

Town of Whitby

Staff Report

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Report Title: 55+ Recreation Advisory Committee Terms of Reference - Revisions

Report to: Committee of the Whole

Date of meeting: September 23, 2024

Report Number: CMS 11-24

Department(s) Responsible:

Community Services Department

Submitted by:

John Romano, Commissioner,
Community Services

**Acknowledged by M. Gaskell,
Chief Administrative Officer**

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1. Recommendation:

1. That Council approve the revised Terms of Reference for the 55+ Recreation Advisory Committee (Attachment 1).

2. Highlights:

- The members of the 55+ Recreation Advisory Committee, in consultation with Staff, reviewed the Committee's Terms of Reference and have made updates to ensure that the role and responsibilities of the Committee are accurately depicted, and that the selection of the Committee's members represent a variety of interests and diversity.
- Changes were discussed over several meetings and were finalized and approved by Committee Members at the June 14, 2024, meeting of the 55+ Recreation Advisory Committee.
- These changes are necessary as the Committee has evolved over time and the current Terms of Reference speaks to past practice versus the current roles and responsibilities of the Committee.
- Four main changes were made including:

- Increasing Committee Members responsibilities to provide input on all 55+ programs rather than a select group of activities, as previously stated;
 - Clarifying that fees are determined by the by Council based on recommendations of the Community Services Department with input from the 55+ Committee through the annual budget process;
 - Clarifying that the 55+ Recreation Clerk supports the administrative tasks of the Committee, not a volunteer Secretary as stated; and,
 - That Committee Members will now be appointed by Council based on recommendations from Committee and Community Services Staff each year, replacing the previous election process.
- These changes ensure that the Terms of Reference are an accurate reflection of the roles and responsibilities of the Committee and that the selection of members serving on the Committee reflect diversity and a broad range of program interests.

3. Background:

The Whitby 55+ Recreation Advisory Committee, in consultation with 55+ Recreation staff, provides advice and perspective regarding the various 55+ Recreation programs offered by the Town of Whitby. The purpose of the Committee is to support all social and recreational programs and to advise the Town of Whitby on issues relating to membership of Whitby 55+ Recreation Services.

Programming for residents age 55+ began with the official opening of the Whitby Seniors Activity Centre in 1976. With the support of the Town, it started with approximately 100 members, 10 volunteers and an appointed Board of Directors. A few years later, services were expanded, and the Seniors' Centre and its programs became an official Recreation Department within the Town.

An Advisory Committee and the Terms of Reference were created based on the activities at the time and was mostly focused on membership and drop-in leisure activities ([ToR-O-03](#)). Since that time, programs and services have expanded and changed to meet the recreational needs of residents aged 55+. Currently, 55+ Recreation provides a variety of classes, sports leagues, health and wellness activities, special events and services to approximately 3,000 members.

The Terms of Reference have been revised with minor changes over the years, including a name change from Whitby Seniors' Services to Whitby 55+ Recreation, in 2020 ([Staff Report CMS 26-19](#)).

The current Committee has reviewed the Terms of Reference and found that some of the terms and processes were out of date and no longer accurately reflected the activities of the Committee and its membership. The Committee feels that these changes will provide a more accurate overview of the activities of the Committee and are in line with many of the other Town of Whitby Committees of Council, with a role that focuses on giving input and advice to staff and Council.

4. Discussion:

In spring of this year, the members of the 55+ Recreation Advisory Committee began a review of the Committee's Terms of Reference and found that some of the wording and actions within were no longer relevant. As a result, the Committee, in consultation with staff, updated the terms to accurately reflect the Committee's current work and operation. These changes were discussed over several months and approved by the Committee at the 55+ Recreation Advisory Committee Meeting held on June 14, 2024.

The four (4) main changes to the Terms are listed below:

1. A change to wording that focuses on the Committee giving general advice on all 55+ Recreation Programming versus on only specifically named programs.

In the previous Terms of Reference, specific programs and events were listed that the Committee could provide advice to (i.e. Drop-in programs, dances, choir, summer student activities). In reality, the Committee provides input and advice on all of the Town's 55+ programs and are not limited to a specific list. This ensures that Committee input is considered by Staff for any 55+ Recreation program. This also ensures that the Terms of Reference stay accurate and relevant since many of the previously listed programs no longer exist, having changed to meet contemporary 55+ programming needs.

