

Considered at March 23, 2021 Council Meeting

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Memorandum

Date: March 9, 2021
Submitted by: Mayor Rob Vagramov and City Manager
Subject: Implementing Hybrid Council Meetings

This memo is in response to Council's direction for the Mayor and City Manager to report back to Council with respect to additional budget requests and staff impacts associated with Hybrid meetings. Hybrid meetings in this instance means a Council meeting held in the Inlet Theatre with some members of Council and staff in the theatre and other Council members and staff participating remotely. Hybrid meetings provide an opportunity for the public to attend the meeting in person in the theatre.

With the recent relaxation of some COVID-19 restrictions, and predictions of further relaxations in the coming months, this memo seeks to facilitate Hybrid Meetings as soon as possible.

This memo includes the Council direction as approved by motion and a description of the action taken by staff to date.

Council Motion #1

THAT Council implement electronic meetings immediately until hybrid meetings are available.

Staff Action

An Electronic meeting on one zoom platform was implemented for the Nov. 3rd and 10th Council meetings and will continue until alternate direction of Council is provided.

Council Motion #2

THAT staff be directed to test a pilot Hybrid Meeting setup for the November 3, 2020 and November 10, 2020 meetings of Council involving dedicated participant devices, and manual audio mixing.

Staff Action

Dedicated (repurposed) laptops were set-up at Council desks for the Nov. 3rd and 10th meetings of Council. Meetings took place successfully in a hybrid capacity, with only minor tech issues.

Due to the spike in pandemic activity and direction given by the Province of British Columbia, on Nov 10th, the Mayor sent an email advising Council and staff that *Council meetings will be held electronically until further notice*. Manual audio mixing was successfully managed by the theatre technician.

Council Motion #3

AND THAT Council approve the procurement of dedicated devices for in-person meeting participants, and support devices, to facilitate holding Hybrid Meetings indefinitely into the future.

Staff Action

Staff procured the required equipment to support hybrid meetings:

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- 7 Computers for Council
- 2 Computers for Presenters in Theatre
- 2 Computers for Streaming the meetings in the Control Booth

The total cost for the above was \$14,859 and was funded by the COVID-19 Safe Restart Grant. In addition it was necessary to purchase a Zoom Webinar license at a cost of \$636/year (\$53/month). This Zoom cost will be added to the Operating Budget for 2021.

In addition to devices for meeting participants, the computing requirements for effectively chairing electronic and/or hybrid meetings of Council have exceeded the capabilities of the technology procured for the Mayor's Office at the beginning of the term, when such meeting arrangements were not considered.

The current chairing setup involves the one laptop originally intended for maximum portability, not video processing. It barely handles HD video feeds, converts and streams them into Zoom while resting on pens and erasers to dissipate heat. There are a substantial number of personal or borrowed electronic devices (including cameras and computers) being used to facilitate the chairing of meetings, and an additional 4 city devices are used for lighting, agendas, and communications with Staff. One device has been fried due to load and replaced with another borrowed device. As such, a computer designed for video capabilities, a secondary display, a monitor and various cables/dongles are proposed for the Mayor's office to improve meeting efficiency, timeliness, better timing of speakers, and reducing the number of total devices needed for meetings. These devices will be used in both electronic and hybrid applications.

Council Motion #4

AND THAT the Mayor and City Manager report back to Council at the November 10, 2020 meeting of Council on additional budget requests and staff impacts;

As noted previously, Hybrid meetings, as defined above, require the following resources in addition to the above, for adequate implementation:

- Theatre Technician to manage audio, video and Zoom meeting \$8,460/year
- Boom Mic Operator/Cleaner \$8,460/year
- Registration staff/ Front of House \$4,480/year
- Door staff Front of House \$4,480/year
- Computer equipment with video capabilities \$7,000
- **Total = \$32,880**

Post Covid-19, where physical distancing is no longer required, the City would only require one additional Theatre Technician to manage audio, video and Zoom meeting at a cost of \$8,460/year. The ongoing \$8,460 would need to be added to the Operating Budget in Cultural Services - Inlet Theatre. The funding source for all Hybrid meeting costs would be the Provincial COVID-19 Safe Restart Grant and would have no tax impact. It is recommended:

THAT Council authorize up to \$34,000 in order to adequately implement Hybrid meetings of Council, to be funded through the Provincial COVID-19 Safe Restart Grant.

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Report Approval Details

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

Tim Savoie, City Manager - Mar 17, 2021 - 2:37 PM