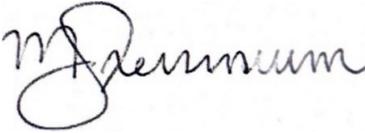




CITY OF HAMILTON
CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE
Communications & Engagement
and
CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Office of the City Clerk

TO:	Chair and Members Audit, Finance and Administration Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	November 21, 2024
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Volunteer Advisory Committee Review (CM23025(a)) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Rebecca Banky (905) 546-2424 Ext. 6732
SUBMITTED BY:	Jessica Chase Acting Director Communications & Engagement City Manager's Office
SIGNATURE:	
SUBMITTED BY:	Matthew Trennum City Clerk Office of the City Clerk Corporate Services
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That, based on municipal best practices, a new civic engagement model be applied that uses community liaison groups of volunteers, with each Division reporting back within one year, and that the:

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- (i) Tourism and Culture Division staff report back to the General Issues Committee on the creation of a community liaison group to replace the Arts Advisory Committee to recommend activities for the stabilization and strengthening of the arts community, monitor and assist with the implementation of the Arts Awards Program and Public Art Program, and inform Council of issues and achievements in the Hamilton arts community and acts as a point of contact for members of the arts community regarding issues affecting the arts community; and that the 2024 approved budget currently assigned to the Arts Advisory Committee be transferred to this Division to support this working group;
- (ii) Climate Change Initiatives Division staff report back to the General Issues Committee on the creation of a community liaison group to replace the Climate Change Advisory Committee to provide advice to Council and City staff on the prioritization, implementation, and monitoring of Hamilton's Climate Action Strategy, through an equitable, inclusive, and climate justice lens, that responds to the perspectives and needs of all, while transitioning to a prosperous, healthy and vibrant net-zero greenhouse gas community that is a national leader in climate adaptation; and that the 2024 approved budget currently assigned to the Climate Change Advisory Committee be transferred to this Division to support this working group;
- (iii) Active Transportation and Mobility Division staff report back to the Public Works Committee on the further development of the Division's Mobility Lab, a community liaison group, to also replace the Hamilton Cycling Committee, expanding their mandate to encourage residents to cycle and monitor the implementation of the Hamilton Cycling Master Plan; and that the 2024 approved budget currently assigned to the Hamilton Cycling Committee be transferred to this Division to support this working group;
- (iv) Indigenous Relations Division staff report back to the Emergency and Community Services Committee on the creation of a community liaison group to replace the Hamilton Indigenous Advisory Committee to honour and engage Indigenous residents in the pursuit of the City's vision by providing advice and recommendations that enhance the wellbeing of Indigenous people; and that the 2024 approved budget currently assigned to the Hamilton Indigenous Advisory Committee be transferred to this Division to support this working group;
- (v) Heritage Resource Management Division staff report back to the Emergency and Community Services Committee on the creation of a community liaison group to replace the Hamilton Veterans Committee to oversee the planning and delivery of military remembrance and

commemoration activities on behalf of the City; and that the 2024 approved budget currently assigned to the Hamilton Veterans Committee be transferred to this Division to support this working group;

