

## CITY OF HAMILTON

### **CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE** *Office of the City Manager*

<b>TO:</b> Mayor and Members General Issues Committee	<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b> CITY WIDE
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b> February 28, 2011	
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b> Citizens' Forum Report on Area Rating (CM11004) (City Wide)	
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b> Chris Murray City Manager	<b>PREPARED BY:</b> Mike Kirkopoulos (905) 546-2424 x3378 Presented by Members of Citizens' Forum: Tim Dobbie, Denise O'Connor; and Representatives of Citizens' Forum: Alex Lolua and Joanna Mobach
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

### RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That the Citizens' Forum Report on Area Rating (CM11004) (City Wide), presented by the Members of the Citizens' Forum, be received.
- (b) That staff be directed to analyze the implications of the recommendations of the Citizens' Forum Report and report back, during budget deliberations, to the appropriate General Issues Committee.
- (c) That members of the Citizens' Forum be thanked for their work.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As per Council's direction, a Citizens' Forum process was established in 2010 to make recommendations to Council on how to move forward on the issue of area rating of property tax. The process was designed to engage citizens in a way that fostered appreciation for each other's perspectives and an environment that encourages individuals to put aside their self-interest so they can arrive at a recommendation that

will work for the City as a whole. Members of this Citizens' Forum were selected from a pool of respondents who responded to a survey sent in May 2010, to a sample of residents, randomly generated from the tax roll. Those selected, reflect the community both demographically and geographically. A Steering Committee of esteemed citizens was put in place to provide arm's length oversight of the process, design and implementation. The project deliverables were:

- ❖ An area rating recommendation for Council based on a rich dialogue of engaged citizens
- ❖ A better informed public
- ❖ A framework of values and principles to guide the policy decision
- ❖ An analysis of why citizens think what they do and what sticking points prevent progress.

A more detailed executive summary of the process is found in the attached report (refer to Appendix A to Report CM11004 "Citizens' Forum on Area Rating submitted by Members of the Citizens' Forum and the Consulting Team").

#### **FINANCIAL / STAFFING / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS** (for Recommendation(s) only)

**Financial:** The recommendations should have no impact on the tax levy. They may however result in redistribution of the tax burden.

**Staffing:** There are no staffing implications associated with Report CM11004.

**Legal:** There are no legal implications associated with Report CM11004.

#### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND** (Chronology of events)

November 24, 2009 - COW accepted Staff Report on Area Rating Options (FCS09087) and referred it to a Citizens' Jury process

February, 2010 – Terms of Reference for a Citizens' Forum passed by COW

May, 2010 – COW approves Steering Committee membership

August, 2010 – COW approves Citizens' Forum membership

September, 2010 – October, 2010 – Citizens' Forum convenes and develops recommendations

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

With respect to the recommendations on area rating, there are no implications for the way in which most of the area-rated services are delivered, only how the costs are assessed on the tax bills. Fire Services, for example, are delivered in a “seamless” manner and the boundaries of the former municipalities are not as important in an emergency response. Culture and Recreation services are driven by considerations such as population size and density, not area-rating, similarly, sidewalks and streetlights.

The Citizens' Forum's recommendation to eliminate area-rated sidewalk snow removal in Ancaster is meant to discourage the adoption of enhanced services in certain areas of the City.

There are implications for the recommendation for an area-rated urban transit model as the remnants of the pre-amalgamation borders are embedded in the current service delivery model and entrenched by the area rating taxation model. The current model does not recognize the urban transit area as one system (Waterdown excepted) that serves one economy, populated by certain workers who need reliable transit 7 days a week to get to work. Adoption of the recommendation would provide an opportunity to re-think the transit service delivery model.

The Citizens' Forum also sent some “additional recommendations” to Council. A recommendation that the City should make information on how tax dollars are spent more accessible and easily understood by ordinary citizens would have policy implications. This recommendation includes the idea of publishing the standards or indicators that trigger a change in service level (e.g. recreation facilities, bus service, enhanced fire services). Taking this suggestion is a call for greater transparency in communicating decision-making criteria and would require a review of the principles and practice of information sharing from the City to the public.

The Citizens' Forum also heard from the public, and agreed from their own experience, that taxes in the City are too high. They respectfully request that Council make every effort to reduce the property tax load. They liked the idea of a service review to ensure that the City is doing the “right” work.

## **RELEVANT CONSULTATION**

By design, this process was, in and of itself, a public consultation. The Citizens' Forum members reflected the community both geographically and demographically. Nevertheless, opportunities were provided for additional public input in three ways. In advance of the Citizens' Forum convening, five focus groups were held throughout the City by the consultants (Stoney Creek, Waterdown, Hamilton Mountain, Hamilton

Downtown and West Hamilton). Typically, these involved a 30 minute presentation to participants on area rating and 90 minutes of dialogue on the issue. The results of these meetings were provided to the Citizens' Forum members when they first met, and posted on the Citizens' Forum website. Secondly, two of the Citizens' Forum's meetings were public meetings where delegations were accepted and delegates were also invited to dialogue in groups with Citizens' Forum members. Thirdly, written submissions were accepted by the Citizens' Forum. In addition, representatives of the joint Chambers of Commerce were invited to spend an hour briefing the Citizens' Forum members on their views on area rating.

A list of speakers at the public meetings can be found in the attached report (refer to Appendix A to Report CM11004 "Citizens' Forum on Area Rating submitted by Members of the Citizens' Forum and the Consulting Team").

#### **ANALYSIS / RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION**

(include Performance Measurement/Benchmarking Data, if applicable)

The recommendations come from the Citizens' Forum, not staff and the rationale is provided in the attached report (refer to Appendix A to Report CM11004 "Citizens' Forum on Area Rating submitted by Members of the Citizens' Forum and the Consulting Team").

#### **ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION**

(include Financial, Staffing, Legal and Policy Implications and pros and cons for each alternative)

Not applicable.

#### **CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN (Linkage to Desired End Results)**

Focus Areas: 1. Skilled, Innovative and Respectful Organization, 2. Financial Sustainability, 3. Intergovernmental Relationships, 4. Growing Our Economy, 5. Social Development, 6. Environmental Stewardship, 7. Healthy Community

##### ***Skilled, Innovative & Respectful Organization***

- ♦ More innovation, greater teamwork, better client focus.

*This project engaged citizens in an authentic process of consultation that built relationships between City staff and citizens while demonstrating a way of creating inter-*

*personal exchanges designed for learning. It allowed both citizens and City staff to move away from a dialogue that engenders finger-pointing and defensiveness to one of respectful appreciation and creative problem-solving. Accepting and implementing the recommendations would demonstrate to citizens a respect for their input and the process. Rural residents were the most vocal in the consultation process and these recommendations recognize the uniqueness of their lifestyle as compared to those of urban and suburban residents.*

**Financial Sustainability**

- ♦ Delivery of municipal services and management capital assets/liabilities in a sustainable, innovative and cost-effective manner

**Intergovernmental Relationships**

- ♦ Influence federal and provincial policy development to benefit Hamilton
- ♦ Maintain effective relationships with other public agencies

**Growing Our Economy**

- ♦ An improved customer service.

*The recommended change to area rating will provide opportunities for improved customer service in the area of transit*

**Healthy Community**

- ♦ Adequate access to food, water, shelter and income, safety, work, recreation and support for all (Human Services).

*An integrated transit system will remove some systemic barriers that affect the capacity of the transit service to meet the needs of the low-income workers who either live or work in the former suburbs.*

<b>APPENDICES / SCHEDULES</b>
-------------------------------

Appendix A to Report CM11004 – Citizens' Forum Report on Area Rating submitted by Members of the Citizens' Forum and the Consulting Team.

