



THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF AMHERSTBURG

OFFICE OF THE CAO

MISSION STATEMENT: Committed to delivering cost-effective and efficient services for the residents of the Town of Amherstburg with a view to improve and enhance their quality of life.

Author's Name: Valerie Critchley	Report Date: December 6, 2021
Author's Phone: 519 736 0012 ext. 2238	Date to Council: December 13, 2021
Author's E-mail: vcritchley@amherstburg.ca	Resolution #:

To: Mayor and Members of Town Council

Subject: 2022 Municipal Election – Voting Method

1. RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that:

1. The traditional voting method with the use of electronic tabulators only **BE APPROVED** for advanced polls;
2. The traditional voting method with the use of electronic tabulators only **BE APPROVED** as the method of voting on Election Day;
3. By-law 2021-078 being a by-law to authorize the use of optical scanning vote tabulators in the 2022 Municipal Election be taken as having been read three times and finally passed and the Mayor and Clerk **BE AUTHORIZED** to sign same; and,
4. The Clerk **BE AUTHORIZED** to secure a vendor(s) for the 2022 Municipal Election.

2. BACKGROUND:

Section 42 of the Municipal Election Act provides authority for the Council of a local municipality to pass by-laws authorizing electors to use an alternative voting method such as internet, telephone or vote by mail. The Act indicates that the by-law authorizing alternate voting methods, and also the by-law authorizing the use of vote counting equipment, be enacted prior to May 1 in the year before the election. The goal of the 2022 Amherstburg Municipal Election is to ensure that the voting process is open and transparent, is accessible to all eligible voters and further that each eligible voter has only one vote, and that individual ballot results are not disclosed.

3. **DISCUSSION:**

For the 2018 Municipal Election, the Town of Amherstburg used a traditional voting method, being one which utilizes paper ballots and optical scan vote tabulators. In this method, qualified electors arrive at the polls and authenticate their identity. If authentication is successful, the voter will be presented with a ballot containing a list of qualified candidates for the contested offices. The voter proceeds to a private booth and marks their choices and the completed ballot is placed in a special secrecy envelope and inserted into the Ballot Box via an electronic counting device. The tabulator scans the ballot, interprets the digital image of the ballot, stores and tallies the results and prints a cumulative total of all votes cast after the polls have been closed.

As with all methods of voting, there are advantages and disadvantages to the traditional voting method. Some of the advantages are:

- Electors are familiar and comfortable with the traditional method;
- Privacy is ensured during the casting of votes;
- Election results are prompt, timely and accurate;
- The Ballot is tabulated immediately, notifying the voters of any errors on the ballot, reducing the possibility of rejected ballots;
- There is a paper trail should a recount be necessary;
- The municipality maintains care, custody and control of the election process including but not restricted to the safeguarding of ballots and the counting thereof; and,
- Candidates are able to campaign up to the close of polls on election day.

Conversely, there are some perceived disadvantages with this method, some of which include:

- Limits the flexibility of the voter (i.e. they cannot vote anytime, they are provided parameters);
- May be difficulties in finding accessible voting locations in that previously used voting locations present barriers which negatively affect the ability of electors to access the facility;
- Weather may have a negative effect on voter turnout;
- May be deemed by some as old school and non-progressive;
- More labour intensive and thus increases workload and staffing.

However, many of these perceived disadvantages can be mitigated through proper election planning. For example, the perceived disadvantage of limiting voter flexibility can be mitigated by holding a number of advance polls so that the electorate have options of when and where to vote. Further, through proper planning, it is possible to find polling locations that will be accessible to all.

Alternative methods of voting that may also be used, in combination with or in place of the traditional method, are vote by mail, telephone and/or internet. It is noted that the majority of Ontario municipalities now use some alternative form of voting other than or in combination with paper ballots at polling stations.

In the 2010 municipal election, the Town of Amherstburg utilized the Vote by Mail system. Numerous complaints were received from the public as well as the candidates regarding the validity of some ballots cast, delay in the reporting of the results and value for dollars spent on the election. As a result of the problems which occurred, prior to the 2014 municipal election, the Town of Amherstburg commissioned the Oracle Group to conduct a survey of its electors to determine which method of voting was preferable. An overwhelming majority favoured the traditional voting system and this was the system which was used in both the 2014 and 2018 Municipal Elections.

While there are advantages and disadvantages to all voting methods, as it is now less than 10 months from Voting Day for the 2022 Municipal Election, it is recommended that the Town continue to use the traditional method of voting, together with optical scan voting method as the voting method for the 2022 Municipal Election. Use of this familiar method will not only be familiar and comfortable for the electorate, but will also allow 2022 Municipal Election preparations to move forward smoothly and expeditiously.

As Council may wish to investigate alternative voting methods for use in the future, Administration will bring a fulsome report on the subject midway through the next term of Council, during 2024. By doing so, Council will have ample time to consider this matter, and Administration will have ample time to implement any direction from Council, well in advance of the 2026 Municipal Election.

4. RISK ANALYSIS:

Well managed, there are no increased or additional risks associated with using the traditional voting method over and above those that are inherent in any election process.

5. FINANCIAL MATTERS:

All methods of voting require statutory notices to be placed in newspapers, to hold open houses and public meetings. Where one method may save monies in labour costs, increased cost in other methods with respect to printing and mailing tend to offset any savings. There appears to be no appreciable cost savings realized by choosing one method over another.

The 2018 Municipal Election was run as a traditional method with optical scan vote tabulators. In 2018, the cost to run the election, including the cost of the re-count, was \$92,135. In preparation for the upcoming 2022 election, the approved 2021, 2020 and 2019 budgets currently incorporate additional funding to adequately manage the 2022 election. The election reserve will have \$135,000 set aside for the 2022 election to cover costs by election time, should the current budgeting process be followed in 2022.

6. CONSULTATIONS:

N/A

7. CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, as it is now less than 10 months from Voting Day for the 2022 Municipal Election, it is recommended that the Town continue to use the traditional method of

voting, together with optical scan voting tabulators as the voting method for the 2022 Municipal Election. Use of this accustomed method will not only be familiar and comfortable for the electorate, but will also allow 2022 Municipal Election preparations to move forward smoothly and expeditiously.



Valerie Critchley

(Interim) Director of Legislative Services & Clerk

Report Approval Details

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This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Tiffany Hong



Tony Haddad



Valerie Critchley