



STAFF REPORT

Department/Function: Council

Chair: Mayor

Meeting Date: March 16, 2020

Report No.: GGF-2020-24

Report Title: Authority to close the municipal office to the public and other facilities, if deemed necessary

RECOMMENDATION:

That Staff Report No. GGF-2020-24 Authority to close the municipal office to the public and other facilities if deemed necessary be received;

And that the Council authorizes the closure of the Municipal Office and other facilities to the public if any one of the following situations occurs:

- 1) An employee tests positive with COVID-19;
- 2) An order is imposed, or a recommendation is made, by the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, the Federal Government, or the Province to close municipal offices or non-essential services or similar;
- 3) Staff availability is limited;

And that this authority rest with the Chief Administrative Officer;

And that in the event of an emergency (other than those listed above) and where a Special Council meeting cannot be called, that the authority to close the Municipal Office and other facilities be delegated to the Mayor (in in his absence the Deputy Mayor) and the Chief Administrative Officer (in her absence the Director of Finance);

And that, once closed, the Municipal Office and other facilities remain closed to the public until it is deemed appropriate by Council to reopen facilities.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND:

As the outbreak of COVID-19 continues to evolve globally, the Township must take a number of enhanced measures over the coming weeks to protect ourselves and our residents from the spread of COVID-19.

David Williams, MD, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, has called on all Ontarians to recognize the risk of attending public gatherings and to practice social distancing as much as possible until further notice to manage the spread of illness. He has also strongly encouraged organizations that can take advantage of virtual options to continue providing services.

The Township has taken these recommendations seriously, and as such decided to cancel all recreational programming and close all recreational facilities abruptly on Friday, March 13th. Our Manager of Parks, Recreation and Facilities and our Director of Technology and Communications worked well into the weekend advising residents and facility users of the sudden closures.

In order to ensure we as staff have the ability to react to the changing information available, it is prudent to get authorization from Council, as to when it is appropriate to close the Municipal Office and other facilities to the public. Under this authority, back office operations would remain, and the level of service provided to residents would solely depend on the staffing and resources available. If a number of staff were to contract the virus, or be in self-isolation/quarantine, only essential office services (as define below) would continue to be provided, on a best effort basis, until the staffing resources became available.

Under our Council Procedural Bylaw, an Emergency Governance Committee may be created to carry out the duties and responsibilities of Council for the duration of an emergency which has been declared by the Mayor and/or his/her designate. This Committee is to be comprised of at least three members of Council and requires that an official emergency declaration first be made.

ANALYSIS:

In the event that an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19, staff recommends that the Municipal Office and other facilities immediately be closed to the public. Staff would also immediately exit the building for the balance of the workday. After a thorough cleansing of the building, including all touch point surfaces, limited staff would be brought in, likely in shifts to resume back office operations.

Below is a list of office services that would remain essential to operate.

- Vendor payment processing
- Payroll
- Admin support for Public Works, Water & Wastewater
- Reception
- Communications

The Municipal Office and other facilities may also require closure to the public as a result of a recommendation or order from the SMDHU or other government authority. Under this scenario, back office business as usual would remain, unless otherwise indicated by said authority.

In the event of an emergency, it may not be feasible to follow the Procedural Bylaw and engage three members of Council. Therefore, it is recommended, that the Chief Administrative Officer be granted the authority to close the office to the public under any one of the following scenarios:

- 1) An employee tests positive for COVID-19
- 2) An order is imposed, or a recommendation is made, by the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, the Federal Government, or the Province to close municipal offices or non-essential services or similar;
- 3) Staff availability is limited;

In the event of an emergency (other than those listed above) and where a Special Council meeting cannot be called, or the Emergency Governance Committee cannot be reached, or an emergency has not been declared to enable the Emergency Governance Committee, the authority to close the Municipal Office and other facilities be delegated to the Mayor and his absence the Deputy Mayor and the Chief Administrative Officer and in her absence the Director of Finance.

FINANCIAL/BUDGET IMPACT:

The closure of the municipal office has the potential to have a significant impact on our operations, the extent of which will be dependent on the duration of closure to the public, and the level of back office operations that can remain. Financial impacts will largely be dependent on the duration of a closure and the backlog of deferred work that may have to be processed in the future.

CONCLUSION:

Ensuring that the municipality remains in a position to provide critical services for the health and well-being of our residents by taking measures to protect the health and well-being of our staff is of critical importance during a pandemic situation. It is felt that the measures described above will support our ability to take the appropriate measures when needed.

Prepared By:

Date: March 15, 2020

Lindsay Barron, CPA, CGA, HBCom.
Chief Administrative Officer

Recommended By:

Lindsay Barron, CPA, CGA, HBCom.
Chief Administrative Officer