

**- ADDENDUM -**

**Governance Committee**

**Council Chambers**

**November 13, 2012, 3:00 p.m.**

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**GOV-22      OPEN GOVERNMENT FRAMEWORK**

Correspondence:

- Dave Sills, President, Guelph Civic League

**GOV-24      COUNCILLOR EMPLOYEMENT STATUS**

Correspondence:

- Dave Sills, President, Guelph Civic League

I submit these comments on behalf of the Guelph Civic League for input to the Governance Committee Meeting on Tuesday, November 13th.

First, re the Open Government Framework, the GCL fully supports this initiative.

As you see in the staff report to the committee, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) identified a number of significant benefits associated with Open Government:

- Establishing greater trust in government
- Ensuring better outcomes at less cost
- Raising compliance levels
- Ensuring equity of access to public policy making
- Fostering innovation and new economic activity
- Enhancing effectiveness by leveraging knowledge and resources of citizens

These are all desirable outcomes.

However, it should be noted that for Open Government to be successful, there has to be a culture of openness and engagement at City Hall. GCL appreciates that the City has made strides in this direction, but more needs to be done. GCL would be happy to work with the City on the issue of Open Government.

Second, re part-time vs. full-time councillors, the GCL very much appreciates the heavy workload handled by our current part-time councillors. However, it is clear from looking at practices in other municipalities in Ontario (available in the staff report) that Guelph is far from the 22,000 residents per councillor that currently appears to be a threshold for employing full-time councillors. In fact, even if Guelph went from 12 councillors to 6, each representing one ward, we would still be below 20,000 residents per councillor.

Instead of spending time and resources pursuing this 'non-starter' issue, perhaps the better approach would be to investigate ways to reduce the workload of councillors given our current employment practices. One possible change could be enhancing the utility of council and committee agendas. These documents tend to be very long, sometimes more than 500 pages. I imagine very few councillors, if any, actually read all of this material. A condensed version could be made available that outlines only the most pertinent information, with more detailed background documentation available if desired. This would help councillors to understand the issues at hand, and would also help the public to better understand the contents of meeting agendas.

Another idea is to create 12 wards and have each councillor represent one smaller ward. This appears to be the situation in a number of Ontario municipalities close to Guelph in size. The staff report indicates that the councillor activity that requires the greatest number of hours per month is constituency work. This might be reduced if each councillor represented one smaller ward. In addition, there would be a greater connection between the councillor and the ward constituents, and less ground to cover at election time.

I'm sure there are many more ideas that could be generated around reducing councillor workload.

I hope you find these comments to be useful.

Sincerely,

Dave Sills, President  
Guelph Civic League