



## CLERK'S REPORT CR-052-16

**TO:** Mayor Cornell and Members of Council

**FROM:** Sue Walton, Deputy Clerk

**DATE:** November 28, 2016

**RE:** Alternative Voting Methods

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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That Clerk's Report CR-052-16 dated November 28, 2016, from Sue Walton, Deputy Clerk, regarding Alternative Voting Methods be received and that consideration be given to Vote By Mail Voting or Internet/Telephone Voting for the 2018 Municipal Election.

### **BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:**

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* provides the authority for the Township to use alternative voting methods (i.e. vote by mail, internet and telephone voting) for municipal elections.

The Township currently conducts the municipal election using the Vote by Mail (VBM) method. This method has been effective in managing the permanent/seasonal nature of our resident population and has been used successfully since the 2006 elections.

VBM is a paper-based alternative voting method in which a package containing instructions, a ballot and a voter declaration form is mailed to every qualified elector on the voters list. The elector will mail back their completed ballot and declaration form, each in a separate prepaid postage envelop. On voting day, the municipality tabulates the ballots using a central count tabulation system, with results being transferred to an election reporting system. This method of voting provides for the ability to start tallying votes through the tabulators early on Election Day resulting in the delivery of unofficial election results more quickly. The following are additional benefits to the VBM method:

- Private, convenient and accessible
- Anytime, anywhere voting
- Longer voting period.
- Effective method to capture both permanent and seasonal residents.
- Repeated use increases elector confidence (familiarity).
- Eliminates need for advance vote.
- Eliminates voting by proxy.
- Fewer election staff required.
- Audit trails/provision for recount as paper composite ballot used.
- Elector can also drop off ballot at central location (municipal office).
- Immediate replacement kits available.

Drawbacks include unsupervised voting and a potential for postal disruptions.

In preparation for the 2018 Elections, staff was directed to explore additional alternate voting methods. A by-law for the use of alternate voting, aside from VBM, must be passed by May 1, 2017. When considering other methods of voting, consideration must be given to the accessibility, voter authentication and authorization, voter privacy, and results validation.

**OPTIONS/ALTERNATIVES:****Internet Voting:**

The qualified elector will receive a voter package by mail (voter information letter) containing instructions on how to access and complete their ballot via the internet.

The elector connects to the voting website from their computer, iPhone, android phone or tablet. The elector is required to enter their provided PIN and then to authenticate their identity (i.e. through the entry of their date of birth) and to verify that they are a qualified elector (similar to signing the declaration form provided in the VBM kit). If authentication is successful, the elector will obtain access to an electronic ballot. The elector may then complete, review and verify their completed ballot to make any changes prior to submission. Once submitted, the results are encrypted and kept anonymous. The elector is issued a receipt and is now blocked from voting again.

Once voting has ended the results are immediately tabulated and transferred to a results reporting system. The results can be viewed in the Election Manager along with various reports on voting activity before publishing them. Results can be verified by downloading a file containing votes and receipt codes

**Telephone Voting:**

The qualified elector will receive a voter package by mail (voter information letter) containing instructions on how to access and complete their ballot via the telephone.

The telephone voting system relies on the voter to process an audio ballot by way of dialing on the key pad. After voting selections are made for each office the voter will be prompted to review their decisions. Once confirmed by the voter, the final ballot data is transferred to a secure server which is tabulated at the end of Election Day and transferred to a results reporting system. When incorporated with Internet Voting, the percentage of individuals utilizing telephone voting is low (approximately 10-12 percent as noted by one supplier).

<b>Internet/Telephone Voting</b>	
<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Private, convenient and accessible.	Unsupervised voting.
Anytime, anywhere voting.	Security concerns that could jeopardize the integrity of the voting process/system potentially vulnerable to hackers.
Quick results on Election Day.	Concerns due to lack of a paper trail in event of audit or recount.
No tabulators required as results delivered electronically.	Increase cost if supplemented with VBM.
Fewer election staff required.	
May increase voter turnout.	-Some research suggests that it does not improve voter participation but is used as a tool of convenience for individuals who already vote.  -Decreased voter confidence with new method (not familiar).
Effective method to capture both permanent and seasonal resident.	Pockets of Township do not have internet connectivity – digital divide.

Any method chosen and accompanying systems must integrate with our current electoral data management software as contracted through DataFix.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

#### **1. Vote By Mail**

To run the VBM method in 2014, the cost was approximately \$63,000 with 18,820 eligible electors (\$3.35 per elector). The above figure includes direct costs related to the VBM process specifically postage, DataFix services (electoral data management, voter kit, Municipal Voter View) and tabulators. This amount is exclusive of other associated costs such as incidental supplies, advertising, salaries and the Inaugural Meeting.

#### **2. Internet/Telephone**

An estimate cost associated with Internet/Telephone Voting includes:

- System Fee - \$0.94 per elector
- Voter Information Letter - \$500 base fee plus \$0.19 per letter – postage not included
- On-site Visits (one person, one day) \$1200 x 3 visits (approximate number of visits)
- Electoral Data Management through DataFix (existing contract) - \$7910

The additional estimated costs to provide Internet Voting along with the Vote by Mail method would be approximately \$52,000 or \$2.76 per elector. This is a preliminary estimate cost and will vary depending on the supplier as per any required request for proposals.

The estimate is based on the 2014 election data and is exclusive of other election/incidental costs which are unknown at this time.

### **RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:**

Strategic Priority: Deliver efficient and exceptional municipal services.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Based on the above analysis and research completed by staff to date, supplementing the Vote By Mail method with Internet/Telephone Voting is not recommended due to the additional costs and the added complexity of managing two voting methods.

It is therefore recommended that consideration be given to utilizing Vote By Mail Voting or Internet/Telephone Voting for the 2018 Municipal Election.

Report Prepared by and Submitted by:

  
Sue Walton, Deputy Clerk

Financial Implications Reviewed by:

  
Doug Taylor, Mgr. of Administrative Services/Treasurer

Report Approved by:

  
Doug Luker, C.A.O./Clerk