



# The Corporation of the Town of Milton

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Report To: Council

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From: Meaghen Reid, Director, Legislative & Legal Services/Town Clerk

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Glen Cowan, Chief Financial Officer / Treasurer

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Date: April 12, 2021

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Report No: CORS-021-21

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Subject: Council Meeting Management Software System

**Recommendation:** THAT a new capital project be created in the amount of \$13,490 to accelerate the Agenda Management System that was previously identified for 2022, with funding from the Project Variance Account.

THAT the single source award to eScribe Software Ltd. for a Council Meeting Management Software System be approved for an initial capital cost of \$9,900 (excluding HST) and a three year operating term at total cost of \$112,663 (excluding HST).

THAT the Manager, Purchasing and Risk Management be authorized to execute the contract(s), as outlined by the purchasing by-law, and the Mayor and the Town Clerk be authorized to sign any other required paperwork.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval for the implementation of a Council meeting management software, which was identified as one of the top 10 business cases through the Service Delivery Review Phase 2 and subsequently endorsed by Council, in principle.
- Funding of the operational costs are sourced through reallocating existing budget savings and therefore no additional operating costs are required.
- Benefits to staff: Implementing a Council meeting management software system seeks to streamline and modernize manual/outdated processes related to agenda creation and to improve the overall experience with respect to the agenda



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

management process. Digitizing this process will result in efficiencies for staff across the Corporation.

- **Benefits to the Public and Council:** The implementation achieves better customer service through improvements to the end-user experience when accessing and viewing Council agendas and related documents, including the addition of an HTML agenda option. Furthermore, there will be enhanced video viewing capabilities and live closed captioning will be added to meetings in keeping with legislated accessibility requirements.
- **Overall Benefit:** The implementation would allow for an opportunity for the Town to move toward paperless agendas and minutes, allowing for a more sustainable and efficient process. Members of Council will be given access via a mobile application to browse upcoming meeting agendas and related reports and supporting information.

## REPORT

### Background

Council approved the Council Staff Work plan on July 20, 2020, including the strategy to “investigate opportunities to modernize or automate processes that are outdated” as part of the Service Innovation priority area.

On December 14, 2020, Council approved the following resolution with respect to the Service Delivery Review (SDR) Phase 2:

THAT the ten business cases in the Service Delivery Review - Phase 2 (Corporate Services) Final Report attached as Appendix A be endorsed in principle and further validated through financial and operational analysis and budget approval where necessary, prior to implementation.

Business Case #9 in the Service Delivery Review Phase 2 recommended that the Town implement a Council meeting management software system to streamline and modernize manual/outdated processes related to agenda creation and to improve the end-user experience when accessing Council agendas and related documents. It was stated that there is an opportunity for the Town to consider a Council meeting management software system to provide more efficient ways for Council agendas to be created, for agendas to be distributed and for members of the public and Council members to access Council agendas and related documents.

Over the years, staff have developed an internal process for Council agenda management that is very manual, leaves significant room for human error with various versions of documents being transferred by e-mails and also results in versions being saved on

## Background

multiple drives. Increasing pressures have recently been placed on this time-sensitive process when the Provincial requirement came into effect as of January 1, 2021, whereby all web content has to be made WCAG 2.0 AA accessible, including all Council meeting documents.

The current process of preparing reports and agendas poses many challenges, namely:

- Manual, outdated procedure that leaves significant room for error;
- Difficulty in maintaining version control;
- Lack of audit trail of changes to reports and agendas;
- Most workflows currently taking place through e-mails (including approvals, version control);
- Manual integration with the Town's website (whereby each report, agenda, webcast link has to be manually and individually added to the website);
- Duplication of records as Council reports are often saved in various locations on the Town's servers;
- Conducting the necessary accessibility checks manually and training staff to apply WCAG 2.0 AA principles in a very time sensitive process is challenging.

## Discussion

### **Purpose of a Council meeting management software system**

A Council meeting management system is a software application that is used to electronically create meeting documents, workflow them for review and approval, and publish those documents to websites. The system essentially manages the documents from creation to archive, while providing version control and an audit trail of all changes.

In keeping with the themes of digitization and effective use of technology, the new Council Meeting Management System would allow for an opportunity for the Town to move toward paperless agendas and minutes. This would allow for a more sustainable process and would support the efforts identified in the 2021 Climate Change Work Plan.

With a Council meeting management system, Council members will access the digital version of the agenda via web browser or alternately can be given access via a mobile application to browse upcoming meeting agendas and related reports and supporting information. This is in keeping with the current practice whereby the Town has not been printing paper agendas since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Benefits of a Council meeting management software system**

#### **1) Benefits to the Corporation:**

- a) Improved and streamlined workflow for the entire pre and post Council meeting process.