MK/db  
Attach. (1)

# **RECOMMENDATIONS TO CITY COUNCIL FROM THE CITIZENS' FORUM ON THE FUTURE OF AREA RATING OF PROPERTY TAX**



**CITIZENS' FORUM**

**FEBRUARY 2011**

**PREPARED BY**

**TIM L. DOBBIE CONSULTING LTD.**

**DENISE O'CONNOR OF MOVING PERSPECTIVE**

**AND**

**CARRINGTON CONSULTING INC.**

**ON BEHALF OF THE HAMILTON CITIZENS' FORUM  
ON AREA RATING OF PROPERTY TAXES**

<b>1. Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Introduction</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3. Process</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1 Framing the Issue	9
3.2 Selecting the Forum Members	10
3.3 Role of the Steering Committee	11
3.4 The Education of the Citizens' Forum	13
3.5 Public Input	16
3.6 Chambers of Commerce	16
3.7 Educating the Public	18
<b>4. Citizens' Forum Statement of Principles</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>5. Citizens' Forum recommendations on Moving Forward as a Community</b>	<b>20</b>
5.1 Fire	20
5.2 Transit	22
5.3 Culture & Recreation	23
5.4 Sidewalks and Streetlights	24
5.5 Sidewalk Snow Removal in Ward 12	24
5.6 Other Services	24
5.7 Phasing in Change	25
<b>6. Other Messages to Council</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Appendix I: Composition of the Citizens' Forum</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Appendix II: Solid Process Design, Public Engagement &amp; Consultation</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Appendix III: Summary of Meeting Evaluations</b>	<b>33</b>

## 1. Executive Summary

### **Messages from the Forum**

*"I felt that the Citizens Forum was great at putting faces to wards, and the ideas that are typically associated with those wards. I was amazed to see that when randomly selected citizens come together, they are able to communicate effectively. I have been to other forums for discussion of municipal policies, and they tend to get dominated by special interests. These special interests dominate discussion, but are not typically representative of the larger population. Discussions between members of the Citizens Forum were not dominated by a single voice, and agreement was reached quickly on difficult issues because the members did not have deeply held beliefs (and the rehearsed sound bites associated with those beliefs) when they arrived. That doesn't mean that they didn't have deeply held values that are representative of their individual wards, simply that they were more open to finding solutions to problems instead of finding blame for problems."*

**- Ken Sills**

*"This has been a real awakening for me and I hope to stay involved in my city in the future."*

**- Laura Holland**

*"I am happy to know that the city of Hamilton cares about its residents' opinions, and am glad to have been part of this unique process. Hopefully it's the first of many different kinds of Citizens' Forums."*

**- Sheryl Bartol**

The Citizens' Forum initiative was designed to engage citizens in a way that fosters appreciation for each other's perspectives and establishes an environment that encourages individuals to put aside their self-interest so they can arrive at a recommendation that will work for the city as a whole.

As per the Terms of Reference passed by Council in February 2010, the members of this forum were selected from a pool of respondents who responded to a survey sent in May to a sample of residents randomly generated from the tax roll. A number of respondents were interviewed by the consultants to ensure they were clear on what was being asked of them, available for the scheduled meetings, and judged able to do the job. Selections were made on a combination of competency and juggling the requirement to meet the demographic imperatives.

Twenty people were recruited who represented the demographic profile of the Greater Hamilton Area (GHA) in terms of gender, age and whether they were born inside or outside of Canada. Forum members had higher levels of education than is found in the community and more of them were affluent. Two were tenants and the balance were homeowners.

Of the twenty recruited, fifteen represented the wards and five were recruited to represent five geographic clusters of wards. Three of the latter group failed to show up to the first or subsequent meeting for a variety of reasons, which left one member at large from the former city and one from the former suburbs.

A Steering Committee was put in place to provide arm's length oversight of the process design and implementation. They provided no input into deliberations, other than to answer or facilitate the answering of some questions. Some committee members monitored the meetings to ensure the process was implemented as agreed.

The project deliverables were:

- ❖ An area rating recommendation for Council based on a rich dialogue of engaged citizens
- ❖ A better informed public.
- ❖ A framework of values and principles to guide the policy decision
- ❖ An analysis of why citizens think what they do, and what sticking points prevent progress.

Forum members came to develop principles and make their recommendations after meeting for over 30 hours between September 11 and October 16. They spent this time in conversation with each other, with staff and with the public and interest groups. There was a rich exchange of ideas among all and a great deal of listening and learning. Staff were very accommodating in answering questions submitted by the consultants through email and also met with forum members during a city bus tour and at other meetings.

The public education aspect of the project included the development of a website, an Issue Book developed for public use/education and distributed through libraries, recreation centres and municipal service centres, radio and television interviews, and two editorial pieces in local media.

There were a number of opportunities for the public to provide input into this recommendation,

- initially through focus groups (66 participants)
- by submitting their thoughts on an Issue Book that framed the challenge
- by participating at the two public meetings (approximately 30 people)

The only alternate approach to the options developed by staff was presented by the joint Chambers of Commerce and the forum members met with them to discuss their position.

Most of those who attended the public meetings were from the former suburban municipalities. Overall, there was a lack of understanding (or trust) among the public that services, particularly fire and recreation, had improved since amalgamation. Moreover, people believe they are paying more in taxes and getting less. We see these beliefs as an obstacle to getting public “buy in” of changes to tax rates on area rated services.

Forum members heard that people are angry about the level of taxes they are paying. We heard that many would like to see a comprehensive review of what the city does and how it does it.

Forum members found this process to be a very satisfying way of participating in a public consultation and, hopefully, influencing public policy. The education delivered by city staff on the service delivery models, the metrics in place that trigger service reviews and the impact of area rating of service delivery was extremely valuable and influenced the decision. Similarly, the conversations held with the public were helpful and insightful. City Council is encouraged to use this method again as a way of conducting a public consultation.

## **PRINCIPLES:**

The Citizens' Forum developed the following set of principles to inform their recommendations:

- There should be clearly definable differences in the distribution of services;
- There must be a measurable difference in the city's cost of delivering services in one area compared to another;
- The determination of boundaries should be based on factual, measurable criteria;
- Area-rating criteria should be such that there is a seamless adjustment or evolution as the city changes;
- The criteria that delimit "areas" should be easily understood and communicated.
- The common good of the whole community must be considered when deciding whether to area rate a service.
- We must recognize that there are some basic costs that we all must share in a city (e.g. roads).
- Tax rates should be such that we have a competitive city that attracts jobs and people.
- The public use of tax dollars should be transparent in that it is communicated clearly to citizens i.e. it should be easy for people to see how their tax dollars are being spent.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **Fire**

The Citizens' Forum recommends three categories for rating fire services.

**Hydrant – Career or Composite Station Primary Response**

**Hydrant – Volunteer Station Primary Response**

**No hydrant service**

**The forum recommends that the rates used for the area-rating of fire service should be based on the cost of providing service to each of the three designated areas as described above. This should recognize that although some areas are primarily serviced by volunteer firefighters, career firefighters respond to fires in all areas. Accordingly, rates in each area should be based on the actual cost associated with their use of these resources, as well as their fraction of the cost of having these resources available to them.**

We heard very clearly from rural residents, and this was validated by data provided by staff, that the response time in rural areas, particularly those residents without a fire hydrant, can be significantly longer than in urban areas serviced by fire hydrants and career staff. However, we also heard a number of factors that influenced our recommendation that perhaps the general public does not know. Most salient are,

- The Fire Department has a highly sophisticated Computer Activated Deployment System that automatically deploys the resources required to respond to a call from where they are available in real time in a seamless delivery model. All fires – regardless of size or location – will have resources from career fire stations deployed. This means the cost of fighting fires includes more than simply the cost of staffing the stations.
- Since amalgamation, the training and workplace safety standards enjoyed by the volunteer firefighters has improved dramatically and is now equal to that of career firefighters as is the equipment available for their use.
- While the cost of capital equipment is linked to the station where it is located for budgeting purposes, it is put to use where ever needed. This means any fire or EMS call in the city has access to the same resources, regardless of location.
- Each station has a primary response area that fans out in a radius, regardless of the boundaries of former municipalities. In Ancaster, for example, Scenic Woods is within the response area of the career staffed station located at Garth and Mohawk in Hamilton.

## **Transit**

**The Citizens' Forum endorses the staff recommendation on Transit, which establishes one transit rate within the Transit Service Area (Urban) and continues not to charge properties outside the Transit Service Area (Rural).**

While there were some strong advocates for public transit among the Citizens' Forum, in the end they were respectful of the position put forward by rural residents for whom transit is not a viable option, that they should not pay for a service to which they have no access. However the Citizens' Forum would like to see a more cohesive service model within the urban service area.

## **Culture and Recreation**

**The Citizens' Forum endorses the staff recommendation that would see the elimination of area rating for Culture and Recreation.**

Culture and Recreation facilities and programs are available to all City of Hamilton residents regardless of where in the municipality they reside. The catchment area for these facilities and programs extends beyond former area municipal boundaries.

## **Sidewalks and Streetlights**

**The Citizens' Forum endorsed the staff position on area rating sidewalks and streetlights, which recommends area rating based on a urban/rural model that reflects the fact that there is a significantly higher concentration of Sidewalks and Street Lights in the urban area (costs would be allocated based on a ratio of sidewalks / light poles in urban versus rural).**

Again, the Citizens' Forum heard from rural representatives that this is a service they do not benefit from and prefer not to pay for.

## **Sidewalk Snow Removal in Ward 12**

**The Citizens' Forum rejects staff's recommendation on Sidewalk Snow Removal in Ward 12.**

The basis of the objection is that they see the provision of an enhanced service to one ward as divisive in terms of city-building and a "slippery slope" that sets a precedent that could potentially undermine our sense of a shared destiny as a community.

