

REPORT

Legislative Services

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: November 18, 2024

From: Hanieh Berg
Corporate Officer
File: 05.1035.10
Item #: [Report Number]

Subject: **Proposed 2025 Schedule of Council Meetings and Proposed Updates to Delegation Protocol and Notice of Motion Process Policy**

RECOMMENDATION

1. **THAT** the 2025 Council Meeting Schedule, included as Attachment 3 to the staff report titled “Proposed 2025 Schedule of Council Meetings and Proposed Updates to Delegation Protocol and Notice of Motion Process Policy”, dated November 18, 2024 from the Corporate Officer, be approved;
 2. **THAT** the September 15, 2025 Regular Council meeting be held at the Queensborough Community Centre;
 3. **THAT** the proposed protocol for delegations, as detailed in the staff report titled “Proposed 2025 Schedule of Council Meetings and Proposed Updates to Delegation Protocol and Notice of Motion Process Policy”, dated November 18, 2024 from the Corporate Officer, be approved;
 4. **THAT** Council Procedure Bylaw No. 6910, 2004, Amendment Bylaw No. 8493, 2024 be considered for first, second, and third readings; and
 5. **THAT** the revised Notice of Motion Process Policy, included as Attachment 6 to the staff report titled “Proposed 2025 Schedule of Council Meetings and Proposed Updates to Delegation Protocol and Notice of Motion Process Policy”, dated November 18, 2024 from the Corporate Officer, be approved.
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PURPOSE

To request approval of the 2025 Schedule of Council Meetings, a new order of proceedings for Regular Council meetings and process for bylaw readings, and updated Notice of Motion Process Policy.

BACKGROUND

In accordance with the *Community Charter* and the *Council Procedure Bylaw* No. 6910, Council must provide advance public notice of Council meetings and, at least once per year, publish the availability of the Council meeting schedule. The meeting schedule lists all Regular Council and Regular Council for Workshop meetings for the year. A new meeting schedule is recommended, including a change to the Regular (Closed) Council meeting start time; however no change to the Regular Council meeting start time is proposed.

Presentations and delegations are heard at each Regular Council meeting. Staff are proposing a new order of proceedings for presentations and delegations to Council to take effect in January 2025. Also, staff propose a new procedure for bylaws.

In addition, in accordance with Section 12.2 of the Notice of Motion Process Policy, staff are reporting back on Section 12 of the Policy and recommend that the Policy be updated to improve efficiencies.

DISCUSSION

Regular Council meetings are scheduled for each calendar year to provide certainty on dates, times, and locations. All Regular Council meetings are open to the public and streamed live on the City’s website. In 2023, staff explored various avenues to enable Council and staff to effectively work on a variety of strategic priorities, separate from Regular Council meetings. This resulted in the introduction of regularly scheduled Workshop meetings. Workshop meetings offer Council and staff an opportunity to delve into key issues the City is facing and guide staff in the advancement of departmental work plans in alignment with the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. It should be noted that Workshop meetings are Regular Council meetings, held for the purposes of Workshop; although they are less formal than Regular Council meetings, Council is seated in a legislative capacity and has the same authority with respect to the consideration of matters brought before them in Workshop as they do during a Regular meeting.

Council was recently surveyed in regard to the current meeting schedule to determine how the meeting cycle is serving the Mayor and Councillors. The survey sought Council’s feedback on meeting times, frequency, order of proceedings and delegation protocol. Based on the survey results, staff are proposing four options for Council’s consideration of the 2025 Council meeting schedule.

Council Meeting Schedule

Option 1 – Status Quo

Currently, Council meets every Monday, except when a statutory holiday is observed. Generally, Regular Council and Workshop meetings are held on the first and third Monday of each month and standalone Workshop meetings are held on the second and fourth Monday of each month. In an effort to prevent back to back Regular Council meetings, some meeting days have been adjusted and do not follow the general meeting schedule; also, where there is a fifth Monday in a month, no meeting has been scheduled.