## Discussion

- b) Centralized document version control (thereby eliminating the current duplication of staff efforts through use of e-mails to manage version control).
  - c) Audit trail of all changes to the reports, benefiting both the report writers as well as their Commissioners.
  - d) Reduced room for inefficiencies and human error through customized workflows to replace the current manual processes that rely on the use of e-mails and shared drives.
  - e) A Council meeting management software aligns with the work that is currently underway through the Council-approved Enterprise Content Management (ECM) system project for the Town. The ECM project seeks to house the Town's digital documents with better access and security control, promote better recordkeeping practices (e.g. create one source of truth; reduce unnecessary transitory records), improve internal business processes, and eventually be able to dispose digital records with the appropriate audit trail, and preserving the Town's corporate history in a digital age.
  - f) Ability to build on and enhance the use of the platform in the future by onboarding the rest of the Town's Committees and Boards. This would provide for a synchronized, integrated approach to the management of all of the Town's committees.
  - g) Ability to build on and add future enhancements such as streamlining of delegation requests, managing of Bill 68 conflict of interest requirements (currently done through a manual process via e-mail and posting on the website).
  - h) Integration with the Town's website (through a vendor partner contract) allowing for automatic agenda uploads to the website, thereby eliminating the current manual process.
  - i) Enhanced integration with the current Council meeting web streaming solution used by the Town. This integration will timestamp the web stream so that interested parties can move through the agenda and automatically jump to the corresponding video segment in the post-meeting recording.
  - j) Through efficiencies gained staff are committed to reviewing the opportunities gained and any existing FTE time would be reallocated where priority needs dictate.
- 2) Overall Benefits to the Public, and to Members of Council**
- a) More efficient and sustainable approach to providing Council and Committee information. A significant reduction in the reliance for paper agendas can be realized.
  - b) An integrated, user-friendly interface that allows for improved viewing and web search functions (as agendas are posted in HTML format, in addition to the current PDF only option).
  - c) Increased accessibility features including a fully responsive WCAG 2.0 AA design and the ability to publish documents in HTML format.

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- d) Advanced webcasting capabilities. Council meeting webcasts would be recorded and posted within one system. Agenda items can be synched to videos so that residents/staff/Council can locate a specific agenda item on a video without having to watch the entire video, or search for that specific item.
- e) The system is a web-based interface that can be accessed from anywhere, at any time and is compatible and adaptable with multiple devices.

## Single Source Award

The proposed vendor is a leader in its industry with 150 Ontario Municipal clients. This ensures that the vendor and their software is already compliant with all applicable Ontario legislations to safeguard and manage all Town Council records to meet the highest standards. The proposed award would align the Town's digitization efforts to those of the other Halton Region municipalities, as Burlington, Halton Hills and Oakville have already implemented the proposed agenda management system.

The Town currently utilizes iSi to provide web hosting services for Council meetings. iSi is wholly owned by eScribe, and as such offers full compatibility with the existing software and hardware that is utilized by the Town.

## Proposed Contract

A proposal has been received from eScribe for the initial implementation as well as the annual licensing of the software for a three year period. The initial setup and training comes with a cost of \$9,900. Following that, annual service and support fees will start at \$36,450 in year one, and grow to \$38,670 by year three, for a total cost of \$112,663. All figures exclude HST.

## Implementation and Change Management

Subject to Council approval and the finalization of the agreement, staff in Legislative and Legal will oversee the implementation, working closely with the Information Technology division to ensure the system is installed, configured and fully tested before engaging with stakeholders across the organization to migrate existing agenda creation processes into the new and improved workflows. The project will take approximately six months to roll out corporately.

Staff are aware that, similar to the implementation of any new workflow efficiency initiatives, users of this system will be asked to adapt to the change management in implementing to the new system. In that respect, we have ensured that the impact to all of the system's users is a positive one, with the following benefits being implemented to all the user groups:

- Report writers will see familiarity in the new process whereby Microsoft Office will still be used to create and write reports. Report writers will see improvement in the



## Discussion

process whereby they will be logging their reports into a system that will track the approvals and provide them with an audit trail of all comments without the use of multiple e-mails and drives.

- Report approvers (Leadership and Strategic Management Team) will also see improvements through the ability to track the life cycle of all their reports through one centralized viewing and approval system. Unlike with the use of e-mails and drives, multiple LMT and SMT members can be logged into the system and can track updates and changes to the reports and agendas as they are happening.
- Members of Council will have access to their own portal within the system which will provide a one-stop-shop with all of the up-to date agenda information. The system will provide increased version control for Council, reducing the need to use e-mails to send revised agendas, additional presentations and confidential items.

## Next Steps

The six month implementation process will include the following:

- Significant outreach to receive feedback from users, including staff and Council members.
- Training to staff and Council to ensure that workflows are created to mirror, where necessary, and to improve upon current processes.
- Updates to the website as implementation nears completion.

## Financial Impact

Funding for a Council meeting management software system was identified in the forecast for 2022 as part of the approved 2021 Capital Budget. Based on the results of the service delivery phase 2 project and the benefits described above, program staff would like to proceed with the initiative at this time.

It is recommended that a new capital project be approved in the amount of \$13,490 as detailed in the following table and funded from the Project Variance Account:

Expense	Amount (Note 1)
Implementation costs	\$10,074
Migration of existing meeting content	1,832
Contingency (10%)	1,191
Capital Surcharge	393
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$13,490</b>

Note 1: Inclusive of non-recoverable HST where applicable

Should this be approved, the funding that was previously identified in 2022 would no longer be required and would be removed through the 2022 Budget process.

