



## Committee of the Whole Report For the Meeting of June 20, 2024

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**To:** Committee of the Whole  
**From:** Curt Kingsley, City Clerk  
**Subject:** Council Meetings Calendar

**Date:** June 5, 2024

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### RECOMMENDATION

That Council maintain the Council meeting schedule and amend City Policy to increase the maximum number of Requests to Address Council spots from six (6) to fifteen (15) when a public hearing is not scheduled.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the March 14, 2024, Committee of the Whole meeting, Council passed a motion for staff to report back on how evening Council meeting time, when not used for statutory public hearings, could be repurposed for enhanced public engagement.

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information on the frequency of public hearings in some B.C. municipalities and to outline options for scheduled public hearing time.

Staff conducted a jurisdictional scan of eight B.C. municipalities, and all have had a reduction in public hearings since 2021. How this reduction will impact these municipalities and their meeting schedules and agendas is still unclear, as most Councils also conduct their business in the evening.

Daytime Council meetings have been efficient for Council to conduct its business without delay. Council also has the ability by way of Council resolution to direct staff to schedule town halls or other special municipal business during evening meeting times with no public hearings. Council's current Requests to Address Council process is used by the public and staff often book speakers months in advance. For these reasons, staff respectfully submit the above recommendation.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information on the frequency of public hearings in some B.C. municipalities and to outline options on how to use scheduled public hearing time considering Provincial changes to local government legislation.

## BACKGROUND

At the March 14, 2024, Committee of the Whole, Council passed the following motion:

*“Motion to refer to staff, to report back by June 2024, on how evening Council meeting time, when not used for statutory public hearings, could be repurposed for enhanced public engagement. Request staff to consider options that may potentially include:*

- 1) assessment of how often other municipalities hold public hearing opportunities, and how that relates to Victoria’s proposed time allocation;*
- 2) looking at how other municipalities around BC plan to use their public hearing time, in light of provincial changes that mean OCP-compliant buildings.”*

### Jurisdictional Scan

Staff conducted a jurisdictional scan of eight municipalities on the Province’s housing target list, with similar urban demographics as Victoria. Since 2021, all have had a reduction in the number public hearings.

**Table 1: B.C. Municipality Public Hearing Frequency**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Public Hearing Frequency Since 2021</b>
<b>Nanaimo</b>	Average one public hearing every two months.
<b>Saanich</b>	Average one public hearing every month.
<b>New Westminster</b>	Average one public hearing every two months.
<b>Delta</b>	Average one public hearing every month.
<b>Kelowna</b>	Average one public hearing every month.
<b>Langley (City)</b>	Average one public hearing every two to three months.
<b>North Vancouver (City)</b>	As needed (only a few public hearings a year).
<b>Maple Ridge</b>	Average one public hearing every month.

It is still to be determined what adjustments municipalities may make because of the reduction in public hearings. Based on the research conducted by staff, most Councils conduct their business during the evening. In the meantime, municipalities are using conventional public input methods such as delegations to Committee of the Whole/Council, written correspondence, or procedures like “Requests to address Council.”

**Table 2: B.C. Municipality Opportunities to Address Council**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Opportunities to Address Council</b>
<b>Nanaimo</b>	Delegations during regularly scheduled Council meetings.
<b>Saanich</b>	Delegations during regularly scheduled COTW; Open Forum portion of COTW (before meeting - informal); Public input on items on a regular Council or COTW agenda.
<b>New Westminster</b>	Requests to address Council at the first regular Council meeting of every month.

<b>Delta</b>	Delegations during regularly scheduled Council and COTW meetings.
<b>Kelowna</b>	Delegations during regularly scheduled Council meetings.
<b>Langley (City)</b>	Delegations during regularly scheduled Council meetings.
<b>North Vancouver (City)</b>	Requests to address Council at regular Council meeting.
<b>Maple Ridge</b>	Delegations during regularly scheduled Council meetings. Community Forum is held following adjournment of the COTW (twice a month).

## ISSUES & ANALYSIS

### Requests to Address Council

By resolution of Council, any individual or delegation can address Council when previous written application is made. The *Requests to Address Council Policy* permits a maximum of six speakers with a speaking time of three minutes per Council meeting. The process is used by the public and staff often book speakers months in advance. If Council is interested in maintaining the current Council meeting schedule, Council could amend the Policy to increase the maximum number of speakers to fifteen when a public hearing is not scheduled. This would establish a 45-minute forum for members of the public to speak to Council on assorted topics.

