



Ward Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 16, 2024, 7:00 p.m.
West Thunder Community Centre

1. Westfort Ward Meeting 02-2024

Chair: Councillor Kristen Oliver

2. Resource Persons

John Collin, City Manager
Krista Power, Director - Legislative Services & City Clerk
Crystal DePeuter, Council & Committee Clerk
Flo-Ann Track, Council & Committee Clerk

3. Guests

Rebecca Johnson, Chair - Council Composition Review Committee
Heather McLeod, Member - Council Composition Review Committee

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the 01-2024 Westfort Ward meeting held on March 28, 2024, for information.

5. Welcome and Opening Remarks

The Chair provided introductory remarks and introduced Chair - Council Composition Review Committee Rebecca Johnson and Director - Legislative Services & City Clerk Krista Power.

There were approximately 18 people in attendance.

6. Council Composition Update

Chair - Council Composition Review Committee Rebecca Johnson provided a presentation relative to Phase Two of the Council Composition Review. City

Clerk, Krista Power was present to respond to questions from residents about the legislative process associated with making changes to City Council.

The presentation included an overview of the committee make up and process, and key findings from the consultations in Phase One.

Chair Johnson presented the two options that are being presented to the community for feedback during Phase Two:

Option 1 – 10 elected at-large, mayor

Option 2 – 4 wards (2 each) + 2 at-large, mayor

Wards will divide via main thoroughfares (Red River Road / Dawson Road; Oliver Road; Arthur Street) and will run east to west to include waterfront, urban, industrial, rural, potential growth areas in each ward

Names will be replaced with numbers

Wards will be balanced according to: population, income, education, number of households, and diversity.

Chair Johnson advised of upcoming public feedback opportunities including deputation opportunity on November 20, 2024 via special committee meeting.

Chair Johnson and Clerk Power fielded questions and comments from constituents:

- There was discussion that neither option will result in significant cost savings due to factors such as a corresponding increase in budget to accommodate increased workload for a reduced number of councillors.
- There was discussion that the motivation for a reduction in councillors was to voice preference for a smaller government and increased efficiencies.
- If 8.6 was the average number indicated by respondents in Phase 1, why are the proposed options 10?
 - Clarification that the number 8.6 only reflected online contributions. The addition of hardcopy surveys and considerations for comparator municipalities and service levels resulted in the recommendation for 10.
- There was discussion that rural areas could be left out with new ward system and urban areas favoured

- Proposed ward boundaries ensure that all ward councillors are exposed to rural issues increasing representation
- There was discussion on the ratio of population to councillor as compared to Toronto and Calgary. A key difference highlighted is that larger municipalities have a larger administrative staff to support councillors with larger workloads, unlike Thunder Bay.
- There was discussion on quorum and the number of people required to make a decision.
- Was increasing councillor compensation considered?
 - Found that Thunder Bay is in the middle of comparator municipalities for compensation
- A concern was raised about the workload with a reduced council
 - Council can ask for workload to be reviewed for next term but the committee cannot provide that direction
- A concern was raised about the presentation of the survey when the community needs more education.
- Could you have both part-time and full-time councillors?
 - Would not be able to do a split because all councillors are elected in the same process and can't be designated after the fact - would affect representation. If full-time, would need to all be full-time and would result in a high expense.
- There was discussion about engagement and efforts made to provide information and opportunity in a variety of ways to different demographics.
- Why are there 2 at-large within the 4 ward model?
 - Considerations included workload and ward balance, number of councillors, maintain one hybrid option, feedback from Indigenous consultation.

7. City Growth

City Manager John Collin provided a brief overview on city growth including the following:

- Thunder Bay has potential but is not currently growing
- The true impact of lack of growth will be felt in 10 years

- Increased population results in increased business which creates a thriving atmosphere
- Thunder Bay population growth is well below the Ontario and National averages
- Focus over the next decade must be on smart growth

There was discussion about what programs or incentives will stimulate growth including:

- Caution in relying on incentives only
- Require a detailed growth plan and task force
- Need to sell and market to attract population growth

There was discussion about attracting large businesses. City Manager John Collin advised that the City actively engages with large businesses and works to provide competitive proposals.

There was discussion about advocacy and engaging with other levels of government, including the need to work with other municipalities on a unified voice.

There was discussion regarding the need for economic diversification to protect the city from industry circumstances that can result in job loss.

8. Ward and City Issues

8.1 Leaf & Yard Waste

There was discussion with respect to the timing and number of Yard and Leaf Pick Ups and the challenge in finding out who to voice concern to. City Manager John Collin advised that services are limited, and schedule was determined based on previous years and data. City Manager John Collin shared plans to implement a 'one-stop' customer service model with one contact for all city concerns.

8.2 Boulevard Garden and Maintenance By-law

The Chair provided an update on the Boulevard By-law advising that there is a motion coming to council to delay debate to November 25, 2024. This is to accommodate the volume of feedback received on the issue.

There was discussion around the restrictions in the proposed by-law and concerns raised with respect to the affect the by-law will have on storm

drainage, ability to manage green infrastructure, food security, and climate change.

A concern was raised that the survey closes on October 17, 2024 and a request for extension. Chair Oliver advised she would look into extending the survey. It was shared that comments, via email or phone call, can continue to be received after October 17 but time is needed to compile survey data.

There was discussion about the online survey and a concern raised about the login process being a deterrent for some people. It was shared that the login process is necessary to ensure the integrity of the data and that the survey responses are not connected to the login for analysis.

There was discussion about comparing the Thunder Bay proposed Boulevard By-law with other municipalities and a caution from Chair Oliver and City Manager John Collin that comparisons can be challenging when the effectiveness is not known or measured.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:54 p.m.