



## Corporate Report

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**Report from** Corporate Support Services, Clerks

**Date of Report:** October 10, 2012

**Date of Meeting:** October 29, 2012

**Report Number:** CSS-602-2012

**File:** 10.12.35

**Subject:** Council Meetings in the Community

### Recommendation

That City Council continue to hold their regular meetings in the City Hall Council Chambers; and

That no further consideration of moving the meetings be entertained at this time.  
FORTHWITH

### Summary

Council directed staff to review the possibility of moving Council meetings into the community to various off-site venues.

### Background

At their meeting on March 19, 2012, Council approved a report to temporarily move their Council meetings to Brock University for July and August 2012. The reason for the move was based upon a need due to scheduled renovations in City Hall and to the Council Chambers.

At that same meeting, Councillor Siscoe asked staff to report back relative to the possibility of hosting Council meetings at other sites within the community.

### Report

Preparing for this move required many staff hours. It became evident early on that there were very few facilities that could host a council meeting. This is due to the fact that Council meetings have very specific needs. It was determined that Brock University was the best choice because they could accommodate most of the many needs. Once this space was chosen, there were still many issues that needed to be addressed. Those issues were:

#### Television and sound synchronization

Council meetings are televised and therefore require a rather elaborate microphone system for speaking; this had to be built. The City also did not have the in-house staff support to have this highly specialized system monitored so that it was

effective with the Cogeco feed; staff had to contract that work out. This was costly because the City paid for the makeshift system to be upgraded and for staff time of the sound specialist.

### **Size and accessibility**

The size was also an issue. Although the meetings do not have a large council and staff proponent, the meeting space must be able to provide a gallery for members of the public to attend. Not only do staff need to ensure there is room, staff also need to ensure the space is accessible to individuals with special needs.

### **Extra space for In Camera Meetings**

The need for a break-out room for In Camera Meetings was also an issue. Many other sites had spaces but no additional rooms close by for the closed portion of the meetings.

### **Internet availability**

Internet access for was also an issue. Staff learned in this process that very few facilities had internet access. Although it is not always necessary, it is a benefit if and when Councillors need this to download their agendas or when members of the public need access for a presentation before Council.

### **Special equipment for public hearings and appointments**

Projectors and other equipment necessary for public hearings and appointments also posed a problem. Some sites had equipment, others did not. This meant staff needed to move equipment after regular working hours off site and then tear it down to bring it back at the beginning of the next work day.

### **Meeting time**

The City's meeting time poses a restriction in terms of what facilities would even contemplate hosting the meetings. Many public facilities are closed after regular working hours and did not want to keep security and staff available beyond their own schedules.

### **Willingness to host the City's Meetings**

Many facilities are limited in terms of their space and were reluctant to book Council meetings. In fact, many of the facilities just said no.

Very quickly the choices were pared down and were very limited. Since Brock University hosts many conferences and conventions, they were overall the best choice. Staff still needed to make adjustments but with their assistance it worked out well for the short term.

### **Financial Implications**

The total cost to hold the Council meetings at Brock University, not including the City's own staff time, was approximately \$7,000.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, staff is not recommending that Council meetings be held outside of the City Hall Council Chambers. This conclusion is due to the cost, time involved and many other priority projects staff are working on at this time.

**Submitted by:**

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