## **Other services**

**The Citizens' Forum does not support area rating any additional services.**

## **Phasing in Change**

**We recommend that the changes in property tax rates that result from this recommendation be phased in over no more than four years with the proviso that an extension of that phase-in is warranted if a property tax increase driven by the municipal tax rate and this recommendation combined will exceed 5% in one year.**

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### **Messages from the Forum**

*"Participating in the Citizens Forum has been an exciting and revealing process in the roles of government and citizen involvement I have brought up my family, lived, worked and participated in community activities almost all my life in Hamilton. I applaud the creation of the Citizens Forum. It is a good first step in the democratic process, associating average citizens in the problems of running a city that's been amalgamated with a sprawling urban growth, large rural areas and burdened with consolidating necessary services. Learning about the issues, listening to others and their concerns and participating in long range and open discussions has been a remarkable and educational experience for me. I have thoroughly enjoyed working on this committee. The whole process has been deftly and ably handled by our consultants Denise & Tim. I have learned a great deal and am more aware of the thorny issues facing the new City Council. I do hope that our work will help them."*

**-Molly Gerofsky**

*"This process has taught me how important listening can be and how imperative it is to try to understand all aspects of any given situation – this enables an educated balanced approach to a solution. It has also reminded me that reasonable people can be respectful of each other and of their differing opinions."*

**- Allison Loureiro**

*"Thank you for inviting me and allowing us this privilege".*

**– Lorna Moreau**

Members of Council will recall approving the Terms of Reference to develop a Citizens' Forum on the area rating for property taxes in February 2010. The purpose of the Citizens' Forum was "to hear from the citizens of Hamilton prior to making a decision on how to approach area rating for property taxes". Area rating of property taxes remains a complicated issue. Inviting citizens to deliberate and advise on a complex issue, such as area rating, takes the City in the direction of fulfilling the City's strategic plan – in particular, the goal of citizen engagement.

The project deliverables were:

- ❖ An area rating recommendation for Council based on a rich dialogue of engaged citizens;
- ❖ A better informed public;
- ❖ A framework of values and principles to guide the policy decision;
- ❖ An analysis of why citizens think what they do, and what sticking points prevent progress.

The Citizens' Forum initiative was designed to engage citizens in a way that fosters appreciation for each other's perspectives and establishes an environment that encourages individuals to put aside their self-interest so they can arrive at a recommendation that will work for the city as a whole. We believe this was achieved.

Citizens' Forums or Assemblies are an innovative way of enabling the voices of moderation, or people from the often silent majority in a community to surface and engage in a public policy issue in a meaningful, constructive way. Unlike town hall meetings or the typical public consultation that brings out entrenched, organized interests or positions, ordinary, unaffiliated citizens are given an opportunity to learn about an issue and generate an informed opinion by finding the common ground with their fellow citizens and working on behalf of all of them. The principles that are built into a good process are described in Appendix II. We were fortunate to have a world-renowned expert in such processes, Matt Leighninger, on our Steering Committee to help ensure our process was well-designed.

*"It was definitely a challenge to assess Fairness in Area Rating, while sticking to the Principles defined. But, Denise and Tim, those hardworking souls, pulled us through ... and those who provided solid facts and figures, I think, definitely helped to define the issues, bringing at last, clarity, common sense, and logic to the issue, guiding us to a logical and fair solution.*

*We worked our butts off, at home and at our meetings, to become semi- educated analysts. LOL. The amount of reading... was phenomenal. But, overall, by being respectful and listening well, to our speakers and to our colleagues, as Allison pointed out in the first session, helped lend an air of professionalism to our efforts.*

*Many thanks to those zealous, passionate community leaders, and to those experts in Fire and Transit, who clearly explained how their service works in both urban and rural areas. They all provided essential, critical information to enable us to reach our final analysis of the issue. Concrete evidence, based on proven and tested facts and figures, as our colleague Ken pointed out several times, is the defining factor, I think. And last, in our two, well publicized meetings with the public, several leaders from both rural and urban areas, also gave much food for thought to help bring us to a fair and logical conclusion.*

*Many thanks to all my fellow Forum members, and to our Steering Team, who all helped to make the Citizens Forum believable and informative."*

**- Deirdre Chartrand**

The public education aspect of the project included the development of a website, an Issue Book (distributed through libraries, recreation centres and municipal service centres), radio and television interviews, and two editorial pieces in local media.

### 3.PROCESS

#### 3.1 FRAMING THE ISSUE

The first challenge faced by the consulting team was the question of how to frame the area rating issue so that the consultation process did not turn into a veiled effort to create buy-in for the staff recommendation.

Five focus groups were held in June 2010 in Stoney Creek, Waterdown, West Hamilton, Central Mountain and downtown east Hamilton. These were designed to cover as many of the outlying former municipalities as possible and to attract from the suburbs. They were meant to explore how the public saw this issue and whether other solutions or ways of seeing it emerged. They were also designed to inform the consultants as they designed the forum's deliberations by assessing what types of questions and what level of detail people needed to wrestle with this issue. These were not typical focus groups where a facilitator asked what people thought. They were designed as dialogues where the participants engaged with each other in breakout groups and presented their ideas back to the large group. It was a very successful design and process. We had representation from all the outlying areas.

Although these focus groups were formally "by invitation only", a number of networks were used to recruit people and the fact of these events was spread by word-of-mouth. Only two people were turned away from participating: one who had formally declared her candidacy in the upcoming municipal election; and one who called at the last minute but we did not have the space to accommodate. Sixty-six (66) residents engaged in this process.

Participants included former councillors from the former municipalities (Flamborough, Stoney Creek), members of the Free Flamborough and Glanbrook Freedom Train movements among others. While we held focus groups around the city, attendance was not exclusive to the local residents. Consequently each focus group garnered a combination of rural and urban residents who respectfully bounced ideas off one another and learned about each other's experience with area rated services.

After a presentation that explained what area rating is, participants were invited to work through the three options presented by staff (status quo, urban/rural model or no area rating). Some participants chose to generate principles that ought to guide the Citizens' Forum. The findings of the focus groups were compiled in a report and posted on the Citizens' Forum website. The majority of participants at each group remarked that this was an effective way of doing a public consultation and wished the Citizens' Forum well.

The data gathered was used to create the Issue Book, which framed the issue and the arguments. In the end, no clear alternative to the staff recommendations emerged from these discussions.

### **3.2 SELECTING THE FORUM MEMBERS**

The members of this forum were selected from a pool of respondents who responded to a survey sent in May to a sample of residents randomly generated from the tax roll. A number of respondents were interviewed by the consultants to ensure they were clear on what was being asked of them, available for the scheduled meetings, and judged able to do the job. Selections were made on a combination of competency and juggling the requirement to meet the demographic imperatives. Council approved the list of Forum members in August 2010.

Twenty people were recruited who represented the demographic profile of the Greater Hamilton Area (GHA) in terms of gender, age and whether they were born inside or outside of Canada. Forum members had higher levels of education than is found in the community and more of them were affluent. Two were tenants and the balance were homeowners. In Appendix I there are brief statements that many of the Forum members have provided that describe who they are.

Of the twenty recruited, fifteen represented the wards and five were recruited to represent five geographic clusters of wards. Three of the latter group failed to show up to the first or subsequent meeting for a variety of reasons, which left one member at large from the former city and one from the former suburbs.

The forum members studied this issue and worked through the steps of coming to a decision over the course of approximately 30 hours of meetings that took place over five weeks (September 11, 2010 to October 16, 2010). Education included presentations and dialogue with city staff, a 3.5 hour bus tour and two public meetings during which they engaged in conversation with members of the public and heard their deputations (see the Meeting Schedule in the following section). The Citizens' Forum also spent a few hours with representatives of the Chambers of Commerce so they could delve into the Chambers' recommendation on area rating.

Reading material was sent out between the meetings. Attendance was excellent: of the seventeen who made up the final Forum, twelve attended all the meetings, with the rest missing between one and three meetings.

### 3.3 ROLE OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee was put in place to provide arm's length oversight of the process design and implementation. They provided no input into deliberations, other than to answer or facilitate the answering of questions. All of the design decisions were made by mid-summer. Some committee members monitored the meetings to ensure the process was implemented as agreed. The forum members' evaluations of the process are found in Appendix III.

