



REPORT

TO: Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

FROM: Kelly Aldridge, Senior Policy Planner

DATE: November 14, 2023

REPORT NO.: PD-2023-078

SUBJECT: Statutory Public Meeting To Consider Alternative Public Meeting Notice Policies – Draft Halton Hills Official Plan Amendment

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. PD-2023-078, dated November 14, 2023, regarding a Statutory Public Meeting for a proposed Amendment to the Halton Hills Official Plan that would permit alternative public meeting notice policies, be received;

AND FURTHER THAT all agency and public comments be referred to staff for a further report regarding the disposition of this matter.

KEY POINTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- The purpose and effect of the proposed Official Plan Amendment is to amend the Implementation Section of the Official Plan in order to provide alternative notice policies for amendments to the Official Plan (in accordance with s. 17(19.3) of the *Planning Act*), and Zoning By-law Amendments (in accordance with s. 34(14.3) of the *Planning Act*). This will allow the Town to provide notices for public meetings via digital means rather than in a printed newspaper.
- This public meeting is to also consider extending existing provisions for Minor Official Plan Amendments and include Minor Zoning By-law Amendments, to eliminate the requirement for public notice and public meetings, for example, when correcting grammatical errors and/or making changes to the numbering of sections.

- The purpose of the Statutory Public Meeting is to obtain comments and feedback from the community. Any comments received will be reviewed, evaluated and included in the Final Recommendation Report to Council at a later date.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

The Ontario Regulations under the *Planning Act* currently require that Public Notices be issued in a printed newspaper that, in the opinion of the clerk of the municipality, is of sufficient general circulation in the area to which the proposed application would apply and that it would give the public reasonable notice of the public meeting and/or open house (regulation excerpt shown in Schedule 1).

For privately initiated amendments, the *Planning Act* requires a notice for a statutory public meeting to be i) posted on a sign on the subject property and mailed out to property owners within 120m of the subject property or ii) the notice to be published in the local paper.

Until recently, for Town initiated amendments impacting large geographic areas such as Secondary Plans, statutory notice requirements were met via the newspaper. Complementary notice has also been provided by digital means (i.e. the Current and social media), and on occasion, courtesy notices to residents within 120 metres of the subject properties.

However, given that the local newspaper, the Independent and Free Press is no longer publishing the newspaper in print, this Official Plan Amendment proposes alternative measures for public notification. Recently, staff have utilized the Toronto Star to publish required notices, which has significantly increased costs. Therefore, as per the permissions within section 17(19.3) and section 34(14.3) of the *Planning Act* (as shown in Schedule 1), which speak to alternative measures for informing and obtaining the views of the public in respect to Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendments, staff are proposing an amendment to section G2.4 of the Official Plan to provide for alternative means for public notices.

As shown in the Draft By-law attached as Schedule 2, staff are proposing that the Town maintain the status quo for privately initiated amendments, which require the public meeting notice to be posted on the subject property and the notice to be circulated to all property owners within 120 metres of the site. For publicly initiated applications, staff are proposing that rather than being required to provide notice in the local newspaper, that the notice be made available digitally, for example, posting on the Town's website, through the Town's newsletter (The Current) and online via the Independent and Free Press and/or Halton Hills Today.

Staff are proposing to maintain the 20-day notice requirement for all notices for public meetings and/or open houses and will continue to ensure the appropriate information is made available to the public prior to a public meeting.

Currently section G2.4 of the Official Plan speaks to eliminating notice to the public and a public meeting for minor Official Plan Amendments based on certain criteria. Staff are also suggesting we follow suit for municipally-initiated Minor Zoning By-law

Amendments based on the same criteria. This will allow for certain housekeeping items to be updated quicker and more frequently to ensure the Zoning By-law is as up to date as possible.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report is administrative in nature and does not have an impact on the Town's Strategic Plan.

RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE:

This report is administrative in nature and does not directly impact or address climate change and the Town's Net Zero target.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public Engagement has been conducted as follows:

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| November 21, 2023 | Notice of Public Meeting published in the Toronto Star. |
| November 23, 2023 | Notice of Public Meeting published on the Town's website. |
| November 23, 2023 | Notice of Public Meeting published on the Town's Twitter account. |

INTERNAL CONSULTATION:

Planning staff has consulted with the appropriate Town Departments and Thomson Rogers in preparation of this Report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This report is administrative in nature and does not have any financial implications.

Reviewed and approved by,

Bronwyn Parker, Director of Planning Policy

John Linhardt, Commissioner of Planning & Development

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer