



# Municipality of Port Hope

## Staff Report

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### Report Title: Public Notice Policy

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**Report to:** Corporate Services Committee

**Date of meeting:** May 3, 2022

**Report Author:**

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**Department responsible:**

Corporate Services

**Report Number:** CS-08-22

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### Recommendation:

That a resolution be presented to Council to adopt the Public Notice Policy; and  
That a by-law be presented to Council to repeal By-law 19/2014.

### Highlights:

- Staff is fulfilling a commitment to update, expand, and develop policies, plans, and frameworks that aligns with the Communications Division
- The current Notice Policy (By-law 19/2014) is out of date and does not align with best practices, current policies related to communications, and a modernized approach to providing notice
- The new policy adheres to relevant public notice legislation outlined in the Municipal Act and the Planning Act and it supplements current key policies and documents, including the Accountability and Transparency Policy, Social Media Policy, and Communications Policy

### Background:

In 2021, Council authorized additional staff resources to increase capacity within the Communications Division. Part of the justification for the request was to allow staff to commit more time and resources to addressing pressing strategic initiatives, including policy, plan, and framework enhancement and development. To further fulfill the commitment to upgrade, expand and develop policies, plans, and frameworks within the Division, Communications staff present the Attachment 1 – Draft Public Notice Policy.

The Municipality of Port Hope acknowledges the importance of accountability and transparency with its residents and stakeholders and believes that the community should be aware and informed of Municipal business. Section 270 of the Municipal Act requires that the Municipality shall adopt and maintain a policy with respect to the

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circumstances in which the Municipality shall provide notice to the public and, if notice is to be provided, the form and manner that notice shall be given.

**Discussion:**

The proposed Public Notice Policy outlines the instances in which public notice shall be given and the process in which the notice is provided to the community. Additionally, it aligns with the current communications tools that are subscribed to and followed by residents and other municipal stakeholders, including the corporate website and social media channels.

The new Public Notice Policy adheres to relevant public notice legislation outlined in the Municipal Act and the Planning Act or any other applicable Provincial Statutes. Additionally, it appends current key policies and documents, including the Accountability and Transparency Policy, Social Media Policy, and Communications Policy.

This Policy is intended to replace the previous Public Notice Policy adopted under By-law 19/2014. The previous policy is out of date and does not align with the current policies that support it nor with current communication practices and trends of present day. For example, the previous policy speaks to the use of the hardcopy newspaper as a primary method for giving notice. Currently, the local newspaper is circulated in hardcopy format only once weekly and not everyone within the Municipality receives the hardcopy of the newspaper. This medium is not an efficient or effective way to notify residents of a matter.

The previous policy also pre-dated use of newer communications tools, including the using of social media. Reference to notice posted on the municipal social media channels has been incorporated into the new Policy.

The new policy improves municipal notice visibility as it describes a mixed-media approach that includes posting the information on the corporate website, on social media, and advertising in the newspaper, where appropriate and applicable. Incorporating digital components in the Notice Policy allows for the information to be accessible to more individuals and for a longer period, as the notice is not immediately removed from the digital platforms, nor does it need to be re-advertised, as is the case with hardcopy mediums.

The Public Notice Policy is a portion of a larger undertaking to develop, update, modernize, and implement policies and plans that fall under the portfolio of the Communications Division. The following outlines the workplan for policy revision / development under the Communications portfolio:

- Social Media Policy – adopted by Council September 2021
- Communications Policy – Adopted by Council November 2021
- Community Engagement Policy – anticipated to be considered by Committee of the Whole May-June 2022.
- Brand Guidelines Policy update – anticipated to be considered by Committee of the Whole June-July 2022

Additionally, as part of the work plan for the Communications staff, Council can expect

the following plans to be presented to Council for adoption in 2022:

- **Communications Plan**
  - This Plan is intended to outline the ways in which the Municipality will effectively communicate with our external stakeholders, set goals to strengthen communications, and measure public awareness of the Municipality's services, programs, and initiatives. Staff will liaise with community stakeholders and internal departments as part of the development of this plan.
  
- **Internal Communications Strategy**
  - This Plan is intended to streamline internal communications using the tools currently available to employees. Communications staff will audit the internal communications currently in place and develop a strategy to enhance internal communications goals, establish consistent use of the Municipal brand, and streamline internal messaging.

**Financial Considerations:**

There are no financial considerations for this policy. This policy was developed in house by the Communications Division.

**Communication and Public Engagement:**

The policy review was conducted as a result of informal feedback received by the public who have expressed concern over the use of the newspaper as a primary tool for notice and an increased expectation to provide notice in a modern, mixed-media format to ensure that the information is accessible to more municipal stakeholders.

**Conclusion:**

The Municipality of Port Hope is committed to ensuring that residents and stakeholders are informed of the business of the Corporation. The Public Notice Policy outlines the circumstances in which notice shall be given and provides communications methods that are more relevant to today's technology and means of communicating with the community.

**Attachments:**

Attachment 1 – Notice Policy