**TABLE 3.0 CITIZENS' FORUM MEETING SCHEDULE**

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Content</b>
<b>Saturday, September 11 9:30 am – 3:30 pm</b>  <b><i>Orientation</i></b>  <b>City Hall</b>	This orientation meeting was designed to connect participants with the process, the content and each other. An overview of Area Rating was done by Bob Carrington of the Consulting Team. Chris Murray, Rob Rossini and Mayor Fred Eisenberger dropped by to greet and thank the forum members. A summary of this meeting was posted on the Citizens' Forum website.
<b>Wednesday, September 15 5:30 am – 9:00 pm</b>  <b><i>Bus Tour</i></b>	A 3.5 hour bus tour of the Greater Hamilton Area (GHA) was organized by staff. The tour went through each ward for the purpose of allowing forum members to see firsthand the diversity and vastness of the GHA. Steering Committee Chair, Paul Johnson, served as tour guide along with Mike Kirkopoulos, our Project Liaison from the City Manager's office. Don Hull, Mike Zegarac, Jim Dahms, Coralee Secore and Dave Cunliffe spoke at various points about their purviews and took questions. The tour included fire halls in Hamilton, Dundas, Waterdown and Binbrook, Recreation Centres, stopped at major transit transfer points and drove beyond the urban boundary past apple orchards and other farmland in Flamborough and Binbrook. Steering Committee member, Cathy McMaster, spoke about the rural economy and the rural experience. A recounting of this trip was posted on the Citizens' Forum website.
<b>Wednesday, September 22, 5:30 – 9:00 pm</b>  <b><i>Public Meeting,</i></b>  <b>Hamilton Spectator Auditorium</b>	This meeting took a different approach than a typical town hall meeting. Members of the public were invited to participate in small group discussions with members of the forum and work through the Issue Book with the purpose of engaging in a productive dialogue where the goal of mutual understanding is paramount. People who requested the opportunity to address the entire group were given that chance as well. Speakers included Eva Marsh (Ward 14), Peter Hutton (Transit Users Group, Ward 13), Ray Rivers (Ward 15), Roy Shuker (Ward 11) and Stan Haworth (Ward 15). The meeting was attended by about a dozen members of the public who participated in the conversations but didn't make a presentation and observed by one Councillor (Robert Pasuta – Ward 14 and one Council candidate (Judi Partridge-Ward 15).

<b>Wednesday, September 29 5:30 – 9:00 pm</b>  <b><i>Public Meeting</i></b>  <b>Sherwood Public Library</b>	<p>The meeting was attended by fourteen members of the public and observed by one council candidate (Brenda Johnson-Ward 11). A long list of speakers meant that the dialogue portion was shorter compared to the first meeting. Speakers included John Norris (Ward 8), John Knechtel (Ward 12), Wally Ford (Ward 14), Bob Pearson (Ward 14), Michelle Spoelstra (Ward 11), Donna Ford (Ward 14), Stan Haworth (Ward 15), Georgina Beattie (Ward 11), Roman Sacherman (Ward 15) and Gordon Luff (Ward 14).</p>
<b>Wednesday, October 6 5:30 – 9:00 pm</b>  <b><i>Debrief on Public Consultation and more education on Fire</i></b>  <b>Red Hill Public Library</b>	<p>The first hour was spent in conversation, debriefing on learnings to- date and discussing next steps.</p> <p>Dave Cunliffe and Phil Thorburn from EMS/Fire presented and answered questions on Fire for the remainder of the meeting.</p>
<b>Wednesday, October 13 5:30 – 9:00 pm</b>  <b><i>Coming to an agreement on Principles</i></b>  <b>Dundas Public Library</b>	<p>Representatives of the joint Chambers of Commerce were invited to return to the forum to allow forum members to explore the Chambers' policy on area rating in greater detail. John Knechtel and Arend Kersten spoke on behalf of the Chambers.</p> <p>The rest of the meeting saw forum members working in small groups then as a plenary, developing a set of principles that would guide their decision-making.</p>
<b>Saturday, October 16 10 am – 4 pm</b>  <b>Recommendations</b>  <b>Ancaster Public Library</b>	<p>Don Hull from Transit came for the first hour to answer forum members' questions on Transit.</p> <p>The forum members then worked through each of the policy areas and came to a consensus on their move-forward position.</p> <p>Finally, they were given the opportunity to introduce any other policy area that might be considered for area-rating. As the work was completed, the meeting scheduled for October 20 was cancelled.</p>
<b>Email follow-up</b>	<p>As the consultants wrote up the recommendations for this report, the text was submitted to Forum members for their approval.</p>

*"I wish to extend my greatest appreciation for the entire process and program which the City of Hamilton has allowed my voice and ideas to be explained and considered through your Citizens Forum.*

*Each [ward] representative brought forward many ideas of how we could or may accomplish the task of keeping Hamilton strong ...through fair taxation. While I have never owned a house or business, my perspective is from that of a tenant who in turn still pays a share of property taxes.*

*We were allowed to explain our individual point of view and concerns in an open manner which was highlighted by information received from those with expertise in each aspect of taxation or city operations. Our Bus Tour gave an actuality to the size and complex makeup of the City of Hamilton and the guest experts on-board the bus informed us with realistic facts without bias.*

*Now that our final draft has been accepted in consensus by the group..., let me state that we were very serious and non-political in the creative basis for the foundation of our agreement.*

*[I'd like to] thank everyone involved with this project. I trust they too feel that this process is a valuable aspect for consideration of any changes or improvement to have fair and unbiased opinions and ideas for taxation, and that taxpayers investment in our collective Citizens Forum will bring forth an equitable result of value and acceptance".*

**- Ed Woods**

## Notes on these sessions

- Steering Committee members Mary Wiebe and Cathy McMaster attended each session as did Mike Kirkopoulos from the City Manager's Office. Paul Johnson attended all or part of the first three meetings but recused himself once it became public that he had accepted a position with the City Manager's Office.
- Media was present at the September 22 meeting (Hamilton Spectator) but none attended the September 29 meeting.
- Notice of the public meetings was posted on the City website and on the Citizens' Forum website. A media advisory was sent out by the City Manager's Office. Additionally, they were mentioned in an Op-Ed piece in the Hamilton Spectator (September 20) and in an article in the Metroland papers (September 25). Denise O'Connor and Paul Johnson also advised the public of these meetings in an interview on the Bill Kelly Show, and on Cable 14 ("On the Record" segment on area rating). A letter to the editor from Paul Johnson was published in Raise the Hammer. People who participated in the focus groups or who had expressed an interest in keeping up to date on the process were advised via email. This "Update" list included people from some of Hamilton's neighbourhood associations. Denise O'Connor also posted notice of the meetings to the MyHamilton website. From the city staff perspective, Mike Kirkopoulos advised stakeholders as did members of City Council. This information was also made available through other speaking opportunities by city staff and through the steering committee and forum members when possible.

## 3.4 THE EDUCATION OF THE CITIZENS' FORUM

The idea of bringing together a group of citizens and asking them to produce an informed position on a public policy issue is a means of bridging the gap between citizens and government. On behalf of their fellow citizens, they take on the responsibility of asking tough questions of staff, stakeholder and

special interest groups and others who come forward with a position. They also commit to moving away from their own self-interest and position to imagine what is best for the “common good” of the entire city. This group demonstrated a strong appetite to move away from positions based on emotion and perceptions to positions based on facts. In response to arguments that more public consultation was needed, some forum members suggested that while the public input was useful and influenced their opinion, much of it was anecdotal, emotional and similar in content. The points were made and heard.

The public policy challenge is to build trust both in processes like this and faith in the ability of “ordinary” citizens to withstand any possible efforts at manipulation by sponsors of a public policy consultation such as this. This process was overseen by an independent Steering Committee and managed by independent consultants so that the management of the process was “arm’s length” from government.

On day one, the forum members were provided with a binder that included the Council approved Terms of Reference, pertinent excerpts from the Municipal Act, correspondence from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing on the Municipal Act and material from the website. Murals that were a graphic representation of one focus group were put up on the wall of the meeting room so people could see what was said in that focus group. The staff presentation on Area Rating was simplified and reworked so the information was presented neutrally. Some forum members expressed disappointment in the narrow scope of their mandate (i.e. to only look at the services that could be area rated versus looking at city services) but, at the same time, took their responsibility very seriously and remained focused.

One participant summed up the feeling of the group when he said at the end of the first meeting: “I came here today thinking I had all the answers. Now, all I have is questions!”

A number of questions were generated by the forum members that day for which the consultants sought answers from staff. Answers were disseminated via email as received but also compiled in an overview document. These answers and questions were posed to city staff and other pertinent experts, by either Mike Kirkopoulos or the consultant team.

The bus tour proved to be an intensive educational opportunity with lots of questions directed at staff. Subsequently, more questions were generated, asked and answered.

The two public meetings provided a chance to hear the lived experience of members of the public as relates to issues like fire, recreation and transit. Forum members also had to contend with the fact that the public who attended these meetings are angry with the level of taxation they endure and what many see as a reduction in the quality of service since amalgamation. This is a summary of what was said:

- Most participants were from Flamborough and the point was made repeatedly that response times for Fire/EMS do not compare with those in the city, that public transit is impractical for rural people, that services are not what they were pre-amalgamation;
- Some feel that the value of the homes in their local community is such that they are contributing more to the city as a community or former municipality than they are getting back;
- There was criticism levelled at the composition of the forum and the Steering Committee stating that rural voices were under-represented given they live in 65% of the GHA's land mass and none of the forum members were farmers;
- They urged the forum to recognize the uniqueness of their rural life when making their recommendation;
- A number of them also expressed the view that it would be a good thing if all of the city (e.g. downtown) were to fare better than it has been doing and they are okay with the fact that their taxes are put to use in this way;
- A number of people would like sidewalk snow removal in their wards as well;
- A representative of the Transit Users Group advocated creative and innovative ways of providing transit in the future, including in rural communities, so that people who are aging in rural communities will be able to "continue to live there" and, that city people without cars can perhaps get out to the country to "visit" the rural folks;
- The forum heard from one urban resident who lives on the Hamilton side of Hamilton- Ancaster boundary. He provided a binder of data that shows how the Hamilton residents are paying significantly higher property taxes for exactly the same services (fire, transit, recreation) as those on the Ancaster side of the border. His position was that the status quo is patently unjust;
- There is a small but strident group of people who believe that revenue generated in a former municipality should only pay for the services they receive in that community. For some, that would include social services and policing. The example was given a few times about how people don't see police cars patrolling rural Flamborough.

