

# Changes to Public Notice Policy reviewed by Committee

**By Riley Murphy**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A staff report presented at the September 8 Governance Committee meeting began with staff recommending the repeal and replacement of the current Public Notice Policy.

The report recommended several key updates.

The current Public Notice Policy was adopted in 2013, with an amendment for open houses in 2014.

In January of 2016, the current Procedure By-law and Council and Committee structure took effect. Council extended public notice requirements for planning applications in 2023, and new 'strong mayor' powers (2023) affected how budget notices are handled.

Council ordered this review in June 2024.

To prepare this report, staff looked at 12 comparable municipalities, including Burlington, Orangeville, and Newmarket.

Following the research, staff recommended several updates.

The first to replace the current Policy with a By-law.

Municipal Clerk Kevin Klingenberg said the benefits of a by-law outweigh those of a policy.

The report stated a by-law brings forward better maintenance and awareness compared to a policy.

'This policy is required by the Municipal Act, thereby having a little bit more importance to it,' says Klingenberg.

The following recommended change came with definitions and interpretations.

'The less discretion or interpretation required, the more transparent the policy becomes. Adding definitions or having them consistently defined the same way as others do leads to less use of discretion and interpretation,' says Klingenberg.

The report stated that the current policy comes with 'inconsistent definitions.'

Changes included 'the notice and plain language definitions and the use of 'published' instead of 'posted.'

This recommendation would maintain print newspapers as the primary choice for public notices, with digital newspapers serving as a substitute when deadlines or circulation necessitate it.

Staff recommended tying the notice timing to the time the report is presented to either the Committee or Council meeting, which will reflect the current structure that the Council holds.

With the budget having gone under legislative updates, 'adopting the budget is no longer the set date it once used to be at a Council meeting,' says Klingenberg.

Staff recommends aligning it with the meeting in which budget amendments are considered.

At the meeting, it was shared that regulatory by-laws have had a requirement to hold an open house for the past three terms of Council.

It is a Caledon policy requirement, which has become the norm, and it's not a legislative requirement in any provincial legislation, shared Klingenberg.

Open Houses currently occur to gain knowledge, an opportunity to seek clarity, get questions answered and become informed on the by-law topic, it was shared during the meeting.

Open houses are not found in any other research municipalities for regulatory by-laws, shared Klingenberg.

Staff is recommending a review be completed to determine appropriate public engagement guidelines, and temporarily place it as a Council resolution until they find the right fit for the requirement in future.

Overall, they hope to find where this requirement permanently belongs.

The third recommendation staff presented with respect to open houses, after recommending the development of public engagement guidelines and the reclassification of the policy requirement as an in-scope policy, is to review the process itself and optimize it to work as good as it could, said Klingenberg.

The recommendation is to follow the Planning Act Open House Model.

This model has a 20-day notice, and the draft official plan is publicly available at the time of the notice.

The open house and public meeting are held within a week of one another.

The Planning Act Open House model has been around since 2006.

With the Town's current Open House By-Law Model, there is no requirement to provide the draft by-law at the time of notice, nor is there a requirement for the meeting in which the matter will be considered during the open house to be held in proximity to each other.

There's too much of a gap between asking questions, getting answers, and then the report coming forward and understanding the regulatory by-law when it's considered by Council or Committee, says Klingenberg.

Klingenberg said these open house recommendations aim to make them more functional and systematic at the Town of Caledon, setting up a framework to make this open house anomaly be one that leads rather than follows.

Regarding meeting notice requirements, staff recommends the Procedural Bylaw to comply with the Municipal Act.

This includes annual schedule posting, special meetings individually posted, agenda notices and delivery and notice statements on agendas, including information on how to participate, accessibility, and more.

The final recommendation regards policy consolidations.

We will need to amend the Land Sale By-law, repeal the Ontario Heritage Act alternative public notice policy and a pair of Council decisions on excess Planning Act mail-out notifications requirements in favor of its inclusion into this by-law, says Klingenberg.

Additionally, cross-referencing is proposed to be included in the Public Notice By-law from the Municipal Act and the Ontario

Heritage Act.

Klingenberg said following the consultation of the Draft By-law at the meeting, he wants to ?give the By-law a bit of a test drive as well.?

?It'd be best if I could try out the Public Notice By-law on itself, essentially, with respect to hosting an open house. It would be like driving a newly built car on the test track after it's rolled right out of the assembly plant before having it hit the open road. I'd like to see how well it handles in the corners and how it responds when you kick it into high gear before putting some license plates on it,? shared Klingenberg.

He proposed cancelling the October 6 Governance Review Committee meeting so that an open house can be prepared to take its place.

The committee moved in favour of the staff report recommendation.

The October 6, 2025, Governance Review Committee meeting will be cancelled in favour of an open house that day on the proposed Public Notice By-law and Procedure By-law, which will be trialed on the Draft Notice requirement.

The proposed Public Notice Policy will be reported back at the October 7, 2025, General

Committee meeting.

Staff will be directed to review public engagement procedures and report back to the Governance Review Committee with recommended guidelines before the end of this term of Council.

Council will also consider amendments to its Procedure By-law later this month to set more precise requirements for meeting notices.

To view the full report and recommendation, visit [pub-caledon.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=50011](https://pub-caledon.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=50011).