



## CITY OF ST. ALBERT ADMINISTRATIVE BACKGROUNDER

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### **TITLE: LOCATION OF GOVERNANCE, PRIORITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

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#### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

On January 27, 2019 Councillor Hughes provided notice in accordance with Section 23 of Procedure Bylaw 3/2018 of her intention to make the proposed motion below.

*In order for Council to debate the motion, it must be formally moved.*

#### **PROPOSED MOTION(S):**

That effective March 2019, the Governance, Priorities and Finance Committee meetings are held in Council Chambers.

#### **ALIGNMENT TO LEVELS OF SERVICE DELIVERY**

Service Name: Legislative Support

Service Definition: Provision of technical advice and expertise regarding compliance with governing legislation and coordination of the development of agendas, reports, materials and minutes/records for council and committee meetings.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

Council meetings are currently held in Council Chambers while Governance, Priorities and Finance Committee (GPFC) meetings are held in the Douglas Cardinal Boardroom (DCB). The rationale for holding GPFC meetings in the DCB is that this venue is more conducive to allowing Council to have a relatively relaxed and informal dialogue with each other and with Administration. Since the primary purpose of GPFC meetings is to explore issues in depth and bring out additional information and alternatives before a matter is sent to Council for a decision, the DCB setting may work better for accomplishing this than the more formal Council Chambers atmosphere which lends itself to a more parliamentary approach to a meeting.

There are, however, some practical issues with using the DCB for meetings of the GPFC, which Administration would like to draw to the attention of Council members as they consider whether to support this motion:

1. The City's local area network is not hardwired into the Legislative Officers' computer in the DCB, which means that a wireless connection must be used and wireless is more frequently interrupted. When this occurs, access to the Granicus software is lost, resulting in the votes and debates having to be recorded manually.
2. VoteCast cannot reliably be used in the DCB because the Surface Pros are not hardwired into the network.
3. The DCB has a very limited number of electrical outlets and the ones it has are only located along the wall (as opposed to being located under the desks as they are in Council Chambers). When Administration and Councillors wish to plug in their laptops, SurfacePros and other devices to avoid draining batteries, a tripping hazard arises when power cords are on the floor unsecured.
4. The acoustics in the DCB are not very good, which means the sound in the video for GPFC meetings is sometimes muffled and hard to pick up, especially for persons with hearing impairment.
5. The DCB layout causes issues with Legislative Services being as effective and efficient as they would like to be. Some examples:
  - The Legislative Officers' workstation is facing the Councillors' backs, which makes it difficult to hear the discussions and motions that are made. This layout also makes it difficult for Legislative Officers to see the screen and confirm that they are accurately capturing motion wording and votes.
  - The colour-coded paddles that were introduced in the DCB to indicate each Councillor's vote do assist the Legislative Officers, but it is still difficult at times to see these paddles -- and in any event using this method as opposed to the Granicus software (which does not work reliably in the DCB as mentioned above) increases the chance of errors.
  - Due to the need to seat both Councillors and senior Administration and also leave a couple of seats for presenters, the Director of Legislative Services and/or Deputy Chief Legislative Officer are not sitting near the Legislative Officers. This results in the Director and DCLO having to walk over to the Legislative Officer's workstation to address issues when they arise, which adversely affects the pace and flow of the meeting.
  - The "gallery" is utilized by both members of Administration and the public, and given the limited space for the "gallery", occasionally people are left standing or chairs have to be set up in front of the TV outside Council Chambers which is remote from where the meeting is actually occurring.

- The physical setup and takedown of the DCB is time-consuming. It takes two members of Legislative Services approximately an hour for setup and takedown in the DCB. By contrast, in Council Chambers a single Legislative Officer requires only 15 minutes of setup and takedown time.

For all the above reasons Administration is of the view that holding GPFC meetings in Council Chambers would work better logistically, would use less staff resources and time and would help ensure the GPFC meetings run more smoothly and efficiently. That said, none of the matters discussed above rise to the level of insurmountable obstacles to continuing to hold GPFC meetings in the DCB, so Administration will be able to continue to accommodate this venue if Council weighs the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative and decides to stay with the *status quo*.

Report Date: February 25, 2019

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