The 2025 Schedule of Council meetings reflective of Council’s current meeting cycle is included as Attachment 1. A summary of the Option 1, including its benefits and challenges is provided below:

| Summary | Benefits | Challenges |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 4 meeting days each month (10 meetings each month) ▪ 3 meetings every other Monday (Closed @ 1 pm, Workshop @ 3 pm, and Regular @ 6 pm) ▪ 2 meetings every other Monday (Closed @ 1 pm and Workshop @ 3 pm) ▪ No meetings when statutory holiday observed ▪ Summer and winter meeting breaks observed ▪ No meetings scheduled during LMLGA, UBCM or FCM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Familiar cycle for Council, staff, and the public ▪ Many opportunities to present items for Council-consideration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demand on Council schedule high ▪ No break between meeting Mondays, except when a statutory holiday is observed ▪ Long meeting days every other Monday ▪ Administratively challenging for staff to manage the number of agendas and staff reports that are simultaneously underway |

Option 2 – Council Meetings Only

In addition to their duties as members of Council, the majority of Council members work full time; this option aims to improve the demand on Council’s time and attendance at City Hall for meetings by eliminating Workshop meetings. It offers a break between regularly scheduled Council meetings and is consistent with the meeting cycle of most other municipalities in the lower mainland. Workshop meetings can be called on an ad hoc basis by way of Special Council meeting. Attachment 2 reflects this option and a summary of the Option 2, including its benefits and challenges is provided below:

| Summary | Benefits | Challenges |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2 meeting days each month (4 meetings each month) ▪ 2 meetings on first and third Monday of each month (Closed @ 3 pm and Regular @ 6 pm) ▪ No meetings on second and fourth Monday of each month ▪ No meetings when statutory holiday observed ▪ Summer and winter meeting breaks observed ▪ No meetings scheduled during LMLGA, UBCM or FCM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less demand on Council's time ▪ Alleviate administrative load for report drafting and overall agenda production | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less opportunities to present items for Council-consideration ▪ Longer meeting days to consider all matters presented for Council-consideration ▪ Potential for frequent Special Council meetings to address urgent/unforeseen matters and/or need for additional time before Council ▪ No scheduled avenue to delve into strategic plan priorities, land use and development objectives, and budget, infrastructure and asset management |

Option 3 – Council Meetings & Workshops (alternate Mondays) *Recommended*

This option is similar to the current meeting cycle as Council and Workshop meetings are regularly scheduled; however, Workshop meetings are eliminated on Regular Council days only, meaning that there are two less Workshop meetings each month. Staff recommend Option 3 as it offers a balance between efficiently handling official City business while continuing to provide a forum where Council and staff can effectively work on a variety of strategic priorities. The recommended meeting schedule is provided as Attachment 3 and a summary of this option and its benefits and challenges is provided below:

| Summary | Benefits | Challenges |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 4 meeting days each month (8 meetings each month) ▪ 2 meetings on first and third Monday (Closed @ 3 pm and Regular @ 6 pm) ▪ 2 meetings on second and fourth Monday (Closed @ 1 pm and Workshop @ 3 pm) ▪ No meetings when statutory holiday observed ▪ Summer and winter meeting breaks observed ▪ No meetings scheduled during LMLGA, UBCM or FCM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shorter meeting days ▪ Distinct two-week cycle established between Regular and Workshop meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demand on Council schedule high ▪ Two less opportunities to present items for Workshop |

Option 4 – Council Meetings & Workshops (same Mondays)

This option is a combination of all the previous options presented; it reduces the number of meeting days by eliminating standalone Workshop days only, however Workshops are still scheduled on Regular meeting days.

| Summary | Benefits | Challenges |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2 meeting days each month (6 meetings each month) ▪ 3 meetings on first and third Monday (Closed @ 1 pm, Workshop @ 3 pm, and Regular @ 6 pm) ▪ No meetings on second and fourth Monday of each month ▪ No meetings when statutory holiday observed ▪ Summer and winter meeting breaks observed ▪ No meetings scheduled during LMLGA, UBCM or FCM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less demand on Council schedule ▪ Distinct two-week cycle established for Regular and Workshop meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Longer meeting days ▪ Two less opportunities to present items for Workshop |

In each of the aforementioned options and in keeping with the City’s past practice, it is recommended that the first Regular Council meeting of September be held in Queensborough. In accordance with *Council Procedure Bylaw* No. 6910, a resolution is required to hold a Council meeting outside City Hall. Moreover, it should be noted that a Special Council meeting can be called with 24 hours’ notice should any unusual or urgent

circumstances arise outside of the usual schedule. Council may also make adjustments to the meeting schedule through the year as circumstances may necessitate.

