

SHORT WORKSHOP ON COMMITTEES AND COMMITTEE STRUCTURES

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Please feel free to be in touch at any time!



CAPE BRETON
REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY





KEY QUESTIONS

What are we trying to achieve?

What are committees actually for?

What standing and temporary committees do we need?

What would make committees effective?



A PROPOSED WAY TO PROCEED



I will gather ideas and get initial guidance from you today.



I will prepare for you a short memorandum -- with recommendations -- by the end of this week.



We can reconvene to discuss and fine-tune the recommendations.



Possible further fine-tuning / additional phase: after your Strategic Planning



THE PURPOSES OF COMMITTEES


- Advise Council on governing
- Lighten the Council agendas
- Give key issues more careful examination
- Highlight strategic priority areas
- Engage citizen talents and expertise
- Make disparate geographical communities and diverse cultural communities feel more included and empowered.
- Develop leadership and areas of expertise within council
- Allow for democratic deliberation and discussion of alternatives in public.
- Meet statutory (legal) requirements
- Other?



TYPES OF MUNICIPAL COMMITTEES

- **Standing Committees** (including statutorily mandated committees)
- **Ad hoc Committees** (Special Committees, Task Forces, Working Groups) – time-limited with a precise mandate to complete a project or study
- **Citizen Advisory Committees/Boards** (usually made up primarily of citizens and chaired by a citizen member). Often, these can report to a Standing Committee or a General Committee and not directly to Council.
- **Community Councils** (focusing on part of the municipality, but reporting to the municipal council)

NOTE: These do not include external committees or boards to which Council makes appointments.



WHICH COMMITTEES TO HAVE IS NOT THE ONLY QUESTION ...

- **Terms of Reference / Mandate Letters: Committees should have clear purposes, timelines, and benchmarks.**
- **Training for Chairs. A Chair is a catalyst and facilitator. Committees don't have to always wait for staff.**
- **Meeting frequency, structure of agendas.**
- ***BUT ... committees should not substitute for staff and administration (MGA is clear).***

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EXAMPLES OF “SMART” APPROACHES TO MUNICIPAL COMMITTEES

CHARLOTTETOWN MODEL

Advisory boards/committee reflect areas of strategic priority: e.g. Arts Advisory Board, Food Council, Seniors Engagement Committee, Youth Engagement Committee





MISSISSAUGA MODEL

Councillors take turns (monthly rotation) chairing the General Committee and Planning and Development Committee (which includes all councillors) to allow the Mayor to participate actively in debate.



EDMONTON MODEL

Each neighbourhood has a citizen-led community league (mandated by the city), which collaborates with City Council through an Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues.



Wałbrzych Model

(In 2019, CBRM and Wałbrzych became twin cities)

Committees often function like small focus groups. They develop councillors' expertise – e.g. knowledge of finances, governance, economic development -- in order to strategize and oversee transition to a post-industrial economy. (Wałbrzych is a former coal-mining city with a similar population size to CBRM).



A few insights from outside the municipal world ...

CBU Senate Model

- **We no longer form a Task Force without giving it a tight deadline and three or four specific questions to answer. Once completed, the Task Force is disbanded. We usually reach outside the Senate for most Task Force members**



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MATTERS

NATIONAL TRUST FOR CANADA MODEL

- Annual, one-page “Mandate Letters” to all committees – including standing committees. The Mandate Letters give each committee three or four key things to achieve this year. (Mandate letters are tied to actually following through on the Strategic Directions.)

COMMON COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE PROBLEMS

Unclear
mandate

No clear goals / no
sense of
momentum from
one meeting to the
next

Long (marathon)
and disorganized
meeting
(No breaks!)

One or two people
do all the talking

Personal conflicts

Members don't do
their homework/
unprepared

Too much
grandstanding

Chair is not
guiding the
meeting
forward

Options before
the group are
unclear

Committee has
outlived its
usefulness

Failure to tap
into community
expertise

Failure to meet


QUESTION 1

**How will CBRM be different in four years because of Council's leadership?
Please write down 3-5 points.**

QUESTION 2

Please tell me about a great committee you served on (for any organization)? What made it great?

QUESTION 3



Please tell me about a bad committee experience? (You don't have to name the organization.)

QUESTION 4

What committee would you be excited to join? (It doesn't have to exist already.)

QUESTION 5

**Let's reflect together
about emerging
themes in our
discussion**

PLEASE SHARE A FINAL INSIGHT

As I write a memo to you this week on committees, committee effectiveness, and meetings, what is one thing you want me to keep in mind?