



Corporate Services Staff Report

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Report Title: Municipal Digital Sign Advertising Policy
Author: Rae Ann Bauman, Executive Officer
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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 C30-2024 Municipal Digital Sign Advertising Policy:

1. Adopt the Municipal Digital Sign Advertising Policy; and
2. Approve the new fees as set out in attachment 2.

Background:

When the Municipal Signage Policy was implemented by the Council of the day in 2015, it began discussions around the installation of a Municipal Digital Sign that could be used for community messaging. The installation of this digital sign was in conjunction with the Industrial Drive reconstruction project, currently all messaging is from the Township, but our intent is to open this up to the community.

Comments:

Staff drafted the Municipal Digital Sign Advertising Policy to ensure that signage provides residents, ratepayers and visitors with accurate and appropriate information from the Township, and its businesses and non-profit organizations. The policy facilitates effective digital communication tools for important community messaging while ensuring transparent, honest and clear channels of communication.

The policy defines the expectations regarding the appropriate use of the municipal digital sign to ensure that advertising does not include:

- Promotion of a political, factional or religious viewpoint;
- False, misleading or deceptive messages;
- Messages expressing discriminating viewpoints pursuant to the Ontario Human Rights Code;
- Personal requests such as birthdays, engagements, weddings, anniversaries, etc.;
- Events and functions open only to members of an organization;
- References to the sale or consumption of alcohol or other drugs;
- References to gambling or lotteries;
- Profane language or content, personal attacks, sexual content;
- Information that may compromise the safety and security of the public; and
- Any other content that is considered inappropriate in the opinion of the Township.

As messages conveyed to the public by the Township act as a representation of the municipality, these limitations ensure that the sign is operated in a manner that represents Woolwich positively.

Interdepartmental Impacts:

With the implementation of this policy, it will require Corporate Services staff to coordinate both the advertisement content and the receipt of payment.

Other departments will be able to use the municipal digital sign to raise awareness of municipal events, notices, programs and services.

Financial Impacts:

The fees for the use of the sign set out in attachment 2 have been established to cover the cost of operating the sign. Fees being recommended were set by reviewing what local community groups currently pay for advertising, reviewing other municipalities' fees and considering the cost to maintain the sign. Once the program has been established the intent is for the advertising revenue generated will provide a source of funding for the end-of-life replacement of this sign at no additional cost to the taxpayer. This ensures that the Township is provided the use of the sign for its own purposes while also minimizing expenses incurred on ratepayers in future years relative to the asset.

The policy provides a discounted fee - dependant on length of the advertising contract - and exempts fees for:

- Township messaging
- Joint messaging with other nearby municipalities
- Messages from the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival

Council or anyone delegated authority to waive fees, may choose to waive fees, with funding coming from Council's Fees and Charges Waiver account.

Community Strategic Plan Impacts:

This Municipal Digital Sign supports our Commitment to Community Connection as it provides residents and visitors with a visual tool that informs them of ways that they can socially connect with each other. Further it establishes an innovative customer service opportunity that furthers our commitment to increasing communication to our community.

Conclusion:

The purpose of the digital sign is intended to promote the municipality's commitment to increasing communication to the public, while generating revenue. With the adoption of a policy relative to the use of the municipal digital sign, our intent is to offset the expense of the renewal of the asset while providing a cost neutral platform that promotes appropriate and effective communication for the Township, its businesses and non-profit organizations.

Attachments:

1. Draft Municipal Digital Sign Advertising Policy
2. Draft Fees and Charges