Overall, we found most public participants (and forum members) were unaware that services, particularly fire and recreation, had improved since amalgamation as well. People believe they are paying more and getting less. With respect to fire services they are not aware that all of the required people and equipment needed to fight a fire or respond to an EMS call are at their service if needed, even when their local station is staffed by volunteer firefighters. They were fixated on response times as the quality indicator. Recreation services were somewhat less contentious although in some public meetings people were generating inventories of their splash pads etc. in order to illustrate the point that they do not have equal access to services.

The belief that they are paying more and getting less, in our opinion, is an obstacle that prevents progress and a sense of commitment to the GHA.

When the forum members reconvened as a group, they had a chance to address some of what they heard about fire and response times with Deputy Chief, Dave Cunliffe and Phil Thorburn, Assistant Deputy Fire Chief.

They questioned staff on how the “seamless service” they had heard about on the bus tour could be reconciled with the stories they heard from various residents (specifically a few Flamborough residents of their experience with fires on the ground). All of this lively discussion and interaction informed the forum’s final decisions, as did their time with Don Hull of Transit and their hour with the representatives of the joint Chambers of Commerce.

Here is one comment from Citizens’ Forum members on their educational journey,

“I’ve learned so much about my taxes, and how they are distributed throughout our city. I am actually quite impressed with how open and accommodating city staff were in response to the Forum’s constant grilling of questions. Not one piece of information was left out or ‘sugar coated’. Facts, numbers, figures... any document was available to us, and I think we made a very well informed recommendation”.

### 3.5 PUBLIC INPUT

As described above, there were a number of opportunities for the public to provide input into this process,

- initially through the focus groups (66 participants)
- by submitting their thoughts on the Issue Book through the web or by mail (6 responses)
- by participating at the two public meetings (approximately 30 people)
- inviting the Chambers for an in-depth conversation about their recommendation

Bill Kelly has invited Alex Lolua and Denise O’Connor to come back on his show after the recommendations are presented to Council and plans to “take some calls” this time.

A number of forum members have remarked that the face-to-face conversations with members of the public were very useful and influenced their thinking.

### 3.6 CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

The only competing approach to area rating was presented by the joint Chambers of Commerce as mentioned above. Their position calls for a series of Geographic Service Zones (GSZs) that are defined by a combination of local service usage and access. The example of transit was provided to illustrate. The suggestion was made that an area of intensive, concentrated transit (such as the core of the city) might constitute a “high use” transit area, and that metrics should be developed to designate moderate and low use zones, and, needless to say, a ‘no use’ zone. Local residents would pay the cost of those local service miles.

According to the Chambers, everything the city does, should be on the table as a potential area rated service, provided it is permitted by legislation. Moreover,

*“any new area rating policy should not simply shift the tax burden from one tax payer to another. It should achieve a better rationale for taxation that is based on the principle that unless there are extenuating circumstances agreed upon by all communities, taxpayers pay for what they use” (Chambers of Commerce Policy Recommendation, August 10, 2010).*

This was seen by the forum members as problematic given their mandate and the facts they had learned about service levels across the city (particularly fire services). In the end, the Chambers’ approach did not resonate with them and their perception of what constituted the “common good”.

The second prong of the Chambers’ approach was to provide advice on what the Citizens’ Forum ought to be doing. The recommendations they made follow along with a response to their advice.

*Recommendation 1: Consider completing a review of all major city services starting with the largest budget service, including an examination of the feasibility, and desirability of establishing geographic service zones.*

The Terms of Reference mandating this project did not direct the Citizens’ Forum to go through services line by line but the floor was opened up to the Citizens’ Forum to identify other services they might like to see area rated. They showed no appetite for this.

With respect to Geographic Service Zones, it is our sense that the Fire recommendation and the staff recommendations, which the Citizen’ Forum endorsed on Transit and Streetlights/ Sidewalks resemble GSZs.

*Recommendation 2: Arrange extensive and effective city-wide public consultation on the findings of the review before drafting a new service rating policy including the use of the HMCOE principle as a tool to determine if any proposed new service rating policies that come from the review/consultation process are widely endorsed by taxpayers across the City.*

What was heard in the public consultations was that people did not think they were getting value for their tax money and they were angry about this. We also heard that the status quo on area rating (i.e. boundaries based on the boundaries of the former municipalities) was not acceptable to anyone and that the rural experience is different enough from the urban that area rating based on essentially an urban/rural split was seen as fair by almost everybody. This input has shaped the recommendations.

It is not within the forum’s mandate to engage in such a broad undertaking as is suggested by the Chambers. As to the advice to go back to seek unanimous endorsement from individual “communities” the question must be raised: who speaks for a community? Is it the few people who come out to a community meeting? Is it organized interests who may be able to fill a room with their

members? Or is the elected Councillor the most legitimate voice that speaks for his or her community?

Allowing every community an effective veto on a public policy decision will lead to paralysis and hodgepodge policy without an internal logic or coherence. Bringing the whole community into a room, as we did with the Citizens' Forum, however, leads to problem solving in the interest of the whole community. In fact, the Citizens' Forum achieved near unanimity on each of the recommendations they made. Only one or two (or no one) found themselves offside with the rest of the group.

There was no uptake by the Citizens' Forum on the HMCOE principle although the notion that the GHA is "one economy" resonated.

Taxation is clearly an emotional issue. The mechanics of area rating are not well understood and trust in governments is low. As has been described elsewhere in this report, the Citizens' Forum was drawn from a pool of randomly selected citizens to provide an opportunity for voices of moderation to surface, become educated on behalf of all residents, listen to people's concerns and make the best recommendation they can to City Council. We are confident that this is how things unfolded.

In terms of implementation, the Chambers made the following two recommendations.

*Recommendation 3: Phase in change over four years*

The Citizens' Forum agreed with this recommendation.

*Recommendation 4: Revise the service rating every ten years.*

This is for Council to decide, but we are assuming the rates are part of the budgeting process and one would expect these are reviewed regularly. The recommendations are such that area boundaries will evolve as services change.

### 3.7 EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

Part of the mandate of the consulting team was public education. The consultants used a multi-prong strategy to try to bring attention to the Citizens' Forum phenomenon including:

- ❖ Issue Book – an Issue Book was designed to serve as an education piece on the subject of area rating. It included a guide that encouraged city residents to hold study groups on the subject and submit their recommendations to the Forum. 750 booklets were printed and distributed through public libraries, recreation centres and municipal service centres and posted on the website. Cathy McMaster and the Steering Committee also distributed as many as possible through various community networks;
- ❖ A link on the City of Hamilton website described the initiative and the topic. It included the Issue Book and provided an opportunity to submit people's thoughts on-line. There was also an opportunity to subscribe to keep updated on the project;

- ❖ Media - 3 radio interviews on The Bill Kelly Show (Denise O'Connor and Paul Johnson at the first two, Denise and Forum member Alex Lolua at the third); Steering Committee Chair, Paul Johnson wrote an Op Ed piece in the Spectator and a letter to the editor published in Raise the Hammer; there was some coverage in local Metroland Papers; one article in the Spectator that reported on the first public meeting and mentioned the second. Paul Johnson appeared on Cable 14's "On the Record" with CATCH's Don Maclean and Rob Rossini to discuss area rating;
- ❖ Information on the public meetings was also broadcast through the e-list of the Hamilton Civic League.

## 4. CITIZENS' FORUM STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

The Citizens' Forum developed the following set of principles to inform their recommendations:

- There should be clearly definable differences in the distribution of services;
- There must be a measurable difference in the city's cost of delivering services in one area compared to another;
- The determination of boundaries should be based on factual, measurable criteria;
- Area rating criteria should be such that there is a seamless adjustment or evolution as the city changes;
- The criteria that delimit "areas" should be easily understood and communicated;
- The common good of the whole community must be considered when deciding whether to area rate a service;
- We must recognize that there are some basic costs that we all must share in a city (e.g. roads);
- Tax rates should be such that we have a competitive city that attracts jobs and people;
- The public use of tax dollars should be transparent in that it is communicated clearly to citizens - i.e. it should be easy for people to see how their tax dollars are being spent.

## 5. CITIZENS' FORUM'S RECOMMENDATIONS ON MOVING FORWARD AS A COMMUNITY

### 5.1 FIRE

The Citizens' Forum recommends three categories for rating Fire services.

