

Electronic Voting Implementation Update

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Priorities and Finance Committee recommend that Council adopt the Electronic Voting Framework contained in Attachment 2.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Consistent with Council's expectations, the City Clerk's Office has worked to ensure that an electronic voting (e-voting) option is ready in September 2020.
- What does this mean to Calgarians? E-voting will allow Councillors' votes to be displayed during a meeting. It will also allow citizens to access voting data through the Open Data catalogue, facilitating empirical research of voting.
- Why does it matter? E-voting improves citizen access to Councillor decisions, strengthening the transparency and accountability of government.
- As it will impact Council's legislative procedure, Council's endorsement of the framework for, and the timing of e-voting, is required.
- The proposed approach to e-voting leverages existing technologies and tools, and offers the same user experience for Members, whether participating in-person or remotely.
- Training sessions have been prepared as part of the proposed implementation and will be rolled out in 2020 September, for full implementation by 2020 October 7.
- Strategic Alignment to Council's Citizen Priorities: A well-run city
- Background and Previous Council Direction is included as Attachment 1.

DISCUSSION

Voting using electronic means is an effective way to capture Members' votes during meetings. An electronic voting module is available within the existing electronic meeting management software (eSCRIBE), and the City Clerk's Office has been exploring the potential use of this module and assessing a number of options for implementation.

Discussions with external vendors and other municipalities were undertaken during the assessment phase. Simultaneously, an investigation into the installation of presentation screens at each Councillor workstation in the Chamber and the Engineering Traditions (committee room in Old City Hall) was completed.

Implementation options, which included custom-built panels, configuration of buttons on existing panels, or existing hardware devices (i.e., Surfaces, iPads) were assessed against meeting requirements, ease of use, and cost.

On the basis of this assessment, the City Clerk's Office is recommending that Council implement electronic voting through the eSCRIBE module, using existing devices. Members will log into eSCRIBE from their Surface devices for the duration of the meeting and will be presented with a pop-up vote box, when activated by the Clerk, to cast their votes on an item-by-item basis. Details of the framework are outlined in Attachment 2.

This option would provide the same voting process for Members participating remotely as those attending a meeting in person, and is intended to be presented through the same device already utilized by Members for paperless agendas. This approach would also allow Members to

Electronic Voting Implementation Update

continue to use Microsoft Teams to view presentations and motions on the screen in front of them.

The recommended approach for e-voting through eSCRIBE is the least costly option, with an estimated cost of \$7500, largely allocated to purchase several backup devices for contingency. The other options assessed were significantly more costly, ranging from \$35,000 - \$82,000 for hardware and software. The continued use of Teams by Members participating remotely and in person would also eliminate the need for the purchase and installation of a stand-alone presentation screen at each Councillor workstation in the Chamber.

In anticipation of implementing electronic voting, Council made changes to the Procedure Bylaw in 2019 to allow for votes to be carried out in this way. As outlined in Attachment 2 and consistent with the Procedure Bylaw, the City Clerk's Office is recommending that e-voting be used for all votes, with the exception of 'general consent', and 1st and 2nd Bylaw readings. Where an e-vote result shows that three or more Members indicate their opposition to a motion, a Roll-Call vote must be taken. The data set of Council's votes would be provided to the Open Data portal to be made available to the public.

Training would be provided to all Members, including citizen Members of Calgary Planning Commission and Audit Committee, during the weeks of September 21 and 28. The first use of e-voting would be expected to occur on 2020 October 7.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION (EXTERNAL)

- Public Engagement was undertaken
- Public Communication or Engagement was not required
- Public/Stakeholders were informed
- Stakeholder dialogue/relations were undertaken

IMPLICATIONS

Social

N/A

Environmental

N/A

Economic

N/A

Service and Financial Implications

Electronic Voting Implementation Update

Implementation of electronic voting for Council and Committee meetings ensures that technology investments are being maximized, and that greater information is made available to the public. The 'Council and Committee Support' service will continue to seek out ways to use technology to support meetings of Council and Committee while also facilitating public access to the legislative process.

The proposed approach minimizes the budget impact by leveraging existing technologies and hardware. Any expenditures associated with the implementation of this option would be funded from existing base operating funding.

Existing operating funding - base

\$7,500

An estimated \$7500 is required from existing operating budgets, largely for the purchase of back-up devices for Members attending meetings in-person.

RISK

There are few risks associated with pursuing the proposed approach. There is a risk associated with not proceeding, which would delay maximizing the investment already made in eScribe.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Previous Council Direction, Background
2. Electronic Voting Framework

Department Circulation

General Manager (Name)	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform (Pick-one)
		Choose an item.
		Choose an item.
		Choose an item.
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