Committee Terms of Reference # 2.1 now reads – "The Whitby 55+ Recreation Advisory Committee, in consultation with Community Services Staff provides advice regarding the various 55+ Recreation programs offered by the Town of Whitby."

2. A change to wording that clarifies that the establishment of 55+ program fees is done through the Staff budget process and approved by Council with the input of the 55+ committee.

Although wording in the Terms of Reference refers to the committee reviewing departmental related expenditures and revenue, this practice stopped years ago when Committee members determined that this was the role of Community and Financial Services staff. A review of program fees is a role the Committee does undertake each year through the budget process. Community Services Staff regularly consult the Committee's input on 55+ program fees.

Committee Terms of Reference # 3.1 now reads - "Fees for 55+ programs will be developed by the Community Services Department with input from the 55+ Committee".

3. Replacing the role of the Committee Secretary with Community Services Staff

The Secretary position within the Committee ceased to exist several years ago when new internal software and accessible document requirements made scribing minutes a challenge for volunteers. The Secretary would type up the minutes and a staff person would have to retype them. The Committee agreed that it was more efficient for staff to take minutes, distribute agendas and circulate correspondence. Currently the 55+ Recreation Clerk sits on the Committee at each meeting, takes minutes and ensures agenda and correspondence distribution. Therefore, the 55+ Recreation Clerk was added to the composition of the Committee.

Committee Terms of Reference #4.1 now reads – “The Committee shall consist of thirteen members; 10 voting members plus three non-voting members one being a member of Council appointed by the Mayor, another being the Manager of 55+ Recreation Services, and the other being the 55+ Recreation Clerk.”

4. Appointment of Members Instead of Elections

The current practice of election of Committee Members was discussed, and it was agreed that this type of approach to Committee Membership was more relevant to past practices when the Centre had one location, a Board of Directors, and mostly focused on Drop-In Leisure activities. At this time, the membership was a smaller, cohesive group that ran most of the activities.

Now, with approximately 3,000 members participating in hundreds of activities at multiple locations, it is a challenge for people to get to know everyone and feel confident to vote for candidates for the Committee. Members also expressed that seeing that the Committee is advisory in nature versus being a Board of Directors, that the election process was no longer in the Committee’s best interest and deterred people from volunteering.

Current Committee members agreed that appointments would be a better approach, which would be completed through an annual application and interview process conducted by the Committee in partnership with Staff. This will encourage members to come forward who are interested in volunteering and giving their input to 55+ programs. The Committee members also felt it was important to look for Committee Members who represent participation across a variety of programs and bring varying diverse perspectives.

Terms of Reference #9.1 now reads - “Appointments to the Committee will be recommended annually to Council through a fair interview process and determined by the Chair, Vice-Chair and Manager of 55+ Recreation with further approval by the Director of Recreation. This is to ensure that the member understands the role and responsibilities of the Committee and to ensure a broad spectrum of interests and diversity.”

Council approval will still be required as stated in the Terms of Reference #9.4 - “The newly appointed Committee will take office as of the first Committee

meeting in January of each year, subject to Council approving and appointing them prior to that date.”

5. Financial Considerations:

There is no impact on the budget with the implementation of these changes.

6. Communication and Public Engagement:

The changes to the Terms of Reference were finalized and passed by the 55+ Recreation Advisory Committee at their June 14, 2024, meeting and included with the June minutes. Once approved, the new Terms of Reference will be posted online at Whitby.ca/55plus and on the 55+ Committee bulletin board at the 55+ Recreation Centre.

7. Input from Departments/Sources:

The changes to the Terms of Reference were reviewed by the Legislative Services/Clerks Department who had no concerns.

8. Strategic Priorities:

The changes to the 55+ Recreation Advisory Committee Terms of Reference connect to the Community Strategic Plan through the following pillars:

- **Pillar 1 - Whitby’s Neighbourhoods: Safe, Healthy & Inclusive** – the 55+ Recreation Advisory Committee provides advice and perspective regarding the various 55+ Recreation programs offered by the Town of Whitby ensuring that adults age 55+ remain active, engaged and connected.
- **Pillar 4 – Whitby’s Government: Accountable & Responsive** - A review and accurate revision of the Committee’s Terms of Reference ensures that the Committee and the Town remain accountable and responsive to the needs of the 55+ community.

9. Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Draft Whitby 55+ Recreation Advisory Committee Terms of Reference (updated June 14, 2024)