- (vi) Children's & Community Services Division staff report back to the Audit, Finance and Administration Committee on the creation of a community liaison group to replace the Hamilton Women and Gender Equity Advisory Committee to provide input with respect to the issues of women, non-binary individuals and gender diverse people; and that the 2024 approved budget currently assigned to the Hamilton Women and Gender Equity Advisory Committee be transferred to this Division to support this working group;
- (vii) Housing Secretariat staff, in partnership with Housing Services Divisions staff report back to the General Issues Committee on the further development of a community liaison group to also replace the Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee, expanding their mandate to work to address the needs of citizens within the community for whom barriers exist to accessing safe, suitable, and affordable housing, including the supports needed to enable citizens to obtain and retain their homes; and that the 2024 approved budget currently assigned to the Housing and Homelessness Committee be transferred to this Division to support this working group;
- (viii) Environmental Services Division staff report back to the Public Works Committee on the creation of a community liaison group to replace the Keep Hamilton Clean and Green Committee to beautify our community, promote environmental stewardship, and prevent litter, illegal dumping and graffiti; and that the 2024 approved budget currently assigned to the Keep Hamilton Clean and Green Committee be transferred to this Division to support this working group;
- (ix) Children's & Community Services staff report back to the Emergency and Community Services Committee on the creation of a community liaison group to replace the LGBTQ Advisory Committee to eliminate barriers experienced by LGBTQ communities by giving voice to the perspectives of LGBTQ individuals and evaluating the City on its related efforts; and that the 2024 approved budget currently assigned to the LGBTQ Advisory Committee be transferred to this Division to support this working group;
- (x) Lodges Division staff report back to the Emergency and Community Services Committee on the creation of a community liaison group to replace the Seniors Advisory Committee to organize the Senior of the

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Year Awards and to be a credible communication vehicle regarding the quality of life for all older persons in the City; and that the 2024 approved budget currently assigned to the Seniors Advisory Committee be transferred to this Division to support this working group; and

- (xi) Reserve budgets remaining from Advisory Committees transitioning to working groups be transferred to the Tax Stabilization reserve.
- (b) That the following Advisory Committees be disbanded, and their members thanked by Council for their service to the community:
 - (i) Committee Against Racism;
 - (ii) Food Advisory Committee;
 - (iii) Immigrants and Refugees Advisory Committee; and,
 - (iv) Mundialization Advisory Committee.
- (c) That staff be directed to review the Accessibility Committee for Persons with Disabilities for alignment with the City's new civic engagement model and community liaison groups;
- (d) That staff in the Office of the City Clerk, in consultation with the City Manager's Office, develop and host a robust and mandatory training program for staff supporting community liaison groups, inclusive of:
 - (i) Civic engagement best practices in alignment with the City's Public Engagement Policy and Framework;
 - (ii) Legislative policies and procedural requirements for meetings; and,
 - (iii) Decorum and behavioural expectations including an explanation of the role of the City's Integrity Commissioner.
- (e) That staff in the City Manager's Office be directed to work with the Integrity Commissioner and Clerks Office to develop and host a training program for members of community liaison groups on expectations, liabilities, and project plans.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The recommendations outlined in Report CM23025(a) are based on municipal best practices, comprehensive engagement efforts, and analysis of the current structure's inherent challenges. Structural changes are required to address the needs of more effective engagement.

Council-directed the Volunteer Advisory Committee Review (VACR) in September 2023. At this time the City of Hamilton had fourteen volunteer-led Advisory Committees. Engagement with City staff supporting Advisory Committees, former and current City of Hamilton Advisory Committee members, and members of Hamilton City Council showed significant need for change, some of which was outside the boundaries of the current structure as shown in Appendix "A" to Report CM23035(a).

Advisory Committee members represent some of the City's most passionate and engaged residents. While trends from the jurisdictional scan, included here as Appendix "B" to Report CM23035(a), show a movement away from this specific form of engagement, and the recommendations outlined here would significantly reshape several of the committees, it remains important to allow effective civic engagement opportunities to advance the 2022-2026 Term of Council Priority of responsiveness and transparency, especially as it relates to getting more people involved in decision making and problem solving.

Advisory Committees that have duplicative mandates of community tables the City already consults, discussed in Appendix "C" to Report CM23035(a), were considered in the context of their unique workplans and recent contributions. Advisory Committees with clear project workplans and strong alignment with a department within the City as detailed in Appendix "D" to Report CM23035(a), were considered for community liaison groups, removing some of the procedural challenges of hosting in-camera meetings, and providing a better opportunity for civic engagement. The newly recommended structure is intended to be supplemented by training, a significant deficiency identified through the VACR engagement process.