Hydrant – Career or Composite Station Primary Response

Hydrant – Volunteer Station Primary Response

No hydrant service

The forum recommends that the rates used for the area rating of fire service should be based on the cost of providing service to each of the three designated areas as described above. This should recognize that although some areas are primarily serviced by volunteer firefighters, career firefighters respond to fires in all areas. Accordingly, rates in each area should be based on the actual cost associated with their use of these resources, as well as their fraction of the cost of having these resources available to them.

We heard very clearly from rural residents, and this was validated by data provided by staff, that the response time in rural areas, particularly those residents without a fire hydrant, can be significantly longer than in urban areas serviced by fire hydrants and career staff. However, we also heard a number of factors that influenced our recommendation that perhaps the general public does not know. Most salient are:

- There are three types of fire stations, "Career" staffed only by full-time firefighters, "Composite" staffed by both full-time firefighters and supplemented by volunteers as needed and "Volunteer" Fire Stations;
- Population density in the rural communities is too low to justify a fully-staffed or career fire hall. Volunteer firefighters provide a much needed service to rural communities;
- Hamilton has a system of supplying water to fight fires where there are no hydrants that has earned the designation "hydrant equivalency". This should reduce rural fire insurance rates although inquiries made of insurance agents by a forum member have not yielded such savings;
- Volunteer firefighters are a valued part of Hamilton's fire services and are important to community building, particularly in rural communities. The training they receive from the City of Hamilton Fire Department is accredited, therefore equivalent to college training, and qualifies them to pursue a firefighting career. Volunteer firefighters are treated as peers of career firefighters. This is substantiated by the practice that the first officer on a call (volunteer or career) assumes leadership of managing the fire;
- Since amalgamation, the training and workplace safety standards enjoyed by the Volunteer firefighters has improved dramatically and is now equal to that of Career firefighters as is the equipment available for their use;

- Volunteer firefighters are paid “on-call” therefore it is less costly to staff volunteer and composite stations. The only guaranteed hours they have are their weekly training exercises. This is laid out in union agreements that describe “ownership of work”;
- The Fire Department has a highly sophisticated Computer Activated Deployment System that automatically deploys the resources required to respond to a call from where they are available in real time in a seamless delivery model. All fires – regardless of size or location – will have resources from career fire stations deployed. This means the cost of fighting fires includes more than simply the cost of staffing the local stations;
- It is challenging to pull the required number of volunteer firefighters to a fire Monday to Friday from 9 to 5. The situation is monitored by fire dispatch and if the required complement of volunteers is not met within a prescribed time frame, additional career firefighters and/or volunteer firefighters are deployed no matter where the call originates;
- While the cost of capital equipment is linked to the station where it is located for budgeting purposes, it is put to use where ever needed. This means any fire or EMS call in the city has access to the same resources, regardless of location;
- Each station has a primary response area that fans out in a radius, regardless of the boundaries of former municipalities. In Ancaster, for example, Scenic Woods is within the response area of the career staffed station located at Garth and Mohawk in Hamilton.

The forum recommends that the rates used for the area-rating of fire service should be based on the cost of providing service to each of the three designated areas as described above. This should recognize that although some areas are primarily serviced by volunteer fire fighters, career fire-fighters respond to fires in all areas. Accordingly, rates in each area should be based on the actual cost associated with their use of these resources, as well as their fraction of the cost of having these resources available to them.

In hearing both from citizens and the Deputy Chief, it became evident to the Citizens’ Forum that three factors had the greatest impact on the time that it takes to start fighting a fire: first, the presence or not of a hydrant; second, the precious minutes it takes for volunteers to get to a station once they are called when primary response comes from a volunteer station; and third, distance to fires, which is an issue in rural areas because of low population density. While the staff recommendation differentiated between the rural and urban experience, it occurred to us that their rural map included pockets of subdivisions that enjoyed both fire hydrants and better proximity to a fire station than truly rural places like Sheffield, for example, that sit near the furthest boundary of the GHA.

## 5.2 TRANSIT

The Citizens' Forum endorses the staff recommendation on Transit, which establishes one transit rate within the Transit Service Area (Urban) and continues not to charge properties outside the Transit Service Area (Rural).

To quote from the Staff Report:

'All properties within the Transit boundary would pay the same rate for transit, with one exception - the Waterdown area. The Waterdown transit service is clearly unique compared to the rest of the transit service area. Service duration and frequency is very limited and the route is not directly connected to other HSR routes (limited indirect access by way of the Burlington transit system). The cost of the Waterdown route should be borne exclusively by the properties in Waterdown and not rolled into the cost of the entire transit system.

Generally speaking, staff recommends that properties that are not currently being charged for transit, will continue not to be charged for transit, and therefore experience no impact.'

While there were some strong advocates for public transit among the Citizens' Forum, in the end they were respectful of the position put forward by rural residents for whom transit is not a viable option, that they should not pay for a service to which they have no access. However the Citizens' Forum would like to see a more cohesive service model within the urban service area.

As to the urban service area, the Citizens' Forum heard that the boundaries of the former municipality continue to delimit designated service areas. As those boundaries have little bearing on where people work, visit or shop, they create artificial service areas that get in the way of an effective, efficient service. Some had personal experiences of trying to get from the former city to a former suburb on the weekend when it is not serviced by transit. This highlighted the point that this travel is two-way, not just for residents of the former suburbs who might want to go to the old city. The current model does not incorporate the "common good" of the whole city, when mobility is impeded unless one has a car. The forum also heard that a good transit system contributes to a strong economy and particularly serves low income people who rely on it to get to work.

The Citizens' Forum was encouraged to hear that the HSR is aware that the standard service delivery model is not necessarily what is needed to serve the outreaches of the former suburbs and is piloting more flexible delivery models including one using smaller buses that could, for example, serve the needs of the aging population more effectively than the current model. The Citizens' Forum – and many members of the public – also liked the Transcab model available in Glanbrook and Stoney Creek and encourages the adoption of that model elsewhere.

The Citizens' Forum also learned that HSR Management closely monitors service use and needs and has a series of "metrics" or measurements that would indicate when a change in service is warranted. We encourage the publication of this data in the interest of greater transparency of the municipal government to the citizens.

The Citizens' Forum encourages Hamilton City Council to review, study and approve, where warranted, service improvements during the annual budget deliberation. We would like the criteria that determine the urban/rural service boundary to be very specific and transparent so the boundary evolves as service changes and people understand why. We would like to see the boundary and service levels reviewed annually.

### 5.3 CULTURE AND RECREATION

The Citizens' Forum endorses the staff recommendation that would see the elimination of area rating for Culture and Recreation as follows:

'Report CM08022 "Area Rating Policy Update" stated that Culture and Recreation may no longer meet the legislative criteria to qualify as an area rated service. Staff continues to support the aforementioned conclusion, and as such, no other area rating options were identified for Culture & Recreation. In a review of other municipalities in Ontario, no evidence was found of any other municipality that area rated this service. Essentially, Culture and Recreation facilities and programs are available to all City of Hamilton residents and, in many cases (i.e. Culture) are available to those outside the City. With respect to recreation program registrations – 60% of users travel to facilities outside of their neighbourhoods/community to participate in registered programs. With respect to Cultural facilities, Dundurn Castle (currently area rated only to the former municipality of Hamilton) draws over 70% of its visitors from outside of the City.

Culture and Recreation facilities and programs are available to all City of Hamilton residents regardless of where in the municipality they reside. The catchment area for these facilities and programs extends beyond former area municipal boundaries. Unlike in 2001, when this service was selected for area rating, 96% of user fee revenues collected have now been harmonized throughout the City. Staff have concluded that this service no longer meets the definition of a "special service" and are recommending to eliminate it from area rating. Any service deficiency in certain parts of the City should be addressed through Council policy or program delivery, and not through area rating. Outside the City of Hamilton, of the municipalities surveyed (see Appendix B), none area rate Culture & Recreation.'

The Citizens' Forum learned that there were a total of 57,899 registrations in recreation programs. Of those, 21,599 (37.3%) use their local facility and 36,300 (62.7%) are non-local or live outside the postal code or ward. A specific example, is the Ancaster Rotary Centre with 2377 registrants, 1080 living in the L9G postal code/ Ancaster and 1,297 living outside of Ancaster. With regard to drop-in programs i.e. recreational swims, adult swims, the participation rates are higher for local registrants and lower for non-residents. In the inner city, Bennetto for example, had 1985 registrants - 1132 local and 853 non-local.

The percentages are higher for non-local at the better facilities such as Valley Park, Huntington, Ancaster. Residents will travel for the better facilities.

We also heard from rural residents of Flamborough and Winona that they essentially have no recreation centres or splash pads, Moms and Tots, Supie or other programs. Yet we heard from City Staff of plans to address those needs and of compensatory strategies, such as a \$4million investment in the Waterdown YMCA to meet the needs of this under-serviced area. We encourage the City to communicate its plans for more recreation facilities. We suggest that Council indicate clearly what new facilities are warranted in each area and when those facilities are scheduled for construction as outlined in the city's 10 year Capital budget. In the end, the Citizens' Forum supported the staff assertion that it is better to address this deficiency with programs than area rating.

