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Date: August 2, 2019
To: Mayor and Council
Author: Jennifer Astrologo, Director of Corporate Services/Clerk
RE: Broadcasting Council Meetings Follow up
Report No.: CS-2019-11

AIM

To provide Council with additional information regarding the costs associated with broadcasting Council meetings, and to recommend that if Council wishes to move forward with this initiative, that it authorize Administration to engage eSCRIBE to provide those services.

BACKGROUND

At the April 23, 2019, Regular Meeting of Council the following motion carried:

That Council receives the Report of Director of Corporate Services J. Astrologo regarding broadcasting Council meetings for information;

And that Council directs Administration to further investigate options with respect to web-streaming services (including closed captioning) for Council meetings, and to bring a report back to Council with estimated costs and timelines for implementation for Council's consideration and further direction.

DISCUSSION

The Town sought input from its residents, via survey, to gauge the interest in this service. Promotion of the survey occurred on the Town's website and through its social media accounts. The survey was available for completion for a period of approximately three (3) weeks: from late May to the middle of June.

There were 185 respondents to the survey and the highlights are listed below:

- 78% of respondents don't attend Council meetings
- 61% of respondents are either indifferent to attending Council Meetings, or rank it as not being important
- 82% of respondents noted that it was important for them to be able to watch and/or listen to Council meetings from a location other than Council Chambers
- 89% of respondents said they would watch Council Meetings live if they were broadcast over some form of media
- 89% of respondents said they would watch recordings of previous Council Meetings if they were made available for viewing
- 76% of respondents indicated a preference for audio/video streaming over the Town website, or other website.
- 75% of respondents indicated that cost would not change their response

While the responses to the survey are overwhelmingly in favour of broadcasting Council meetings, it is noted that there were only 185 respondents to the survey. Accordingly, Council is cautioned about placing too much weight into the survey responses. Rather, it is more likely that the majority of residents do not have a strong opinion about this subject matter and leave it to their elected representatives to make the decision.

Many municipalities across Ontario, including those in Windsor-Essex County, broadcast or are moving toward broadcasting their Council meetings in an effort to improve their accountability and transparency. As discussed in the original report (attached as Appendix A), Administration recommends engaging eSCRIBE to provide this service. The video integrates with the Minutes generated from the Meeting to allow the public to view the meeting by business items, there is minimal staff time required to implement this initiative, and there is no limit on the number of Council Meetings that can be recorded/streamed.

It will take approximately two (2) months to configure Council Chambers and the eSCRIBE software. The costs to configure Council Chambers are negligible and the eSCRIBE software implementation and annual fees thereafter are described more fully in the Financial Consideration section of this report. Based on the current set up and microphone equipment that is used, one camera would be positioned at the back of Council Chambers to provide a bird's eye view of the meeting.

The Province continues to amend the *Municipal Act, 2001*, and other pieces of legislation that impact municipal government to enhance and improve accountability and transparency at the local level. Broadcasting council meetings is a positive step toward enhancing the Town's accountability and transparency and may even increase public engagement, understanding and interest in local government. Accordingly, it is recommended that Council authorize Administration to engage eSCRIBE to broadcast its Council Meetings with an anticipated implementation date of January 2020.

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Strive to make the Town of Kingsville a more accessible community.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Pricing for this solution is contingent upon the number of other Essex-County municipalities that also engage their services. Although the Towns of Tecumseh and Essex have reportedly communicated their intentions to use the eSCRIBE broadcasting module, as of the date of this report, they had not yet signed an agreement with eSCRIBE.

Accordingly, first implementation fees would be as follows and are exclusive of HST:

Fees	Live Stream	Closed Captioning (Recordings)	Total Cost
Implementation Fee	\$11,975	\$11,675	\$23,650
Annual Fee	\$9,950	\$8,975	\$18,925

If either Tecumseh or Essex sign an agreement with eSCRIBE before the Town, the above fees are reduced and the total cost for first year implementation would be \$22,425 and the annual fee thereafter would be \$17,700, plus HST.

Funding for this project can be allocated from the funds that were received earlier this year as part of the one-time funding received by the Town to improve service delivery and efficiency. Alternatively, Council could pre-approve the amount of \$23,650, which amount would then be included in the 2020 budget.

CONSULTATIONS

eSCRIBE
Manager of IT
Director of Financial Services

RECOMMENDATION

That Council authorizes Administration to engage eSCRIBE to provide broadcasting and closed captioning services for its Council Meetings; and that Council provide direction regarding whether the sum of \$23,650 are to be allocated from the one-time funding that was received earlier this year to improve service delivery and efficiency, or whether that amount be pre-approved in the 2020 municipal budget.

Jennifer Astrologo

Jennifer Astrologo, B.H.K. (hons), LL.B
Director of Corporate Services/Clerk

Peggy Van Mierlo-West

Peggy Van Mierlo-West, C.E.T.
Chief Administrative Officer