

## Staff Report

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**Report To:** City Council

**Report From:** Michelle Palmer, Senior Manager, Strategic Initiatives and Operational Effectiveness

**Meeting Date:** March 25, 2024

**Report Code:** CM-24-005

**Subject:** Community Open House Event 2024

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### Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CM-24-005 respecting Community Open House Event 2024, City Council directs staff to:

1. Proceed with hosting a Community Open House on November 7, 2024; and
2. Provide a report to Council following the event.

### Highlights:

- Municipal services impact the daily lives of everyone in our community.
- The proposed event is an opportunity to showcase the variety of City services.
- Enabling a time for staff and community members to have face-to-face two-way conversations builds relationships.

### Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: Collaborative City.

### Climate and Environmental Implications:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

## **Previous Report/Authority:**

[CM-23-016 Community Engagement Policy and Toolkit](#)

## **Background:**

At the January 29, 2024 meeting, Council approved the following resolution:

"WHEREAS October 2024 is the mid-point in the current term of Council; AND WHEREAS there has not been a town hall-style meeting so far this Council term; NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT City Council directs staff to:

1. Bring forward a report to Council outlining a structure and plan for town hall-style meetings, at least one of which to occur in 2024, to serve as a forum for public questions and suggestions relating to City operations and governance; and
2. Reserve a location for this meeting with a larger seating capacity than the Council Chambers and a foyer where information tables can be set up to raise awareness about City departments, Committees, and initiatives as well as community services and agencies should they choose to participate."

Council approved the Community Engagement Policy (CE003) in December 2023, which outlines how the City will engage with community members on specific initiatives. This report focuses on hosting an event for community members where the City can showcase the variety of services delivered by staff dedicated to creating and maintaining the City's infrastructure.

## **Analysis:**

Staff have discussed internally and had discussions with other municipalities, which have offered a variety of open house/town hall events, to develop a proposed format that would serve community members and enable interaction.

Through gathering their lessons learned, and ideas from City staff, we are recommending a community open house focused on providing an opportunity for community members to come and meet with City staff, ask questions, and learn about the services and operations of the City as well as services offered by community organizations (which are often thought to be provided by the City).

### Outline:

Each division providing public-facing services will have a table staffed by the manager and/or City staff from that team. Each table will have signage that outlines the day-to-day activities/services that the team provides to the community. Community members who attend will circulate to the various tables at their leisure to talk to staff, learn about services, and ask questions about those services. The Strategic Leadership Team and members of Council that attend will not have a specific table but will circulate throughout the room to connect with community members. Divisions which will be in attendance are noted below for reference:

- Arena Operations
- Building
- Clerks \*includes By-law and Committees
- Communications
- Community Development (River District)
- Engineering
- Environmental Services (transit, waste)
- Events
- Facility Booking and Community Programs
- Finance
- Fire Services
- Human Resources
- Parks and Open Space
- Planning and Heritage
- Public Works, Water, and Wastewater
- Purchasing
- Tom Thomson Art Gallery
- Tourism

An informal setting where community members can talk with staff one-on-one will ensure that questions and information can be shared to raise awareness of City services. This open house is intended to supplement the community's current ways to interact with City staff - by telephone or email (Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) or by using [Report a Concern](#) at any time.

### Timing:

While reviewing the 2024 corporate calendar of planned events, it was challenging to identify a date that would be ideal for this type of event. Staff are recommending that in 2024, the initial community open house be held on Thursday, November 7, 2024, from 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. This would avoid having the open house in a week with already currently scheduled evening committee meetings and hopefully before the winter weather season is upon us. If the open house initiative proves to be successful, in 2025, staff would propose aligning the community open houses with local government week (third week of October) and public works week (third week of May).

### Location:

Staff are recommending that the Christie Hare room at the Harry Lumley Bayshore Community Centre be used for the event. The facility is fully accessible with available parking, as well as being on the East Bayshore public transit route and along the paved trail.

### Other Community Agencies at the Event:

Some of the most important issues facing Owen Sound require a concerted community-wide response and are not the sole purview of the City. Often, there is confusion over which services are provided by the City, and which are provided by Grey County and other agencies. Based on historical questions received, staff are proposing to invite the following agencies to attend:

- Grey County – Housing Programs and Services
- Grey Bruce Health Unit
- Canadian Mental Health Association Grey Bruce
- United Way Grey Bruce
- Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library
- Owen Sound Police Service

Collaborating with local organizations by providing space for them to share information with community members at the same event reinforces the City's commitment to service excellence and partnership.

### Measures of Success:

Quantitative and qualitative data should be collected to identify whether the event is successful. Proposed metrics include:

- Number of attendees;

- Number of surveys completed;
- Number of questions received;
- Number of suggestions received; and
- Feedback (positive and negative) from the survey.

Staff are proposing that a survey (paper and electronic) be available to attendees as they leave the event to gather suggestions and feedback. Following the event, staff will gather the feedback and bring a report to Council with recommendations for the 2025 community open house events.

### **Financial Implications:**

A budget of \$2,000 is requested to cover the cost of promotional signage and printing of materials such as pamphlets or information sheets, refreshments, and room rental. This budget does not include staff time for preparation or attendance at the event.

### **Communication Strategy:**

A communications plan will be developed outlining the use of a social media campaign, media release, and the City's website to inform the community of the event.

### **Consultation:**

The Strategic Leadership Team, the City Clerk, and the Communications Advisor were consulted in developing this report.

### **Attachments:**

None.

### **Recommended by:**

Michelle Palmer, Senior Manager, Strategic Initiatives and Operational Effectiveness

### **Submission approved by:**

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Michelle Palmer, Senior Manager, Strategic Initiatives and Operational Effectiveness at [mpalmer@owensound.ca](mailto:mpalmer@owensound.ca) or 519-376-4440 ext. 1246.