

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON FEBRUARY 3, 2015
FROM:	CATHARINE SAUNDERS CITY CLERK
SUBJECT	COUNCIL POLICY CHANGES

RECOMMENDATION

That this report BE RECEIVED for information.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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None.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting on January 13, 2015, the Municipal Council resolved:

“That the City Clerk BE DIRECTED to review and report back, at the February 3, 2015 meeting of the Corporate Services Committee, with respect to the following:

- a) possible changes to corporate policies that would allow food and non-alcoholic beverages to be consumed by the public during Council meetings;
- b) making vending machines, or other refreshment options, available to the public during Council and Standing Committee meetings, in order for the public to be able to purchase refreshments on site; and,
- c) the scheduling of meal breaks on public agendas.” (6/2/CSC) (AS AMENDED)

Food & Drink in the Council Chambers

Currently there is no written policy prohibiting consumption of food and drink in the Council Chambers, however the practice has long been discouraged for general etiquette, maintenance and security reasons. A scan of Canadian municipalities revealed that of those municipalities surveyed, Moncton, New Brunswick was the only one which openly allowed food in the Council Chambers, subject to approval from the City Clerk. This approval is exercised at the discretion of the City Clerk, and primarily during extended meeting sessions (i.e. day-long meetings). The Moncton policy is related to potential equipment damage (on the Council floor) and meeting disruption (from the gallery). Generally speaking, eating/drinking in the public gallery is tolerated so long as it is not disruptive to the meeting, in keeping with the practice here in London.

While there are few limitations to Council allowing food/drink in the Chambers, due consideration should be given to:

- the protection of technical equipment at the desks on the Council floor;
- potential disruption/distraction (noise) from the gallery;
- a restriction from using the balcony ledge to set food or drink on for obvious safety reasons; and
- the provision of additional waste/recycling receptacles, and a potential for increased maintenance.

Public Access to Refreshments on Site

There are vending machines publically accessible on the 12th Floor, in the Cafeteria. Accessing these machines during a Council/Committee meeting break is sometimes difficult because of Council Member and staff traffic. To better accommodate these occasions, additional (or alternate) locations for vending machines could be investigated. Potential locations may be the Lower Level, where public-access washrooms are also located.

Providing public access to Cafeteria facilities (food availability and/or use of facilities) may be difficult to manage firstly because it would be very difficult to predetermine and ensure sufficient food and staff are available and secondly the Cafeteria would have to be properly set up to serve those additional individuals wanting to access those services. This could result in increased costs due to the need for additional resources and there may be some risk that food would have to be disposed of in keeping with safe food handling practices because there was “too much” on hand. Further consultation would be required with Cafeteria management staff as to the viability of providing public access to Cafeteria services during meetings.

By way of background, the current Council policy related to public use of the cafeteria is as follows:

“Use of Cafeteria as a Staff Facility

That a policy be established to provide that the City Clerk be authorized and directed to take the steps necessary to de-emphasize the use of the City Hall cafeteria for purposes other than its originally intended use as a staff cafeteria facility.”

As another alternative, should the need present itself (i.e. when it is known in advance that a meeting will be lengthy and well attended by the public), Council could consider the option of making third-party arrangements for food availability, but again it will be very difficult to pre-determine how many people might want to access that food and to adequately address any special dietary requirements or allergies.

On the latter note, the City does offer tours to school-aged children and those tours include a visit to the Council Gallery. Schools have banned certain food (e.g. peanuts and peanut products) for safety of the children, so consideration would have to be given to banning certain foods in the Gallery, if food is to be allowed there, that may put persons with allergies at risk.

Scheduling Meal Breaks on Agendas

In the past, dinner breaks were always held at a set time, or at least within a few minutes of that set time. However in recent years this practice has lessened due to a desire to complete matters actively under discussion or to finish the agenda so there was no further business after the dinner break. The City Clerk’s Office attempts to schedule breaks for the benefit of the Members and the public where there appears to be a natural break in the business, however it is challenging to accurately anticipate the level of discussion and public input. The Council may want to consider adopting a policy where by a common break, for all committees occurs at a set time. By way of consistency among the various meetings, it will soon become an anticipated and appropriate break for all persons involved. The City Clerk’s Office is currently reviewing various practices that may improve the ability to manage shorter breaks in the meeting. Should Council choose to reinstate set break times, it will be important to be realistic with the amount of time required to adequately accommodate the break. It will not serve the public (in attendance or viewing on-line) to indicate a re-start time that cannot be met.

Council may wish to institute any or all of the above options on a pilot basis to work toward the best solution for all parties and we await their direction in that regard.

RECOMMENDED BY:
CATHARINE SAUNDERS CITY CLERK