## **5.4 SIDEWALKS AND STREETLIGHTS**

The Citizens' Forum endorsed the staff position on area-rating sidewalks and streetlights, which recommends area rating based on a urban/rural model that reflects the fact that there is a significantly higher concentration of Sidewalks and Street Lights in the urban area (costs would be allocated based on a ratio of sidewalks / light poles in urban versus rural).

Again, the Citizens' Forum heard from rural representatives that this is a service they do not benefit from and prefer not to pay for.

## **5.5 SIDEWALK SNOW REMOVAL IN WARD 12**

The Citizens' Forum rejects staff's recommendation on Sidewalk Snow Removal in Ward 12.

The basis of the objection is that they see the provision of enhanced services to one ward as divisive in terms of city-building and a "slippery slope" that sets a precedent that could potentially undermine our sense of a shared destiny as a community. The Citizens' Forum recommends the Ancaster BIA assume the cost of sidewalk snow shovelling in its business area as is done in the rest of the city.

There was a great deal of interest from people participating in the public meetings who live in urban wards in having that service for residences in their wards.

## **5.6 Other Services**

The Citizens' Forum does not support area rating any additional services.

## 5.7 Phasing in Change:

We recommend that the changes in property tax rates that result from this recommendation be phased in over no more than four years with the proviso that an extension of that phase in is warranted if a property tax increase driven by the municipal tax rate and this recommendation combined will exceed 5% in one year.

Although the staff recommended changes to the transit funding should wait implementation of the new transit master plan, the Citizens' Forum felt there were transit issues that should be addressed sooner rather than later.

## 6. OTHER MESSAGES TO COUNCIL

- ❖ We found this process to be a very satisfying way of participating in a public consultation and, hopefully, influencing public policy. The education we got from city staff on the service delivery models, the metrics in place that trigger service reviews and the impact of area rating of service delivery was extremely valuable and influenced our decision. Similarly, the conversations we had with the public were helpful and insightful, although we had hoped to hear from more citizens from more diverse backgrounds. We encourage City Council to use this method again as a way of conducting a public consultation.
- ❖ People are angry about the level of taxes they are paying and the tax increases they have seen since amalgamation. We heard that many would like to see a comprehensive review of what the city does and how it does it.
- ❖ We encourage the City to tell citizens about the service improvements, particularly in Fire and Recreation that have been made since amalgamation.
- ❖ We encourage the City to make information on how our tax dollars are spent more accessible and understandable to the average citizen. This would improve both accountability and transparency. We refer you to the City of Ottawa's website as an example of how it might be done.
- ❖ We heard from Fire Services that the service in rural areas of the GHA is such that there is "hydrant equivalency" that should result in a decrease in homeowners' insurance rates. However, inquiries made by one of our members of insurance brokers did not result in such a reduction. We encourage Council to direct Fire Services to contact the appropriate representatives of the insurance industry to advocate or educate so that people realize these savings in their insurance rates.
- ❖ We understand that recreation guides are no longer delivered to households and are only available at the Recreation Centres. We have many new residents in newly developed areas. If there is no local delivery, and no local Rec Centre, such as is the case in rural areas, how are they to know the programs even exist? There are many reasonably priced programs available for kids, as well as camps, PA day programs etc. that new residents and rural residents don't have any way of knowing about.

## APPENDIX I: COMPOSITION OF THE CITIZENS' FORUM

The Citizens' Forum was selected only on the basis of demographics and an interview to assess or ascertain their commitment to the process and their ability to do the job. It was suggested at the last meeting that City Council might be interested in knowing more about these people. This is who we got.

1. I am a [male] physics lecturer at McMaster University and small business owner with one child in public primary school, and one in public middle school. I am also a coach for girls competitive soccer and a musician who has played in cover bands at venues all around the GTA, both paid and charity gigs. I have lived in Nova Scotia, Connecticut, Ohio, California, England and several cities in Ontario.
2. I am a stay-at-home mom to two young boys (aged 4 and 6 years) with a background in Graphic Design/Marketing. I was born and raised in Hamilton.
3. A [male] retired Chartered Accountant, I worked for most of my career in the printing and publishing industry spending most of my career in newspapers in both the Finance and IT departments. I specialized in the acquisition, development and implementation of computer systems in newspapers across Canada. I have lived in cities and towns across eastern Canada and have lived in the Hamilton area since 1973, spending 8 years living in the urban downtown and the last 26 years in rural Hamilton.
4. I am a wife, mother of five children. I work full-time and have a part-time job as well. Although no expert in local politics I believe in the Citizens' Forum and the job we did. I have enjoyed and felt challenged in all that we did and learned and feel that this experience is one I will never forget. I am honoured to be a part of this and the community that I live in.
5. I'm a single, [female] parent, of two grown children, all of us born in Hamilton with 7 years post-secondary education. Career wise, I am a Bookkeeper, Office Administrator, Receptionist, Seamstress, and Cook with more than 20 years experience. I will be returning to College in January to complete my education, taking the Social Service worker course.

The area tax rating affects rent payers with the amount of rent paid. Myself as someone on ODSP, rent has become so high in this city that subsidized housing has become my only alternative. Market rent has been for some time been out of reach. My former landlord raised the rent the Max each year, and applied for extra increases in rent for capital costs, for renovations done in the building. Right now there is a 7 year wait-list for a unit in my building for someone who requires a subsidy. There are units sitting empty, but the market rent is too high. Illegal rooming houses are the only alternative for those on OW. The inspection, and licensing fees as well as the cost incurred by landlords for regulations and non-paying tenants, and evictions, have made legal rooming houses prohibitive to operate. I chose to live in the area I did under-housed, to give my young children, at the time, the "Best

Example" I could, to grow up in. "Children learn what they live." My children grew up in an area where almost all of their peers Graduated High School, worked, and got the highest grades possible in school. Most of my daughters friends graduated high school with honours, and all of them attended Post Secondary Education. This was what all of the children in the area I live, grow up with thinking as normal. So being under-housed on a wait-list for a bigger unit was acceptable, for their sake.

6. I am a [female] lifelong resident of Hamilton; I grew up in Ward 4 and moved to the Stoney Creek area after getting married and buying a home. I have worked in the Financial Industry in Insurance and Taxation for 26 years.
7. I am a retired teacher, recently widowed to a Hamilton- born businessman, who was active in the affairs of downtown Hamilton including the establishment of the first BIA there. Born in the U.S., I married and moved to Hamilton. I had 3 children, became a Canadian citizen, worked in our business and resumed my career as a teacher in the public school system. I worked in special education and became president of the Council for Exceptional Children, Hamilton-Wentworth Chapter. My family and I love Hamilton with its natural and beautiful scenic areas as well as its music, opera and art. I hope to see Hamilton grow and prosper, a city dear to us.
8. This male Forum member is originally from Toronto and has been a resident of the Hamilton area for 12 years. Much of his employment experience has been in the realm of infrastructural capabilities from communications to natural gas pipeline construction, recreation instructor, banking machine maintenance, chemical tanker transportation and as a company pilot throughout western Canada and the United States. This brings a unique perspective as to how a city may function and grow and the entire infrastructure to keep a city in good shape. Creative writing of experience and observations has led to the self-publication of a book of poetry and stories. This latest opportunity to become a member of the Citizens' Forum is appreciated and was truly a learning tool for even greater insight to the functioning of a city.
9. [I am female] Born in Britain, I have lived and worked in my ward for nearly 30 years. I am very active in my community, in environmental issues and as a member of the Crown Point planning team. The Citizens' Forum was a great experience for all to learn about our neighbours and voice our frustrations with the tax system that impacts each ward differently. A survey of the rural area [shows change is needed]. Also, I strongly believe that if the developers of our great city would pay the full development fees it would ease the tax burden on our citizens.
10. I am a [male] practicing Chartered Accountant working in downtown Hamilton and I specialize in the valuation of businesses and in assisting companies with their financing strategies. I have worked with many national, regional and local companies of various sizes in different industries. I have lived in Hamilton all my life, growing up in the downtown core before moving to the mountain after graduating from McMaster University.

11. I have lived, for the past three years, with my husband, in Ward 3 on Main Street East, in the inner City of Hamilton. Ward 3 is designated as a high risk area by Real Estate and Insurance agents. Because of this, our property assessment value is way below par, compared to the same condo in Ancaster, and our car and house insurance rates are high. We made this choice to live there with open eyes. We felt the perks outweighed the drawbacks. Being seniors, our main values are to be in walking distance of all necessities, entertainment, the YWCA, and also Bayfront Park, where we spend at least two hours walking every day.

