



PROPOSED OPTIONS TO IMPROVE
ACCESSIBILITY
TO MUNICIPAL COUNCIL MEETINGS

PRESENTED BY
THE CITIZENS' COUNCIL OF HAMILTON
TOWNSHIP

NOVEMBER 10, 2015

INTRODUCTION

- We are here today to discuss the increased interest, of our citizens, in municipal activities and the desire for improvements to the communication process between Council and the citizens of Hamilton Township.
- In 2012, the Ontario Ombudsman's Office requested that all municipalities video and audio record **all open and closed municipal council meetings**. In the three years since the Ombudsman's request, uploading video recordings of open meetings of Council to the internet has become a growing practice amongst Ontario municipalities who are striving to provide improved communications, transparency, and accessibility to their constituents.

INTRODUCTION - CONTINUED

- The Municipal Act requires that records be kept of all meetings. Electronic recordings, including combined audio and video, provides the most faithful, thorough record possible while ensuring that complete and accurate record of the meeting is kept.
- Our Municipal Council and the Canadian Government also seek to reduce barriers and increase opportunities to ensure the full participation of people with disabilities in Canadian society. Canada has a strong legal and legislative framework that guarantee's the equal rights of people with disabilities.

INTRODUCTION - CONTINUED

- The Municipal Act and our Townships' Municipal Policy and Procedures Manual stipulate the importance of balance, diverse values, aspirations, priorities, and competing interests of the community.
- We, the Citizens' Council, would like to build upon the collective capacity of all organizations to address issues such as the isolation of seniors through social innovations. This would include promoting improved access to information through such endeavours as uploading Council meetings to the internet.

INTRODUCTION - CONTINUED

- The majority of our ratepayers must work during the day (when our Council meets). For the working and/or busy family, internet access to the video recording is a valuable resource to review the meeting further at their own discretion and on their own timelines.
- Upon review of the updated Hamilton Township Strategic Plan for 2020 we have found many references to improvements where we feel video recordings of Council meetings would assist in the attainment of Council's goals. We have highlighted these references in **purple enlarged text** on the next five slides.
- The combined visions and values of the CCHT and Hamilton Township Council reflect openness, transparency, honesty, integrity, and respect.

TOWNSHIP OF HAMILTON STRATEGIC PLAN -2020

CONCLUSION

- o **Greater knowledge of municipal decision-making**, services, programs and events, and increased participation, **will be achieved through the development and implementation of improved communication** and marketing **techniques**

TOWNSHIP OF HAMILTON STRATEGIC PLAN -2020

Parks & Recreation & Culture: To promote a social & healthy environment made available for a wide variety of activities in clean, efficient, functional facilities and parks

Provide for Inclusive and Accessible Communities

- o a. Preserve and protect the unique nature of the 'community of communities' that exists in the Township, but address the challenge geography and distance creates and come up with solutions that focus on 'the ties that bind the entire community fabric'.
- o **b. Consider municipal policies, services and programs that take into account the impact of an aging population**
- o **c. Implement legislated requirements, with the goal of improving and expanding opportunities for persons with disabilities, and identify, remove and prevent barriers to their full participation in the life of the community.**
- o d. Celebrate the cultural richness of the Township of Hamilton, which includes the historical United Empire Loyalists links to our past.
- o e. Work with other community stakeholders to ensure that people in our community feel like they belong.

TOWNSHIP OF HAMILTON STRATEGIC PLAN -2020

Effective Governance and Management of the Organization: To deliver efficient and cost effective governance in a timely manner, through leadership and respect
– administer with an unbiased view.

Ensure Effective and Accountable Governance

- o a. Maintain a Council size and structure that ensures strong leadership, highly functional and effective teamwork, accountability and good interaction with the community
- o b. Ensure sufficient funding is provided for Council and staff training and development opportunities.

Raise the Municipal Profile & Image

- o **a. Establish a modern, progressive and creative image for the municipality.**
- o b. Develop a long-term plan to improve municipal signage.