Order of Proceedings

Presentations & Delegations

New Westminster City Council has a history of allowing people to appear and share their views directly with Council members while they are seated in a decision-making capacity. In accordance with the *Council Procedure Bylaw No. 6910*, up to 10 members of the public may delegate at each Regular Council meeting, except when a Public Hearing is scheduled on the same evening. Generally, public delegations are open with regard to subject matter; however, delegations are not permitted on some land use applications in accordance with the *Local Government Act* and *Council Procedure Bylaw No. 6910*.

Regular Council meetings are scheduled for 6 pm, with presentations and delegations heard at 7 pm. The proceedings of Regular Council meetings are “paused” at 7 pm in order to hear from the public, regardless of how far along Council has reached on the agenda. Moreover, there are often items on the Consent Agenda that are removed as a delegation has registered to speak on the matter and it is prudent of Council to hear from the delegation before its consideration of the matter. The Consent Agenda is a common procedural tool utilized to simplify the approval of various routine administrative matters and receive items for information in one motion. The procedure saves valuable meeting time and allows Council to focus primarily on the substantive topics that require more discussion. In an effort to further realize these efficiencies, it is proposed that presentations and delegations be brought forward on the order of proceedings and be heard at 6 pm. A minor amendment to *Council Procedure Bylaw No. 6910* is required to effect this proposed change.

Bylaws

Staff recommendations are presently drafted to read that a bylaw be *considered* for readings; the bylaw is then read separately following Council’s consideration of the accompanying staff report. In essence, the bylaw is on the agenda twice: first for its consideration and second for its readings. To further increase efficiencies during Council meetings, it is proposed that bylaws for first, second, and/or third readings be considered as part of Council’s consideration of the related staff report, i.e., under the Consent Agenda header or Items Removed from the Consent Agenda header. There is no need for Council to *consider* giving a bylaw a reading, it can just give it the reading. It is worthwhile to note that the proposed new process for bylaw readings is legislatively correct; a local government bylaw must receive three readings prior to proceeding to adoption. Each reading is passed by resolution; a change to the Council Procedure bylaw is in order to allow that Council may give up to three readings in one resolution; for instance, the following sample recommendation would be presented for Council consideration: *THAT Bylaw 1234 be introduced and given first, second, and third readings*. The recommendation is definitive and uses legislatively appropriate language. Bylaws for adoption would continue to be considered separately from the Consent Agenda; however any number of bylaws may be combined for the purposes of adoption in one motion.

In addition to the proposed changes to the order of proceedings, the proposed Council Procedure bylaw amendment (Attachment 5) captures other miscellaneous matters, including the distribution of Council agenda material and the designation of the acting Mayor to preside over Workshop meetings.

Notice of Motion Process Policy

The Notice of Motion Process Policy was approved by Council at its March 13, 2023 Regular Council meeting. Part 12 of the Policy speaks to the maximum number of Notices of Motion that can be presented at each Regular Council meeting and includes for the review of this clause after one year.

Since the implementation of the updated policy, a total of 75 Notices of Motion have been presented before Council. These Notices have been brought forward over the course of 33 Regular Council meetings and represent approximately 26% of all items considered by Council.

In accordance with Part 12 of the Policy, the Corporate Officer must review each Notice of Motion and consider (i) its compliance with the City’s *Code of Conduct Bylaw* No. 8408 and Respectful Workplace and Human Rights Policy, (ii) its conformity to the law, (iii) its accuracy of legislative references, (iv) it, in light of any applicable existing bylaws and policies, and (v) in light of prior Council dealings with the subject matter.

The current process is labour intensive. It is estimated that, on average, each Notice of Motion requires two to three hours of dedicated staff time to carry out due diligence prior to placing it on an agenda.

