



## Clerks Services Staff Report

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Report Number: C28-2023  
Report Title: Draft 2024 Council Meeting Schedule  
Author: Alex Smyth, Deputy Clerk  
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Consent Item: No  
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Reviewed By: Jeff Smith, Director of Corporate Services/Clerk  
Final Review: Senior Management Team

### Recommendation:

That the Council of the Township of Woolwich, considering Report C28-2023 respecting Draft 2024 Council Meeting Schedule:

1. Approve the draft 2024 Council Meeting Schedule as attached to this report; and
2. Direct staff to continue to use the same method of drafting council meeting schedules as the 2024 draft for the term of Council.

### Background:

At the June 6, 2023 Council Meeting, Council directed staff to prepare a revised Council meeting schedule for August to December, 2023 using the preferred method as outlined in report C24-2023. Council requested a trial period to determine if the staff preferred method of scheduling one rotation per month, with no break week in between will work for Council, the public, and staff for the duration of the term.

A revised schedule was implemented on August 1, 2023 and at the October 17, 2023 Council meeting staff requested feedback from Council on the trial period. Discussion occurred and resulted in direction to staff to draft a 2024 schedule with a pattern of one rotation (two meetings) per month, with a break week in between the Committee of the Whole meeting and the Council meeting.

## **Comments:**

### **Business Continuity**

In the past, staff have purposely tried to schedule reports and matters on Committee of the Whole meetings that might require more thought so as to give Council the opportunity to have time to think on the decisions made at Committee of the Whole prior to making final decisions at Council. With this new method of scheduling meetings, staff caution Council that staff may have less control over the planning of contentious or emergent items. These items may need to go directly to Council meetings, rather than Committee of the Whole meetings, to ensure business continuity.

### **2024 Regional Council Schedule**

At the October 17 Council meeting, feedback was received to align Woolwich's schedule with the Regional schedule as much as possible. Staff drafted the attached draft for Woolwich Council with Regional schedule as a guide. Almost all meeting weeks were able to be aligned.

### **Special Council Meetings**

Two types of Special Council meetings are utilized in the attached draft schedule. The first is a scheduled Special Council meeting. This type of Council meeting is exactly like a regularly scheduled Council meeting except that it operates without a Committee of the Whole meeting having taken place. These are used rarely and for unique circumstances. Staff are proposing to utilize one at the end of January, due to the 4 budget deliberation meetings scheduled in the second and third weeks of the month. The second is proposed for the end of July after the summer break of Council.

The second type of Special Council meeting utilized is the Special Council – Planning meeting. This category of Special Council meeting was created in response to the Bill 109 legislation which tightened the timelines to process planning applications. Planning staff have noted that to meet the new timelines, there cannot be more than a one week break between meetings. Due to the nature of the method of scheduling for this draft, there were fewer large gaps between meetings therefore only four of these types of Special Council – Planning meetings were necessary.

There is one other type of Special Council meeting that cannot be pre-scheduled and reflected in the draft schedule. These types of meetings are scheduled as-needed after a Committee of the Whole meeting to ensure business efficiency and to ratify decisions made at the Committee of the Whole meeting. These are used for urgent matters that cannot wait until the next meeting of Council for a decision to be made. Appropriate notice is given to the public regarding these meetings as is outlined in the Township's Procedural By-law.

## **Televised Meetings**

Each year, Rogers TV selects one meeting per quarter to Televis. In order to coordinate with all the other municipalities in the Region, Rogers TV typically coordinates their broadcast schedule in the last quarter of the year. Once Council approves a 2024 schedule, staff will provide that to Rogers TV. Once Rogers TV has selected the broadcast dates for Woolwich, staff will draft an informational memo with the broadcast dates

## **Other Guiding Parameters Used to Draft the Schedule**

At the June 6, 2023 Council meeting, Council directed staff to avoid scheduling meetings after holiday weekends and on commercial holidays as much as possible. Specifically, March Break and the AMO conference were intentionally avoided.

In the attached draft, staff have not followed the desired pattern to avoid scheduling Council meetings after the February and May long weekends.

## **Direction for the Term of Council**

Staff are also seeking Council's direction for the term of Council and whether this method is the preferred method to utilize for the remainder of the term, and whether to continue using the other guiding parameters as mentioned above.

## **Interdepartmental Impacts:**

All departments have had the opportunity to review the draft schedule and have no concerns with business continuity, provided that Special Council meetings may be scheduled immediately following a Committee of the Whole meeting to ensure projects with urgent deadlines are approved in a timely manner.

The proposed draft was circulated to Planning staff and Engineering staff who have confirmed that planning applications and engineering projects wouldn't be negatively impacted.

During the trial period, the reduced meetings have saved staff and Council's time. So far, there haven't been concerns with scheduling open business, though meetings have been running longer. With fewer meetings, scheduling closed session meetings has been more difficult. This may be less of a concern going forward as many of the education sessions to inform the new Council's orientation are complete, however staff may need to schedule closed meetings at 5:30 or plan to move back into closed session at the end of an open meeting to finish closed business.

## **Financial Impacts:**

None.

## **Strategic Plan Impacts:**

This report and draft Council meeting schedule support the Strategic Plan focus Area of Best Managed and Governed Municipality as they seek to ensure efficiency in meetings of Council by keeping the number of meetings reduced while ensuring the business of the corporation continues efficiently as well.

## **Conclusion:**

Staff recommend that Council approve the draft 2024 Council meeting schedule attached to this report and direct staff to implement the same method of schedule meetings for the term of Council.

## **Attachments:**

1. Township of Woolwich Draft 2024 Council Meeting Schedule
2. Region of Waterloo Approved 2024 Council Meeting Schedule