



## Clerks Services Staff Report

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Report Title: 2025 Council Meeting Schedule  
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Reviewed By: Alex Smyth, Deputy Clerk  
Final Review: Senior Management Team

### **Recommendation:**

That the Council of the Township of Woolwich, considering Report C22-2024 respecting the 2025 Council Meeting Schedule, approve the draft 2025 Council Meeting Schedule as attached to this report.

### **Background:**

In November of 2023, Council approved the 2024 Council Meeting Schedule, which included adopting the “two meetings per month with break week between” format and the preference to align Woolwich meetings with the Region of Waterloo’s meeting schedule. The 2024 Council Meeting Schedule also incorporated planning application deadlines, as a result of Bill 109, (More Homes for Everyone Act), which requires no more than one week between meetings of Council.

The 2024 Budget process introduced two full-day and two evening Special Council – Budget Meetings, rather than the past format of evenings only. In April, staff brought forward a 2024 Budget Feedback Report, which included the recommendation to continue the two full days and two evenings, plus a Council meeting in the week between to allow for business continuity.

The 2025 draft Budget Schedule was presented to Council as part of the 2025 Budget Parameters report at the September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Committee of the Whole meeting.

## **Comments:**

### **Budget Meetings**

Based on Council and staff feedback, the change to full-day budget sessions was a positive change and staff are recommending that the schedule continue to include them. The Senior Management Team reviewed the 2024 Budget schedule and the timing for departmental budget presentations, delegations, as well as timing of deliberations, and have recommended that the 2025 Budget schedule consist of two full day sessions, a break week (with Special Council meeting) followed by a week with one evening and one full day session.

This proposed schedule allows for full departmental operating and capital presentations over the first two full-day sessions, an evening for any items that staff need to bring forward, as well as delegates from the community, and a final full day session dedicated to deliberation. The proposed schedule would offer the 2025 Budget for final approval as early as the February 18<sup>th</sup> Council meeting.

### **Council Meetings**

The meeting schedule has seen changes the past few years, including the return to Tuesday meetings, from back-to-back to break-week timing, and the introduction of scheduled Special Council – Planning meetings to accommodate the Planning Act deadlines implemented by Bill 109, (More Homes for Everyone Act). Staff are recommending the continuance of the twice monthly, with break week, format and have included any Special Council – Planning meetings that may be required. A Special Council - Planning meeting can be cancelled if there are no planning matters planned for that agenda.

Other factors considered in creating the 2025 schedule include statutory holidays and days of observance, municipal-related conferences such as the AMO Conference, March Break, and the Region of Waterloo Council and Standing Committees meeting schedule. Generally, the meeting schedule is drafted to avoid having a meeting of Council the day after a statutory holiday.

As presented in the Budget Parameters report, the 2025 draft schedule in February includes a Council meeting on February 18<sup>th</sup> which aligns with the break-week format, but has a meeting scheduled the day after a holiday. Should Council wish to avoid the post-holiday meeting, the break week can be eliminated, and the Council meeting can be moved to February 11<sup>th</sup>. If a meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> is preferred, a Special Council – Planning meeting would need to be added for February 25<sup>th</sup>.

### **2025 Regional Council Schedule**

In 2023, Council expressed a desire to align Woolwich's schedule with the Regional schedule as much as possible. Staff have created the attached draft schedule for

Woolwich Council with the 2025 Regional schedule as a guide. Most meetings align with the Region and none of the meetings overlap or conflict.

### **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. The draft schedule includes one Special Council meeting for the budget break week in January and one in July to allow for business continuity.

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, (More Homes for Everyone Act) legislation which tightened the timelines to process planning applications. Planning staff have noted that to meet the new timelines and to avoid refunding applicants by missing deadlines, there cannot be more than a one week break between meetings. Staff are proposing two Special Council - Planning meetings during July, as well as one in April, to allow for any matters subject to Planning Act timelines.

An additional type of Special Council meeting exists that cannot be pre-scheduled and reflected in the draft schedule. These types of meetings are scheduled as needed for emergencies or urgent items 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 outlined in the Township's Procedural By-law.

### **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.

Full-day budget meetings allow for the greatest availability of staff across all departments, and the continued use of Zoom provides opportunities for both staff and Council to participate virtually for any meeting of Council if needed.

### **Financial Impacts:**

None.

## **Community Strategic Plan Impacts:**

### **Transparency**

The 2025 Draft Schedule and structure of Council meetings assist in the Township's commitment to maintaining open communication with residents so that decision-making processes are transparent, that residents have access to relevant information regarding municipal decisions and helps build and maintain an environment of trust and openness.

### **Conclusion:**

Council has been provided with a proposed 2025 meeting schedule and Council may amend any of the factors considered in crafting this schedule. Staff recommends that Council approve the schedule attached to this report.

### **Attachments:**

1. Township of Woolwich Draft 2025 Council Meeting Schedule
2. Region of Waterloo Approved 2025 Council Meeting Schedule