

DATE OF MEETING APRIL 26, 2023

AUTHORED BY NATALIE SPONAUGLE, COMMUNICATIONS ADVISOR

SUBJECT GOVERNANCE AND PRIORITIES COMMITTEE

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To present an updated terms of reference and agenda structure for the Governance and Priorities Committee.

Recommendation

That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council:

1. Endorse the Governance and Priorities Committee terms of reference as attached to the staff report dated 2023-APR-26.
2. Endorse the proposed changes to the GPC agenda structure and 'Upcoming Topics and Initiatives' schedule as attached to the staff report dated 2023-APR-26.

BACKGROUND

The Governance and Priorities Committee (GPC) was first established in 2019 to “enable members of Council to review upcoming and important issues and opportunities with members of administration and the public, with a focus on understanding the broader policy implications of the items being considered”. The GPC was a focal tool in supporting Council’s strategic priority of ‘Governance Excellence’ during the 2018-2022 term. The GPC provided an opportunity for in-depth conversations on a number of topics as seen in Attachment A. In addition, the GPC acted as the steering committee for the ReImagine Nanaimo process, prior to *City Plan*’s adoption in July 2022.

At the February 13, 2023, GPC meeting, Council provided input through Zoom polls which are summarized below. Council discussion over the past number of months has also served to inform staff of updates to the GPC’s terms of reference that could serve the current Council better. The original GPC terms of reference, which was adopted on March 4, 2019, has been attached for Council reference (Attachment B).

Meeting Feedback

Time of Day

Zoom poll results indicated that the majority of Council preferred daytime meetings; however, it was noted that evening sessions would be more suitable for topics of high public interest. Staff also acknowledge that daytime meetings can be a barrier to individuals who work during the day but may wish to attend meetings. With this in mind, the Committee could consider directing staff

to change the meeting times to evening hours for topics of high public interest, and when public engagement is being sought or considered. A process for this is outlined later in this report under agenda structure.

Meeting Frequency

Zoom poll results indicated that the majority of Council preferred monthly meetings to bi-weekly meetings; however, staff believe there is value in keeping with the current schedule which includes bi-weekly meetings in select months only. The 2023 GPC key date calendar is attached for Council reference (Attachment C).

Meeting Location

Zoom poll results also indicated that the majority of Council prefer for GPC meetings to continue to be held in the Vancouver Island Conference Centre's Shaw Auditorium.

Engagement Strategy

Zoom poll results indicated support for having a public schedule of GPC agenda topics posted in advance, based on Council Strategic Priorities. Support was also indicated for collecting community feedback on applicable topics before they are placed on the GPC agenda. Once the review of the Integrated Action Plan and Monitoring Strategy are complete, staff intend to ensure that GPC agendas reflect Council's Strategic Priorities, while still providing a forum for additional matters Council wishes to bring forward for discussion.

DISCUSSION

An updated terms of reference for the GPC is attached (Attachment D) and reflects staff's effort to capture what has been heard through Council discussion over the past number of months. One theme that has stood out is the value in ensuring that GPC meetings serve as a venue for in-depth Council discussion.

Previously, the GPC had been used to host a variety of "workshop" topics from various departments. Staff believe it would better serve the current Council to limit the number of these items on GPC agendas (noting there will still be some need for these types of workshops) to ensure space for Council identified priorities and discussion.

It is also worth noting that one of the GPC goals outlined in the terms of reference (both past and present) is to "review Council's Committee structure and recommend changes to Committee mandate and role". A separate report on this agenda will discuss Council Committees, but staff thought it worthwhile to highlight that the GPC would be an appropriate venue for further discussion, and motions, regarding committees to be brought forward.

Agenda Structure

Moving forward, staff propose to format GPC agenda headings around the 5 goals of City Plan: A Green, Connected, Healthy, Empowered and Prosperous Nanaimo. With the GPC acting as Council's focal committee, this structure would provide space for discussion on City Plan goals, actions and Council priorities, and could also reduce the need for additional committees.

In addition to the 5 City Plan goal headings, staff propose replacing the current “Governance and Priorities Committee Agenda Planning” section with “Upcoming Topics and Initiatives”. This would include the public schedule of GPC agenda topics, as previously discussed, but could also capture other matters of public interest such as eTown Halls and other engagement opportunities. Staff propose adding a column to this chart where Council could discuss and determine the time of day they prefer those meetings to be held. An example of this proposed agenda structure and schedule are attached (Attachment E).

OPTIONS

That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council:

1. Endorse the Governance and Priorities Committee terms of reference as attached to the staff report dated 2023-APR-26.
2. Endorse the proposed changes to the GPC agenda structure and ‘Upcoming Topics and Initiatives’ schedule as attached to the staff report dated 2023-APR-26.
 - Advantages: The updated terms of reference ensure that Council has opportunities for in-depth discussion on their strategic priorities and important topics and initiatives. The proposed agenda structure aligns with *City Plan* and the proposed schedule provides Council with flexibility on determining the time of day they wish to discuss GPC agenda matters.
 - Disadvantages: None identified.
 - Financial Implications: If Council wishes to increase the number of evening GPC meetings, it will increase costs associated with staff required to work overtime.
2. That the Governance and Priorities Committee provide alternate direction. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- The Governance and Priorities Committee has provided Council members with a forum for in-depth information sharing and discussion on a number of topics since 2019.
- Council members provided input through a series of Zoom polls at the Feb. 13, 2023 GPC meeting which helped to inform updates to the GPC terms of reference.
- An updated terms of reference for the GPC, along with a new agenda structure and ‘upcoming topics and initiatives’ schedule has been prepared for consideration.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: GPC Topics covered between 2019-2022

ATTACHMENT B: Previous GPC Terms of Reference (adopted March 4, 2019)

ATTACHMENT C: 2023 GPC Key Date Calendar

ATTACHMENT D: Updated GPC Terms of Reference

ATTACHMENT E: Proposed Agenda Structure & 'Upcoming Topics and Initiatives' chart

ATTACHMENT F: ToR comparison chart of proposed changes to committee mandate |

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