

# Town of Whitby

## Staff Report

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### Report Title: Council Participation at Community Events Protocol and Attendance Guidelines Policy

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**Report to:** Committee of the Whole

**Date of meeting:** January 15, 2024

**Report Number:** CLK 02-24

**Department(s) Responsible:**

Office of the Town Clerk

**Submitted by:**

Christopher Harris, Town Clerk

<b>Acknowledged by M. Gaskell, Chief Administrative Officer</b>
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**For additional information, contact:**

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#### 1. Recommendation:

1. That Council approve the Council Participation at Community Events Protocol and Guidelines Policy appended to Report CLK 02-24 as Attachment 1.

#### 2. Highlights:

- Adoption of the draft Policy will provide guidance to Members of Council and Town Staff regarding the etiquette, decorum, and practice for Members of Council to attend, speak, and otherwise be engaged with community events.
- Having a documented framework to reference when scheduling Members of Council to attend community events will be beneficial to Staff in the Mayor and Councillors' Office.

#### 3. Background:

Staff and Members of Council have historically relied on an understanding of unwritten practices at the Town when it comes to the protocol around accepting invitations and attending community events.

Staff are aware that at least one other Ontario municipality, being the City of Brampton, has chosen to document the rules of protocol through a [Civic Events Protocol](#) document. At the City of Toronto, the Strategic Protocol & External Relations division in the City Clerk's Office was contacted to identify what processes Toronto has in place for Members of Council attending community events. Staff were advised that Toronto has opted to not have a written policy in order to allow for the evolution of protocol, as well as to have maximum flexibility to respond with judgement on a case-by-case basis. It should be noted that Staff and Council at the City of Toronto benefit from having dedicated professionals within the City Clerk's Office with an expertise in protocol to provide such case-by-case reviews and recommendations.

#### **4. Discussion:**

Having a documented policy to reference for protocol and guidelines will be beneficial so that Staff are aware of the processes to follow when communicating with event organizers and arranging scheduling on behalf of the Mayor and Members of Council. A documented protocol will also be helpful for Members of Council to understand their role when attending a community event. Enactment of the draft Policy is timely given the recent retirement of a long serving Staff member in the Mayor and Councillors' Office who was responsible for scheduling and the associated loss of their in-depth knowledge and understanding of precedent when it comes to scheduling on behalf of the Mayor and Members of Council.

The draft Policy is broken down into sections that align with different event types to provide guidance based on the unique considerations associated how different events operate. One of the most frequent invites sent to Members of Council is to request their attendance at business openings. The protocol for attendance, speaking and scheduling business and other grand openings is covered in Section 5 of the draft Policy which proposes that Staff in the Mayor and Councillors' Office will action the invite based on who the invite is addressed to. For example, if the invite is only addressed and intended for the Mayor, then the Mayor will provide direction as to how the invite is handled. The Mayor could advise that they will attend, designate another Member to attend on their behalf, request the Ward Team also attend, inquire if all Members of Council may be invited, or some permutation of these options. Staff would then action the scheduling for that event based on the direction provided by the Mayor. Where an invite is received by the Mayor and Councillors' Office Staff and is addressed to all of Council, Staff will arrange RSVPs and scheduling on behalf of all Members of Council. If the invite received by the Mayor and Councillors' Office only identifies select Councillors to attend or the invite is unclear as to who is invited to attend, Staff will contact the event organizer to clarify who is invited and based on the information provided, confirm the opportunity for all Members to attend.

Where a Councillor receives an invite directly from an organizer for a business or grand opening, the Councillor may choose to forward the invite to Staff in the Mayor and Councillors' Office who will inquire with the organizer if all Members of Council may attend. If the Member chooses to confirm their attendance directly with the organizer, then the Member will attend the event in an informal capacity and not provide official remarks on behalf of the Town. The proposal that the Member attend in an informal

capacity in such instances is necessary given that their attendance is coordinated without Staff assistance and therefore it is unknown if other Members of Council may be attending and what the relevant speaking and gift presentation protocol would be. Further, providing for informal attendance unless coordinated through the Mayor and Councillors' Office respects the provisions in the Municipal Act that designate the Mayor to represent the municipality at official functions (section 225) and to act as the representative of the municipality both within and outside of the municipality (section 226.1).

An understanding of precedent and past practice at the Town, along with best practices identified after reviewing Brampton's Civic Events Protocol and based on feedback from Staff at the City of Toronto has been used to inform the draft Policy.

## **5. Financial Considerations:**

There are no financial implications associated with Council approving the draft Council Participation at Community Events Protocol and Attendance Guidelines Policy.

## **6. Communication and Public Engagement:**

Subject to Council's approval of the draft Policy, Staff in the Mayor and Councillors' Office will advise external organizations of the relevant policy provisions as needed when accepting invites and arranging scheduling on behalf of the Mayor and Members of Council.

The opportunity for a website form to intake invites from businesses and external organizations for the Mayor and Members of Council to attend community events will be investigated.

All Council approved policies are posted to the [Policy Index](#) available through the Town's website.

## **7. Input from Departments/Sources:**

The Whitby Chamber of Commerce was consulted regarding Council attendance at business openings given the Chamber's involvement with many business openings. The Chamber has indicated that it has no concerns should all Members of Council choose to attend business openings. As such, unless otherwise noted on an invite, when the Chamber forwards business opening invites to the Mayor and Councillors' Office such invites will be handled in accordance with section 5.1.2 of the Policy by Staff so that the invite is forwarded to all Members of Council and scheduling is arranged on behalf of Council.

Input from Staff in Strategic Initiatives regarding the draft Policy was also received and their input incorporated.

## **8. Strategic Priorities:**

Adoption of the draft Policy aligns with Strategic Pillar 4 in the Community Strategic Plan as it will ensure that the Town remains an accountable and responsible government and by prioritizing strong community partnerships.

**9. Attachments:**

Attachment 1 – Draft Council Participation at Community Events Protocol and Attendance Guidelines Policy