Alternatives for Consideration – Not Applicable

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: Disbanded committees will no longer have associated budget requirements. Committees transitioning to working groups will have their budgets transferred to appropriate departments to continue project plans in this new form.

Staffing: In cases where an Advisory Committee has been replaced by a community liaison group, departmental Staff Liaisons will continue to support these new groups.

Legal: None

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

An Advisory Committee review was last conducted and presented to the Audit, Finance, & Administration Committee in June of 2015 (CM15007). The review made several recommendations, including establishing Advisory Committees for the 2014-2018 Term of Council. This report informed the current shape and policies of the City's Advisory Committees.

At the July 13, 2023, meeting of the Audit, Finance, & Administration Committee, the Committee considered a motion to review Voluntary Advisory Committees. Consideration of this motion was deferred pending a Staff Report on the expected duration of the pause of these committees. Report CM23025 was brought to the Audit, Finance, and Administration Committee on September 7, 2023. The motion passed and included a pause on existing Volunteer Advisory Committees, with the exception for the Climate Change Advisory Committee, for which recruitment was already underway, but included it in the review process.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

The pause and review motion specifically did not include the Accessibility Committee for Persons with Disabilities (ACPD), a legislatively required sub-committee of council previously referred to as an Advisory Committee.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Staff in the Government Relations and Community Engagement Division partnered with the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC) to conduct arms-length engagement with three groups: City staff supporting Advisory Committees; former and current City of Hamilton Advisory Committee members; and members of Hamilton City Council. Engagement methodology took the form of surveys, key informant interviews, and focus groups described in Appendix "A" to Report CM23035(a).

Engagement from support staff, committee members, and councillors was high in all groups, reflecting the dedication and desire to ensure Volunteer Advisory Committees can operate in a way that effects meaningful change in the City. SPRC-led engagement efforts also identified significant areas of need for change, many of which fell outside the capacity of the Advisory Committee structure.

Staff leading the review conducted internal cross-departmental engagement to identify community tables and networks the City regularly consults with, included as Appendix

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“C” to Report CM23035(a). To complete the picture of who we may be missing from existing consultation, SPRC conducted a scan of community tables leading work efforts similar to Volunteer Advisory Committees, Appendix “E” to Report CM23025(a).

A jurisdictional scan of other municipalities was conducted by staff, offering alternative models for civic engagement in alignment with current best practices, outlined in Appendix “B” to Report CM23035(a). Of note, the City of Ottawa has recently moved entirely away from non-legislated Advisory Committees and toward a departmentally led model like community liaison groups.

Staff engaged in the review met with staff supporting the Climate Change Advisory Committee to discuss their role in the upcoming model and attended the inaugural meeting of the Climate Change Advisory Committee.

Preliminary recommendations were shared with staff liaisons supporting Volunteer Advisory Committees to provide relevant context and discuss the implications of these changes. In a few instances, support staff identified unique situations specific to their committees that informed staff recommendations.

Staff supporting the Food Advisory Committee specifically identified Covid-related staff redeployment as a challenge for their committee’s activity and success.

Staff leading the review spoke with Active Transportation and Mobility staff about their existing Mobility Lab and about whether it aligns with the new model of community liaison groups. Aligned with this new model, the recommendations outlined here suggest this group should be expanded to take on work previously assigned to the Hamilton Cycling Committee.

The Housing Secretariat’s Community Partnership Action Table serves a similar role to what a developed Housing and Homelessness community liaison group might serve. Staff leading the review work met with members of both the Housing Secretariat and the Housing divisions to discuss this and received general agreement for the adaptation of a group, be it this one or another related working group.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

A scan of ten similarly sized municipalities revealed that Hamilton has more Advisory Committees than comparable municipalities as outlined in Appendix “B” to Report CM23035(a). This indicates a trend moving away from this form of civic engagement. Alternatively, municipalities are moving forward with a variety of civic engagement methods like experts’ panels, task forces, and departmentally led working groups.

