

Resumption of In-Person Council and Committee Meetings

ISSUE

Administration is providing an update on the scheduled return to in-person meetings at City Hall for Council and Committees effective April 2022.

BACKGROUND

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic a resolution was passed at the March 16, 2020 Governance and Priorities Committee (GPC) meeting for City Council and Committee meetings to be held remotely, suspending provisions of the Committees and Procedures Bylaw to do so. City Council has been meeting via teleconference (Teams) since that date.

A return to in-person Council/Committee meetings has been planned in conjunction with a return to the workplace for City of Saskatoon staff on two occasions. The first plan was to be effective September 2021 and the second effective February 2022. As each date approached however, an increase in COVID-19 in the Saskatoon region occurred, and a decision was made by Council to further defer the return to in person meetings.

At its February 8, 2022 Special meeting, City Council made decisions to:

- remove the Proof of COVID-19 Vaccination or Negative Test Requirements for City of Saskatoon facilities when the Government of Saskatchewan rescinds the “Public Health Order Proof of COVID-19 Vaccination or Negative Test.”; and
- continue the masking requirement for all person accessing City facilities, including Saskatoon Transit, when the Government of Saskatchewan rescinds the “Public Health Order Mandatory Isolation and Face Covering”

At the February 22, 2022 Governance and Priorities Committee meeting, Council received a COVID-19 verbal update from the City’s Director of Emergency Management Organization regarding operational principles and requirements and highlighting a move to task-specific masking for City employees effective February 28, 2022. Further, GPC received an information report of the City Clerk regarding the current plan to return to the workplace and in-person meetings and resolved that Council and Committee meetings resume in-person on April 1, 2022.

Public masking requirements in civic facilities are to be evaluated monthly by City Council, with a report from the Administration on this matter to be considered by Council at the March 28, 2022 meeting.

CURRENT STATUS

The City continues to follow the direction and recommendations from the Saskatchewan Health Authority local Medical Health Officers. There continues to be COVID-19 safety protocols and elements of the discontinued exposure control plans in place for all staff and public attending civic facilities.

Council Chamber and select Committee Rooms have been equipped to facilitate a full return to in-person meetings, a continuance of virtual meetings, or a hybrid of the two. Administration is prepared to host meetings of any format and The Procedures and Committees Bylaw has been adjusted to facilitate this.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Subject to any differing direction from Council, the intent is for in-person meetings of Council and Committees to resume with the scheduled April 11 Standing Policy Committee meetings. Meetings will be hosted in the Council Chambers at City Hall. The Chambers has been made capable of hosting “hybrid” meetings, where both in person and remote attendance will be possible, both for Council and any public or administrative presenters. All meetings will continue to be live streamed for public viewing, with recordings available shortly after the meeting as well. New for 2022 is a closed captioning feature that is available on the live stream and recordings.

Along with the live stream, attendance by the public will resume on the same date, subject to any guidelines set by City Council for public attendance at civic facilities. Based on the aforementioned Council resolutions, this does not include proof of vaccination or negative test; however current as of March 28, 2022 does include a requirement for masks to be worn in all areas where the public may gather, including during a public meeting. This would include masking by all Councillors, staff, and members of the public in attendance at the meeting. Any changes made to the existing masking requirements by Council at the March 28, 2022 meeting would be applicable for in-person meetings.

Written and Approved by: Adam Tittlemore, City Clerk

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