TOWNSHIP OF HAMILTON STRATEGIC PLAN -2020

Effective Governance and Management of the Organization: To deliver efficient and cost effective governance in a timely manner, through leadership and respect – administer with an unbiased view (continued)

Provide Exceptional Customer Service & Commit to Maintaining High Standards for Municipal Service Delivery

- o **a. Emphasize exceptional customer service and a high standard of service delivery**, including the potential for extended service delivery (hours, locations), so that such service is recognized as a particular strength of the municipality

Improve Communication with the Public and Increase Public Awareness of Municipal Activities

- o a. Improve how staff communicate with the public throughout the entire municipality by developing and implementing a communications strategy.
- o b. Communicate with residents about local programs and related service delivery expectations.
- o **c. Develop methods to communicate with the public to help manage expectations concerning the growing disparity between service level expectations and actual resources.**
- o **d. Communicate with residents about issues that directly impact their quality of life (e.g. noise, burning permits, etc.).**
- o **e. Identify the technological improvements that will be required to connect the Township and its ratepayers, (ie website refresh)**

OPTIONS

In our investigation of alternatives we have contacted various municipalities. We feel our situation is similar to the Council Chamber in the Town of Pelham, in Niagara region.

- a) Their Council Chamber appears to be similar in size to ours.
- b) Their town population is approximately 16,600 versus ours at approximately 11000.

Pelham has had a recording system in place for some time now and uploads their Council meeting videos to Youtube and embeds them on their website.

Detailed costs and systems specifications will be provided on November 10th as well as the pros and cons of our suggested alternatives and our final recommendation/request.

Please take the opportunity to go online and review the links we have provided on the next page. We would hope you would at least preview the Pelham and the Oshawa web addresses before our presentation on November 10th as there may be questions you would like to ask about these videos at that time.

COUNCILS CURRENTLY UPLOADING VIDEO RECORDINGS OF THEIR COUNCIL MEETINGS

- o Midland Ontario has video done by Rogers TV. Two cameras. One at back of room and one at the front to capture delegations faces. Meeting date of September 28th, 2015
<http://www.rogerstv.com/page.aspx?lid=237&rid=73&sid=5861&gid=238615>
- o Lambton Shores, Ontario (Sarnia) video seems to only show a square Council table. Meeting date of October 13, 2015
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjPGhpmVWSM>
- o Municipality of Pelham in the Niagara Region – one camera at back of the room Meeting date of December 15, 2014
<https://www.youtube.com/embed/pH9WsluTRT0?rel=0>
- o Oshawa city council - High mounted camera showing all of council, excellent audio Meeting date of October 19, 2015
<http://civic.neulion.com/cityofoshawa/index.php?clipid=3494516%2C000>

RECOMMENDATIONS

- o GoPro camera(with smart remote) strategically placed near back of Council chambers to capture all Council members at the front as well as the rear vision of presenters to Council
- o Camera includes:
 - Entry level GoPro is \$130 US to high end option of \$500 US
 - smart remote - \$80 US
 - Curved and flat adhesive camera mounts \$20 US
 - Wall charger that allows for simultaneous filming while charging \$40 US
- o Software package (if necessary) to convert video to the format necessary to upload it to YouTube \$150 (Microsoft wave is one option which our Council may already own)
- o Very minimal labour required to take the video from the GoPro and have it formatted and uploaded to YouTube. No Cost to getting a license to use YouTube. Embed YouTube on the Township of Hamilton Website for public access.

RECOMMENDATIONS Continued...

CURRENT ISSUES THAT NEED RESOLUTION BEFORE VIDEO RECORDING BEGINS

- o In discussion with staff at Pelham they recognize that there are problems with Councillors not speaking into microphones properly. Sophisticated systems have just as many problems as the GoPro when this happens. This is currently a concern for our ratepayers who are actually sitting in the Council Chambers and cannot hear what Councillors or presenters are saying. It needs to be solved whether or not we are video recording.
- o Also need to solve the problem of outside noise interference in the Council Chambers with loud voices from front desk transactions and door squeaks etc. Very hard to hear in the back rows when all the noise travels into the room.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

- o Articles from the Ombudsman of Ontario's Office
- o Hamilton Township Strategic Plan - 2020