



The Corporation of the Municipality of Arran-Elderslie

Staff Report

Council Meeting Date: October 15, 2024

Subject: SRCLK.2024.14 – Electoral System – Community Engagement Strategy

Report from: Emily Dance, Chief Administrative Officer

Christine Fraser-McDonald, Clerk

Appendices: None

Recommendation

Be It Resolved that Council hereby,

1. Receives Report SRCLK.2024.14 – Electoral System – Community Engagement Strategy; and
2. Approves the proposal from Clerks on Call for an Electoral System – Community Engagement Strategy in the amount of \$5,850.00 plus HST, mileage and disbursement costs incurred to be funded from Account 01-1020-4300 – Contracted Services; and
3. That as per By-law 59-09 – Procurement Policy, Section 4.7 (b) that the calling of a Request for Quotation be waived as the goods and services are available from only one source.

Report Summary

The intent of this report is to provide Council with information on the Community Engagement Strategy regarding a Ward vs At-Large electoral system.

Background

At the September 25, 2024 Council meeting, Council passed the following resolution:

Moved by: Councillor Steinacker

Seconded by: Deputy Mayor Shaw

Be It Resolved that Council hereby,

1. Directs staff to proceed with seeking input from the community on their support for electing Councillors in a ward-based system or electing Councillors through an at-large system;
2. That a public survey be created seeking community input; and
3. That staff to bring a recommendation report and if applicable implementing bylaw to Council in Q2 outlining community feedback received in 2024.

Carried

The CAO, Clerk and Deputy Clerk met to consider a strategy to move forward with Council's direction. It was determined that it would be appropriate for staff to remain at arm's length from the engagement process to ensure that the information was provided in a neutral and unbiased fashion. Staff capacity was also considered, and it was concluded that staff would not have the capacity to prepare and implement such a strategy due to current demands on staff time.

Staff consulted a firm called "Clerks on Call" to develop a third-party community engagement strategy regarding a Ward vs At Large Electoral System.

Analysis

Clerks on Call is a consulting firm made up of two former Clerks with over 30 years of municipal experience holding various positions including as a CAO, elected official and as a Past President of Association of Municipal Clerk's and Treasurers of Ontario.

Clerks on Call provided a proposal to ensure that residents and elected officials are provided with the information needed to evaluate both the ward and at-large electoral systems.

Clerks on Call have proposed the following framework to execute the project:

- To ensure that the project is conducted in an independent manner, Clerks on Call will manage the project at arm's-length from staff and elected officials.
- Meet with Council Members to discuss the public engagement strategy and conduct individual interviews with the Mayor and Members of Council to obtain their perspectives on potential electoral system reform.
- Use paper surveys and an in-person facilitated open house, along with using online survey tools for community engagement.
- Prepare the survey document and online survey and provide to the Municipality for distribution.
- Attend and facilitate an in-person open house to obtain input from the public.
- Compile and analyze survey results.

- Prepare and present a report to Council to report the survey results as well as providing context for the public's 'preferred' electoral system for the upcoming Council term.

The anticipated time for completed of the community engagement and a subsequent report to Council is spring of 2025, which would provide enough time for Council to provide further direction to the Clerk's department on how to proceed for the 2026 Municipal Election.

Link to Strategic/Master Plan

6.5 Engaging People and Partnerships

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding/Link to Procurement Policy

The cost of this proposal is:

- Community Engagement Strategy Project Fee **\$5,850.00**
- Mileage and disbursements are additional costs

This would be financed from Account 01-1020-4300 – Contracted Services.

Approved by: Emily Dance, Chief Administrative Officer