much more often than not, come either too late for the LGBTQAC's advice to be considered or implemented or, in rare cases, after the fact. In some instances during this term of Council, the LGBTQAC has learned about a City decision that could impact Two Spirit or LGBTQIA+ communities and had to take the unusual step of adding it to its Agenda and discussing it without staff input or engagement.

According to past and previous members of the LGBTQAC, this has had an alienating effect. Some of those members sat on other Advisory Committees and described this as a phenomenon that was not unique to the LGBTQAC.

The clearest examples of this having happened during this term of Council involved the decisions around civil marriage ceremonies being conducted at City Hall and the inclusion of "rainbow crosswalks" in Waterdown. With respect to both of these decisions, the Committee was not provided realistic advance notice and the decisions were made before the Committee's next meeting occurred.

Analysis / Rationale

The City of Hamilton is best served when Advisory Committees are able to participate in fulfilling their mandated function – to give advice to City Council on relevant decisions.

It's too often the case that important decisions are made without consulting Advisory Committees or by consulting them too late.

It's a misuse of the valuable resources, lived experiences, and volunteer contributions of the City's Advisory Committee members, all of whom applied to sit on Advisory Committees with the expressed desire of providing input, feedback, and advice.

Advisory Committees are an often underutilized and potentially valuable source of feedback when it comes to issues that intersect with their mandates, especially in areas where the City otherwise has no defined professional expertise. That has often been the case with respect to decisions that impact members of Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ communities.

We recognize that there will not always be congruence between City decisions and individual Advisory Committees.

This is why we included the word "relevant" in our motion above, so that this consultation might be done with respect to decisions where Advisory Committee mandates clearly overlap with the work being done by City staff.