When we were younger, we valued living in a rural area. Open spaces, quiet and peacefulness, clean air, and being far away from the maddening crowd, were great perks that we all felt were important for our children.

Drawbacks, of course, in rural living, were no transit, but we had two cars to take us to a bus line. There was no fire, cultural or recreational services close by. We had a community well for our water. Our kids were driven by car to anywhere. But we still had to pay full tax for all of these services.

However, we felt the perks outweighed the drawbacks at that time.

We finally did get water and fire hydrants, after the first year. But it cost each person \$ 25.00 a foot frontage for main water pipes to be laid. Then we had to pay 350.00 for a pipe to go from the main pipe into the house. These extra charges were put on our water bill on a monthly basis until it was paid off. That was in Navan-Cumberland township, a small community in a rural area. If a fire occurred, we had to depend on volunteer firefighters from the closest town 4 miles away. Transit service finally came after 30 years of living there, but only mornings and evenings 5x a week. When we left Navan seven years later, we still were on septic tank, which we paid for ourselves to be cleaned out.

So, having been both a rural and urban dweller, in the amalgamated cities of Edmonton, Montreal, and Ottawa, I felt this hands-on experience in both worlds, would be of some value in determining the fairness of Area Rating, based on where people decide to live. I firmly believe, based on living in both worlds, that we choose our location based on our values, and should be prepared to accept the drawbacks of both areas.

On a more personal level, my education consists of an Hon. BA. in Clinical Psychology, and a Master's Degree in Education. I also had professional training in problem solving and finding fair solutions for those individuals who had a beef, either legitimate or otherwise. I really enjoy being challenged, and finding a solution to any problem is a big perk for me. We both play the challenging game of Bridge, and are socially active in the YWCA Seniors group downtown, which we walk to.

12. I am married, a new mother and work as a high school teacher. This was an important issue for me to get involved in as it not only has a direct impact on my family, but the entire city as a whole. I encourage all of my students to take action and get involved and I saw this as my opportunity to practice what I preach.

13. I am a married father and work as an executive in Hamilton. I worked for most of my career in the financial sector and in south west Ontario. I have a undergraduate degree in Economics, Masters degree in Business and an accounting designation.
14. I am a married father of three daughters who has been a lifelong resident of Hamilton. I am a government relations professional who has served on many government committees, primarily at the provincial level. My profession has allowed me to play an active role in the development of public policy through dealings with both bureaucrats and politicians of all political stripes. I have a post-secondary degree in kinesiology. I have worked in government at the provincial level, been a partner in a small business and have represented workers in Ontario's construction industry.

## APPENDIX II:

### SOLID PROCESS DESIGN, PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

In 2008, the British National Consumer Council and the public participation firm Involve, produced a background paper “deliberative public engagement: nine principles”<sup>1</sup>, which served as a guide in the design of Hamilton’s Citizens’ Forum process. All quotations below are from this paper as are an analysis of how this process adhered to those principles and met the conditions that made it a deliberative process.

Deliberative public engagement is defined as “*an approach to decision-making that allows participants to consider relevant information, discuss the issue and the options and develop their thinking together before coming to a view*”. Summarized below are the three conditions identified by the report as those that make a process deliberative. Each is followed by a commentary on how the Citizens’ Forum met these conditions.

***“Discussion between participants*** at interactive events ... are designed to give sufficient time and space to enable participants to gain new information and to discuss in depth the implications of their new knowledge in terms of their existing attitudes, values and experience”.

The Citizens’ Forum, including the public meeting events, were all designed to ensure the time spent engaging in dialogue exceeded the time spent hearing presentations.

***“Working with a range of people and information sources*** – including information, evidence and views from people with different perspectives, background and interests. This may include evidence requested or commissioned by the participants themselves”.

The forum itself was designed to be diverse by ensuring the members reflected the demographics of the community. The public meeting portion provided another opportunity to hear from people with different points of view and perspectives. The forum had presentations from staff but also live question and answer sessions and subsequently would send questions to staff through the consultants.

***“A clear task or purpose***, related to influencing a specific decision, policy service, project or programme”.

The Terms of Reference created by the City clearly laid out the parameters of the work.

As the title implies, the report identifies nine principles that serve as the foundation for the development of a good process. The commentary that follows lifts quotations from the NCC report that elaborate on these principles and have been achieved by the Citizens’ Forum. These are the principles,

---

<sup>1</sup> Deliberative public policy engagement: nine principles (2008) National Consumer Council  
[http://www.involve.org.uk/nine\\_principles/](http://www.involve.org.uk/nine_principles/) retrieved November 2009/ October 2010.

- The process makes a difference
- The process is transparent
- The process has integrity
- The process is tailored to the circumstances
- The process involves the right number and types of people
- The process treats participants with respect
- The process gives priority to participants' discussions
- The process is reviewed and evaluated to improve practice
- Participants are kept informed

The design of Hamilton's Citizens' Forum was based on these nine principles. With respect to the *first principle*, "the process makes a difference", participants have learned "*about wider political and decision-making processes, as well as about the subject being discussed*". They were "*engaged in a meaningful way*" and "*therefore more enthusiastic about getting involved in the future*". This is demonstrated by the verbatim comments transcribed in the "Messages from the Forum" sidebars in the body of this report.

With respect to the principle of transparency, transparent information was provided, in that the participants were aware of the sources. There has been transparency of the reporting of their points of view: they had substantial input into the drafting of the report. In terms of Council's ultimate decision-making, it was clear "*to everybody how the results from public engagement are intended to be used*" and it will be made clear "*how the public input has had an impact*".

As for integrity, "*the scope for making a difference to the policy or decision [was] explicitly declared at the start. In particular it is important to be clear about things that cannot be changed ... in order to manage expectations*". The relevant legislation (i.e. the Municipal Act) and the principle of revenue neutrality were discussed in the first meeting. "*Sincerity*" and a "*willingness to be open-minded*" was clearly demonstrated by the forum members.

The *fourth principle*, that the "process is tailored to the circumstances" was also met as described in the body of this report, as was the *fifth* that the "process involves the right number and types of people". In this case, "*efforts [were] made to involve people of different ages, genders, social class, ethnic groups, and geographic location*". This forum included "*people living in poverty or disadvantaged neighbourhoods*" among others. A "*minor incentive*" was offered to cover expenses "*to ensure that [some] are not excluded from taking part on financial grounds*".

The evaluations completed by forum members (see Appendix III) confirm that the consultants met the *sixth principle*, that "the process treats participants with respect".

The meeting schedule and descriptions shows the consultants met the seventh principle, *"the process gives priority to participants' discussions"*. The exercise followed *"a logical path through learning and discussion, so that the participants build on and use the information and knowledge they acquire as the process develops"*. They were *"given a variety of ways to express their views – both collectively, through the discussions, and individually through other methods such as voting, post-it notes..."*.

The eighth principle, that the "process is reviewed and evaluated to improve practice" occurred both through the formal evaluation forms and debrief or huddles held at the end of the public meetings.

Finally, with respect to the principle, "participants are kept informed". The consultants provided clear information on the process, *"before, during between and after meetings"* and they will provide *"clear information on the final decision, and how participants' input has made a difference"* once Council makes its decision.

## APPENDIX III: SUMMARY OF MEETING EVALUATIONS

### Evaluations completed at the end of three meetings

11-Sep-10	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Unsatisfactory	Total
Facilitators were well prepared for the meeting	12			12
Time was well used	12			12
Everyone was given an adequate opportunity to participate in discussion and decision-making	11	1		12
Treatment of all participants was courteous, dignified and fair	12			12
The facilitators presented material in a neutral way	12			12
Other comments	stuck to schedule			
	small groups made asking questions easier			
13-Oct-10	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Unsatisfactory	Total
Facilitators were well prepared for the meeting	7			7
Time was well used	7			7
Everyone was given an adequate opportunity to participate in discussion and decision-making	7			7
Treatment of all participants was courteous, dignified and fair	7			7
The facilitators presented material in a neutral way	5	1	1	7
Other comments	[ Facilitator] keeps saying "if I"			
	I am very impressed with the skills of the facilitators and how well prepared they are.			

<b>16-Oct-10</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Needs Improvement</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Facilitators were well prepared for the meeting</b>	13			<b>13</b>
<b>Time was well used</b>	13			<b>13</b>
<b>Everyone was given an adequate opportunity to participate in discussion and decision-making</b>	13			<b>13</b>
<b>Treatment of all participants was courteous, dignified and fair</b>	13			<b>13</b>
<b>The facilitators presented material in a neutral way</b>	12	1		<b>13</b>
<b>Other comments</b>	I would like to thank you for your guidance and professional conduct you have shown towards this group. You have been very helpful and totally willing to go the extra mile.			
	You guys did an amazing job, keeping things so smooth running and respectful. Thank you!			
	Great learning experience! Also gives incentive to learn more. Much more interested in politics. Thank you so much!			
	[Facilitator] has done a fantastic job of keeping everyone on topic (sometimes guiding them back 2 - 3 times).			