### Special Meetings

Municipalities have the authority to conduct special meetings. A special meeting is a Council meeting other than a regular or statutory meeting. Special meetings may be used to address key matters of Council. Special meetings require public notice and may only be held in accordance with local government legislation. A special meeting may be called by:

- The mayor, or
- The mayor upon request by two or more Council members, or
- Two or more Council members under specified circumstances.

Any Council member can make a motion to hold a special meeting. Because special meetings are held for a specific purpose, motions must include a rationale, which could be enhanced public engagement. Examples of special meetings for enhanced public engagement could be meetings dedicated to updates from Neighborhood Associations and Advisory Committees or a public hearing style of meeting on a specific topic of community interest.

If Council uses special meetings for enhanced public engagement, Council could revise the meeting schedule to only hold public hearings on the second Thursday of each month. This would make available the fourth Thursday of each month so a special meeting could be called.

### Council Meeting Times

Victoria Council conducts three regularly scheduled meetings – Committee of the Whole at 9:00 a.m., Council to Follow (daytime Council meeting) and regular Council meetings at 6:30 p.m. (evening Council meeting). Daytime Council meetings for regular business were implemented to reduce the time commitment for members of the public interested in public hearings scheduled for evening meetings. With a reduction of public hearing time, Council could revert all Council meetings back to evenings. Of the municipalities reviewed, the City of Kelowna is the only municipality also conducting daytime Council meetings. However, there are larger municipalities (e.g., Vancouver) not included in the jurisdictional scan also holding daytime meetings.

## OPTIONS & IMPACTS

**Option 1: Maintain the Council meeting schedule and amend City Policy to increase the maximum number of Requests to Address Council spots from six (6) to fifteen (15) when a public hearing is not scheduled (Recommended).**

This option would maintain the current Council meeting schedule and will require staff to report back to Council with recommended changes to the *Requests to Address Council Policy*.

Implications:

- Provides additional public input opportunities when a meeting has no public hearing.
- Reduces the current wait list for Requests to Address Council as there would be more opportunities to speak per month (12 to 21).

**Option 2:**

- 1. Adjust the Council meeting schedule to only have an evening Council meeting on every second Thursday of each month, beginning September 2024 so that Council can hold special meetings on a topic of community interest; and**
- 2. Amend City Policy to increase the maximum number of Requests to Address Council spots from six (6) to twelve (12).**

This option would direct staff to make the necessary public notices to reduce the number of evening Council meetings from two to one beginning September 2024 and will require changes to the *Requests to Address Council Policy* to maintain the current number of speakers per month by increasing the maximum from six to twelve as there will only be one scheduled meeting per month instead of two.

Implications:

- Reduces evening Council meetings from two per month to one.
- Council can use available evening meeting slots for special meetings on a specific topic.
- Maintains the current number of Requests to Address Council at twelve per month but over one meeting instead of two.
- Aligns with the reduced need to hold public hearings.
- Reduces the need to pay unionized staff overtime costs for evening meetings.

**Option 3: Direct staff to report back on moving all Council meetings to evenings.**

Implications:

- Additional evening Council time could be utilized for non-public hearing related business.
- Committee of the Whole would still be conducted during the day once a week.
- Daytime Council would no longer be held each week following Committee of the Whole.
- Council business would be concentrated into fewer meetings, resulting in longer evening Council meeting times and the possibility of delays in business such as Bylaw readings and Bylaw adoption.
- Would result in increased unionized staff overtime costs for longer evening meetings.

**Option 4: Maintain the current Council meeting schedule and process.**

Implications:

- Evening Council meetings with no scheduled public hearings will continue to be short.

### *Accessibility Impact Statement*

Council proceedings will continue to incorporate and improve upon existing processes outlined in the City's Accessibility Framework to ensure accessible participation at Council meetings.

### *2023 – 2026 Strategic Plan*

As per "Economic Health and Community Vitality," Council will explore governance reforms.

### *Impacts to Financial Plan*

A reduction in evening Council meeting times would reduce unionized staff overtime costs while additional evening Council meeting times may increase unionized staff overtime costs.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Staff's review of other municipalities indicates most are not using additional meeting time from less public hearings for other special municipal business. Daytime Council meetings have been efficient for Council to conduct its business without delays. Council has the ability by way of Council resolution to direct staff to schedule town halls or other special meetings for interaction with the public during any evening meetings with no scheduled public hearings. Council's Requests to Address Council process is used by the public and staff often book speakers months in advance. For these reasons, staff respectfully submit the above recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,

Barrie Nicholls  
Legislation and Policy Analyst

Curt Kingsley  
City Clerk

Susanne Thompson  
Deputy City Manager and  
Chief Financial Officer

**Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager**