

Delegation to Corporate Services, Strategy, Risk and Accountability Committee

Good Day to the Chair, Members of Committee, Madame Mayor, staff and members of the public.

I delegate today, on behalf of the Citizen Members of the Advisory Review Team, in support of the recommendation by staff to complete the review of advisory committees.

Along with this support we'd also like to share additional guidance surrounding the areas we considered in great depth. Offered in the hope that committee and staff may avoid some of the drawbacks we encountered and save time reconsidering things already well studied.

1. We absolutely support a review and creation of consistent terms of reference that provide standardized information about the role of an advisory committee, define what it is, what it isn't and its relationship to council.

Confusion of roles on advisory committees was expressed by staff, advisory members and members of council and was clearly evident throughout all of the surveys. Our suggested two tiered terms of reference including standardized purposing, common to all committees and the unique goals and objectives of individual committees will clarify roles, reduce misunderstanding of the general duties of advisories and the specifics of each advisory.

2. We absolutely support improvements in training for advisory committee members particularly as that addresses roles and terms of reference.
3. We also support the notion that some advisories or task oriented committees will have term limits and sun setting provisions.
4. We are essentially neutral on the matter of mandatory advisory reviews. We think elected councilors are perfectly capable of requesting any such reviews as deemed necessary by them.

We would, however draw attention to our recommendation that length of committee service, presently limited to two terms of three years, be amended to be 3 terms of two years. This would remove a time commitment barrier for some potential members while maintaining the same terms for those who are already committed. It also allows for continuity of committee knowledge, work and mentoring of new members while avoiding the politicization of term endings coinciding with changes of council.

5. We are absolutely supportive of a workshop with staff and council to gain a consensus on the role, function, structure, terms of reference, recruitment and tasks of advisory committees. An opportunity to review the input received from the public, council, action labs, and advisory committee review team and consider how our recommendations may be used.

I think it is fair to say that the workshop of February 25th concluded unsatisfactorily for all involved.

With the best of intentions, a consultant brought in to support the recommendations of the Review Team got badly off on the wrong foot, took up way too much time on incidental issues and, we believe, lost us the opportunity for a much more productive dialog with council. We would welcome the opportunity for Q & A and deeper dive into our recommendations and the reasons behind them

6. We are supportive of reporting back on options for greater engagement opportunities using digital technologies, civic lotteries, and other tools, to improve connection between community members and city hall. We encourage seeking perspectives from organisations experienced in running successful civic lotteries and the benefits they bring. As a volunteer committee we relied heavily upon the work of Mass LBP.
7. We support maintaining intact the provincially legislated Accessibility Advisory and Heritage Advisories. We support maintaining the Mundialization, Downtown Parking, and Sustainable Development Advisory Committees which have clear mandates and function well. We also support maintaining the newly formed Agricultural and Rural Affairs Advisory Committee. Subject to the proposed review and update of the terms of reference.

In all of our deliberations there was never any suggestion that these committees should change or cease to exist. Our focus has always been on improving advisories which we believe the proposed review and update of terms of reference will help achieve.

8. We support the creation of a Transit Advisory but in doing so we acknowledge that a single committee that considers all transportation appears attractive. This is why ITAC was created in the first place. However, in practice ITAC has seemed hampered by conflicting agendas of competing mobility alternatives. The formation of an ITAC 2.0 which absorbs cycling and a new transit advisory might face similar challenges.

If the current committees are to be reformulated, might we suggest two committees with achievable areas of responsibility: "Transit" and "Active Transportation". Cycling being one element of a larger active transportation effort in a city dedicated to tackling a climate emergency.

We support council's current emphasis on improving transit as part of a wider mobility plan, deserving of a standalone committee. We encourage terms of reference for both of these advisories to stress a strong expectation of collaboration between transportation-related committees.

9. We are supportive of striking a task force of community members to review the terms of reference of the former Waterfront Access and Protection Advisory Committee.
This might be a perfect trial for the effectiveness of issue specific task forces.
In line with our original recommendation we would encourage such a review to consider the legislative weight of some kind of tie in or support from the existing heritage advisory.
10. We feel that in the proposed review of terms of reference for all advisory committees, any issues concerning roles, activities, staff support, structure and membership for the Millennial, Seniors and Inclusivity Advisory Committees will be suitably addressed. Concerns over the naming or age ranges can best be addressed by the committees and their members/staff liaisons.
11. We support consulting with the recreation services department to potentially formalize the newly established Burlington Youth Council and to wholly integrate it as a full advisory with the same rights and responsibilities as any other advisory.

Areas we had hoped might come through more strongly in the direction include:

Advisory Budgets: We are still of the opinion that funding for all advisories should be pooled and more fairly allocated to each advisory, commensurate with the work being undertaken by that advisory. Presently advisory budgets range from a few hundred dollars to several thousand. Understanding that some funding is mandated or donated and cannot be redirected, a more equitable distribution would encourage and promote advisory work.

With the support of the less generously funded advisories, we had hoped to see further investigation of this.

"Vision to Focus Alignment: We recommended that a collaborative group called CiViC be created to help match needs for advice and engagement with the appropriate advisory groups and/or task forces and coordinate the engagement efforts of staff and members.

Convinced that there should be improving collaboration and communication between advisory committees, staff liaisons and committee clerks, we envisaged the establishment of a joint collaborative CiViC team meeting quarterly to create a formal structure to achieve this improvements.

Our longer term vision for CiViC was of some realignment of staff functions to better utilize various skill sets with a view to providing consistency in communication, collaboration, advisory roles, responsibilities, recruitment and training to improve the effectiveness of advisories on community engagement.

We urge council and city leadership to give serious consideration to this better alignment between departmental responsibilities in the pursuit of the city's Vision to Focus effort on citizen engagement and advisories.

In closing, we offer our thanks to all the staff who supported and encouraged our work on this worthwhile endeavour.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of The Citizen Members of the Advisory Review Team.

Jim Young