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For our purposes in Hamilton, the model we are recommending is the community liaison group. A Community Liaison Group (CLG) reports directly to staff to advise on the community perspective, which staff includes in the process of making recommendations directly to Council. Such groups can meet in person, regularly, or even virtually, corresponding over email to share recommendations, like a public information session. The groups are chaired by and called to order by departmental staff and do not follow the procedural by-law.

Engagement and consultation findings showed a significant need for change, with major areas of improvement identified across themes of meaningful engagement, transparency, clarity, and culture. The feedback gathered by the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC), summarized in Appendix “A” to Report CM23035(a), indicated the interdependence of most of these issues, with greater clarity on policies and procedures contributing to effective engagement, more transparency contributing to overall process clarity, and culture being largely dependent on how the Advisory Committee functions.

A SWOT analysis of the Volunteer Advisory Committees is attached as Appendix “F” to Report CM23025(a). While there are strengths to the Advisory Committee model, there are considerable disadvantages and leaving the structure unchanged could result in negative public engagement outcomes, especially in the context of the City’s Public Engagement Framework. Restructuring to community liaison groups presents an opportunity to address these weaknesses and further the goals of public engagement.

Recommendations around training focuses on these identified needs, both supporting Advisory Committee members with fulfilling their mandates and training support staff to better aid advisory bodies. Training recommendations also suggest that new community liaison groups receive specialized training owing to the expectation, responsibility, and liability of their roles.

Analysis was done of comparable tables the City consults with, shown in Appendix “C” to Report CM23035(a) and meetings, budgets, and citizen committee reports made to a committee’s standing committee as indicated in Appendix “G” to Report CM23035(a). In cases where the recommendation is to disband a given Advisory Committee, these recommendations stem from related work being done by other community tables and a lack of product from the Advisory Committee in terms of integrated workplans, produced citizen committee reports, and in some cases even meetings with quorum. The expectation is that increased support and training opportunities would lead to better quorum and member participation, so a lack of quorum alone was not considered sufficient reason to disband an Advisory Committee when their work was not also duplicative of other community tables the City consults with, included as Appendix “C” to Report CM23025(a), or other community tables in the scan conducted by SPRC, included as Appendix “G” to Report CM23025(a).

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For the remaining Advisory Committees, a recommendation is made around a shift toward staff-directed, community liaison groups to reduce some of the procedural requirements around open meetings that have been challenging for volunteer members. Council-directed working groups would still, by the legislative requirements, be expected to hold open meetings. To ensure ongoing transparency and accountability for the new community liaison groups, it is also recommended that departmental staff report back on an annual basis to the relevant committee on the feedback and results of the groups. Staff would also be more easily able to integrate community liaison groups into workplans and project plans. Where there was evidence of a strong project plan and close alignment with a department, the recommendation was made to shift the Advisory Committee to this form of civic engagement.

Appendix “D” to Report CM23025(a) shows each Volunteer Advisory Committee’s mandates and objectives and a suggested departmental alignment.

Next steps for successful implementation of community liaison groups will include departments reporting back on tailored solutions around recruitment and structure. Community liaison groups allow for more fluid recruitment, supported by Human Resources, and are not restricted to four-year terms. This recruitment should and could include former members of VACs but could also broaden to a wider group who might not have felt comfortable with the formality of the VAC structure. Staff will work closely with existing VAC members, Clerks, Councillors and Human Resources to ensure a smooth transition to the new community liaison group structure.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

Not applicable.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix “A” to Report CM23025(a):	SPRC Engagement Findings
Appendix “B” to Report CM23025(a):	Jurisdictional Scan Summary
Appendix “C” to Report CM23025(a):	External Community Tables and Networks the City Consults
Appendix “D” to Report CM23025(a):	VAC Mandates, Objectives, and Alignment
Appendix “E” to Report CM23025(a):	Community Tables Scan
Appendix “F” to Report CM23025(a):	SWOT Analysis
Appendix “G” to Report CM23025(a):	Current VAC Structure Overview