To align the implementation of the Notices of Motion against existing staff resources, staff has created a table with options. Staff propose revising the Policy to limit the number of Notices of Motion permitted to be added to each Regular Council agenda as well as introducing an annual maximum number of Notices of Motion per member of Council. Option D is recommended as it does not require a service enhancement.

| | Option A <i>Status Quo</i> | Option B | Option C | Option D <i>Recommended</i> |
|--|-------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------------------------|
| Maximum # of NOM per meeting | 7 | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| Maximum NOM per year per member of Council | No maximum | 15 | 10 | 5 |
| Total NOM in year if each member of Council utilizes their maximum | 154* | 105 | 70 | 35 |
| Additional Staffing | 1 FTE | .5 FTE | .25 FTE | 0 |

*there are 22 Regular Council meetings scheduled for 2025

In keeping with the current process, the Notice of Motion would be placed on the agenda based on the order of the date they are received by the Corporate Officer. Should Council choose Option B, C or D, once the maximum number of Notices of Motion has been reached for any given Regular Council agenda, the Corporate Officer will advise the member of Council who submitted the Notice of Motion that it will be added to the agenda of the next available Regular Council meeting. The staff recommended Option D approach continues to afford the Mayor and each Councillor an opportunity to bring matters before Council while ensuring the sustainable management of Notices of Motion, which does not impact the operating budget by requiring additional staff resources. Moreover, in accordance with the section 12 (3) of Council Procedure bylaw, an item may be added on a Regular Council agenda with a majority vote of Council.

A number of miscellaneous changes are also proposed to the Policy such as the renumbering of clauses and reassigning responsibilities of a legal nature to the City Solicitor. The proposed revised Policy is included as Attachment 6.

NEXT STEPS

Subject to Council-approval, the 2025 Council Meeting Schedule will be published in accordance with the *Community Charter*. It is anticipated that the statutory notice would proceed in accordance with *Public Notice Bylaw No. 8417* and bylaw adoption could be considered at the December 2, 2024 Regular Council meeting. The proposed bylaw amendments would not take effect until January 1, 2025.

CONCLUSION

This report provides options for the 2025 Council meeting schedule and recommends updates to the Council Procedure bylaw to realize efficiencies in meeting proceedings, and address minor miscellaneous changes. An updated Notice of Motion policy further supports meeting and administrative efficiencies. The proposed changes serve to ensure that the principles of efficiency, effectiveness and access to Council remain at the forefront of the City's legislative services.

OPTIONS

1. THAT the 2025 Council Meeting Schedule, as included as Attachment 3 to the staff report titled "Proposed 2025 Schedule of Council Meetings and Proposed Updates to Delegation Protocol and Notice of Motion Process Policy", dated November 18, 2024 from the Corporate Officer, be approved;
2. THAT the September 15, 2025 Regular Council meeting be held at the Queensborough Community Centre;
3. THAT the proposed protocol for delegations, as detailed in the staff report titled "Proposed 2025 Schedule of Council Meetings and Proposed Updates to Delegation Protocol and Notice of Motion Process Policy", dated November 18, 2024 from the Corporate Officer, be approved;
4. THAT Council Procedure Bylaw No. 6910, 2004, Amendment Bylaw No. 8493, 2024 be considered for first, second, and third readings; and

- 5. THAT the revised Notice of Motion Process Policy, included as Attachment 5 to the staff report titled “Proposed 2025 Schedule of Council Meetings and Proposed Updates to Delegation Protocol and Notice of Motion Process Policy”, dated November 18, 2024 from the Corporate Officer, be approved.
- 6. THAT Council provide staff with alternate direction.

Options 1 through 5 are recommended.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Option 1 – 2025 Council Meeting Schedule (Status Quo)
- Attachment 2 – Option 2 – 2025 Council Meeting Schedule (Council Meetings Only)
- Attachment 3 – Option 3 – 2025 Council Meeting Schedule (Council & Workshop – alternate Monday) **Recommended**
- Attachment 4 – Option 4 – 2025 Council Meeting Schedule (Council & Workshop – same Monday)
- Attachment 5 – Council Procedure Bylaw No. 6910, 2004, Amendment Bylaw No. 8493, 2024
- Attachment 6 – Revised Notice of Motion Process Policy

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:
Hanieh Berg, Corporate Officer

This report was reviewed by:
SMT

This report was approved by:
Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer