



## The Corporation of the Township of Huron-Kinloss

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### Staff Report

**Report Title: Council Chambers - Modifications for Social Distancing**

**Prepared By: Emily Dance, Clerk**

**Department: Clerk**

**Date: Feb. 1, 2021**

**Report Number: CLK-2021-02-8**  
Council Chambers

**File Number:** A20 COU 21 –

#### **Attachments:**

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#### **Recommendation:**

THAT the Township of Huron-Kinloss Committee of the Whole hereby approves Report No. CLK-2021-02-8 prepared by Emily Dance, Clerk AND directs staff to obtain quotes for modifications to Council Chambers to allow for social distancing and hybrid meetings AND FURTHER that staff bring forward an amendment to the Procedural By-Law to permit electronic recordings of Council Meetings.

#### **Background:**

At the April 15, 2020 Council meeting, Council approved an amendment to the Procedural By-Law to allow for electronic participation for Council meeting and to moved to holding electronic meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Township has been using the “Zoom” Platform since April 2020 for Council and Committee meetings. The transition to this platform has permitted meetings to continue and allow for public participation.

Staff has received positive feedback from residents, delegations, and consultants on the ability to participate in the virtual meetings.

Additionally, there has been a few requests from the public and press for copies of recordings of the electronic meetings.

#### **Discussion:**

Once the pandemic restrictions are lifted, and Council can back to some sort of normalcy, Council Chambers in its original desk configuration does not allow for

physical distancing of Council and staff along with a public gallery for in-person Council meetings.

Staff is requesting Council direction on when it is permitted to move back to in-person meetings that Council supports modifications to Council Chambers which may include the purchasing of new desks to allow for physical distancing and new electronics to allow for a hybrid in-person/ virtual meeting model.

As it is unknown at this time when large groups of people will be permitted to gather, a hybrid model would allow for Council and Staff to meet in person and allow the public to participate virtually using an electronic platform for the meeting in progress that is streamed in live time.

The current Procedural By-law allows for Council members to participate electronically and does not require that all members be electronic or all in-person giving the flexibility to move to a hybrid option even for Council members.

The electronic platform would need to allow for participants attending virtually to address Council as required for Public Meetings under the Planning Act and Drainage Act, etc.

Other points to consider is that hybrid meetings may allow consultants to attend meetings virtually and reduce travel costs, participation can continue during inclement weather and seasonal residents can participate from their primary residence at any time.

If Council supports this direction in principle, staff can obtain quotes that can be considered during budget deliberations.

With the current "zoom" platform we have the ability to live stream Council Meetings to our Youtube Channel which can then be saved and linked from the Township website.

Posting of Council meeting recordings has been widely used in large centers and is now being used in smaller municipalities that are hosting electronic meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic as a way to be open and transparent.

If Council would like to post meeting recordings to the website, staff will bring forward an amendment to the procedural by-law outlining the process. This will also need to be considered in the hybrid model.

### **Financial Impacts:**

The financial impacts will vary depending on the type of system and will include new desks, update to audio equipment, additional cameras, IT support and electrical.

### **Strategic Alignment / Link:**

We are an accessible community by being open and transparent.

**Respectfully Submitted By:**

Emily Dance, Clerk

**Approved By:**

Mary Rose Walden, Chief Administrative Officer