

ST. JOHN'S

Minutes of Committee of the Whole - City Council

Council Chambers, 4th Floor, City Hall

February 18, 2025, 3:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Danny Breen
Deputy Mayor Sheilagh O'Leary
Councillor Maggie Burton
Councillor Ron Ellsworth
Councillor Sandy Hickman
Councillor Jill Bruce
Councillor Greg Noseworthy
Councillor Tom Davis
Councillor Carl Ridgeley

Regrets: Councillor Debbie Hanlon
Councillor Ophelia Ravencroft

Staff: Kevin Breen, City Manager
Derek Coffey, Deputy City Manager of Finance & Corporate Services
Tanya Haywood, Deputy City Manager of Community Services
Jason Sinyard, Deputy City Manager of Planning, Engineering & Regulatory Services
Lynnann Winsor, Deputy City Manager of Public Works
Cheryl Mullett, City Solicitor
Theresa Walsh, City Clerk
Jackie O'Brien, Manager of Corporate Communications
Jennifer Squires, Legislative Assistant

Others Victoria Etchegary, Manager, Organizational Performance & Strategy
Christine Carter, Elections Coordinator

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Announcements**
3. **Approval of the Agenda**

Recommendation

Moved By Councillor Bruce

Seconded By Deputy Mayor O'Leary

That the agenda be adopted as presented.

For (9): Mayor Breen, Deputy Mayor O'Leary, Councillor Burton, Councillor Ellsworth, Councillor Hickman, Councillor Bruce, Councillor Noseworthy, Councillor Davis, and Councillor Ridgeley

MOTION CARRIED (9 to 0)

4. **Adoption of the Minutes**

4.1 Adoption of Minutes - February 4, 2025

Recommendation

Moved By Councillor Ridgeley

Seconded By Councillor Davis

That the minutes of February 4, 2025, be adopted as presented.

For (9): Mayor Breen, Deputy Mayor O'Leary, Councillor Burton, Councillor Ellsworth, Councillor Hickman, Councillor Bruce, Councillor Noseworthy, Councillor Davis, and Councillor Ridgeley

MOTION CARRIED (9 to 0)

5. **Presentations/Delegations**
6. **Finance & Administration - Councillor Ron Ellsworth**
7. **Public Works - Councillor Ophelia Ravencroft**
8. **Community Services and Special Events - Councillor Jill Bruce**
9. **Housing - Councillor Ron Ellsworth**

10. **Economic Development, Tourism & Immigration - Councillor Tom Davis**

11. **Arts & Culture - Councillor Sandy Hickman**

12. **Governance & Strategic Priorities - Mayor Danny Breen**

12.1 2024 Municipal By-Elections Report and Recommendations

The City Clerk reviewed the 2024 Municipal By-Elections Report, which contained information on registration, accessibility, voter turnout, and cost. The 2024 Municipal By-Elections Report also included three key recommendations: mandatory voter pre-registration, seeking legislative changes to allow for electronic and telephone voting options, and reducing the number of Satellite Drop-off Centres (SDOCs). These recommendations are interconnected, as changes in voting methods could influence the need for vote-by-mail kits. If electronic and telephone voting are implemented, mandatory pre-registration could follow, ensuring that kits are only sent to registered voters who request them.

The report suggests that while recommendations 1 and 2 may not be ready for the upcoming election, Staff are advising that recommendation 3 implemented immediately. This would mean returning to the practice of having one SDOC per ward on election day, reducing costs while maintaining accessibility. Additionally, the City is considering placing additional drop-boxes at City-owned facilities to improve voter convenience and accessibility and increase election awareness.

Councillor Ridgely, while supportive of the recommendations, requested that consideration be given to a second SDOC in Ward 5 due to the size of the ward. Members of Council voiced their support of having a second SDOC in Ward 5. Councillor Davis noted that voter turnout was a challenge and felt that requiring mandatory registration may deter residents from participating in the democratic process. The importance of accessibility was noted, and support was shown for the provision of additional satellite drop off boxes at City facilities.

Councillor Hickman and Mayor Breen agreed that changes to the Municipal Elections Act to allow electronic and telephone voting were an important next step for voter engagement. They were optimistic about discussing the legislative changes with the Province once Staff are ready to move forward with the recommendation.

Recommendation**Moved By** Councillor Burton**Seconded By** Councillor Ellsworth

That Council accept the 2024 Municipal By-Election Report, allowing staff to begin work on the recommendations it contains, deferring mandatory registration until legislation allows for telephone/electronic voting. Council also approves the reduction of the number of Satellite Drop-off Centres per Ward, returning to pre-pandemic practice, with one SDOC location per Ward with consideration for 2 SDOC locations in Ward 5 for the upcoming 2025 Municipal General Election in October.

For (9): Mayor Breen, Deputy Mayor O'Leary, Councillor Burton, Councillor Ellsworth, Councillor Hickman, Councillor Bruce, Councillor Noseworthy, Councillor Davis, and Councillor Ridgeley

MOTION CARRIED (9 to 0)**12.2 Strategic Plan Report 2024 and Action Plan 2025**

The City Manager provided Council with an overview of the 2024 Strategic Plan Report and Action Plan for 2025. Acknowledgement was given to the progress made on sustainability initiatives, and support was shown for the planned Metrobus improvements, which include the electrification of the fleet, Visa and Mastercard tap options, and six new bus shelters.

Recommendation**Moved By** Councillor Ellsworth**Seconded By** Councillor Bruce

That Council approve the 2025 action plan.

For (9): Mayor Breen, Deputy Mayor O'Leary, Councillor Burton, Councillor Ellsworth, Councillor Hickman, Councillor Bruce, Councillor Noseworthy, Councillor Davis, and Councillor Ridgeley

MOTION CARRIED (9 to 0)**13. Planning - Councillor Maggie Burton****14. Development - Councillor Carl Ridgeley**

15. **Engineering and Regulatory Services - Councillor Sandy Hickman**
16. **Sustainability - Deputy Mayor Sheilagh O'Leary**
17. **Parks, Open Spaces, and Facilities - Councillor Greg Noseworthy**
18. **Other Business**
19. **Adjournment**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 3:23 p.m.

Mayor