



Appendix “A” – COVID-19 Work Safe Capacity Layout for MYAC Theatre

Appendix “B” – 2021 Council Meeting Cost Projections

## **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report responds to Council’s direction for staff to investigate the feasibility of returning to in-person Regular Council meetings. This report provides Council with three options to consider for moving forward with Regular Council meetings consistent with current public health guidance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Background**

A Provincial State of Emergency, declared by the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, is still in effect and is expected to continue for the foreseeable future.

Recently, the number of people being infected with COVID-19 in B.C. has been surging upward and health officials are making changes designed to reduce the spread of the disease. On November 5, 2020, B.C. hit a record high of 425 confirmed new cases of COVID-19. This was followed by 589 new cases on November 6, 567 new cases on November 7, and 998 over November 8 and 9. The total number of active cases as at November 10 was 4,891 (its highest total to date). On November 7, Dr. Bonnie Henry announced new restrictions for the Vancouver Coastal Health region and asked businesses “to review their COVID-19 safety plans to ensure every step is being taken to protect everyone”. The order is in effect from Saturday night to Monday, November 23 and focuses on limiting social gatherings, reducing travel, restricting indoor group exercises and strengthening workplace safety plans.

This week also saw Canada’s top public health doctor, Dr. Tam, recommend the use of 3-layer non-medical masks to improve the level of protection that can be provided by non-medical masks or face coverings. Following this recommendation, the Public Health Agency of Canada updated its guidance mentioning the risk of transmission from aerosols for the first time. According to Linsey Marr, one of the top aerosol scientists in the world, “the big difference now is that ventilation is important – distancing alone is not enough.”

The Provincial Health Officer (“PHO”) Order on Gatherings and Events restricts the number of people in attendance at an event. The gathering of more than 50 patrons at a place for the purpose of an event is currently prohibited. This applies to a Council meeting place. All associated WorkSafe Guidelines for office work environments also remain in place.

Young, Anderson Barristers & Solicitors issued a bulletin on June 19, 2020 addressing the latest Ministerial Order on local government meeting requirements:

On June 17, 2020, the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General made Local Government Meetings and Bylaw Process (COVID-19) Order No. 3 (M192) under section 10 of the *Emergency Program Act*. Under Order M192:

- Local government bodies are only permitted to exclude public attendance at an open meeting if, despite using “best efforts”, the local government body is unable to accommodate public attendance in a manner consistent with *Public Health Act* requirements and recommendations.
- Where a local government body holds an open meeting at which the council, board or body

members attend electronically, the local government body must make “best efforts” to have facilities to allow the public to hear or watch the meeting.

- Public hearings may continue to be held by means of electronic or other communication facilities as permitted by the previous Order M139. The new Order M192 does not introduce any requirement to use “best efforts” to allow in-person attendance at a public hearing.

With respect to excluding public attendance at open Council meetings, the Order states that a local government body “must use best efforts to allow members of the public to attend an open meeting of the council or body in a manner that is consistent with any applicable requirements or recommendations made under the *Public Health Act*”. Additionally, it is important to note that a local government body “is not required to allow members of the public to attend a meeting if, despite the best efforts of the council or body, the attendance of members of the public cannot be accommodated at a meeting that would otherwise be held in accordance with the applicable requirements or recommendations under the *Public Health Act*”. The Order also specifically speaks to electronic meetings and continues to allow local government bodies to conduct meetings by means of electronic communication facilities even if some local government body members would be ‘able’ to attend the meeting in person. Where the local government body holds an electronic meeting, it “must use best efforts to use electronic or other communication facilities that allow members of the public to hear, or watch and hear, the part of the meeting that is open to the public”.

On June 23, 2020, RMOW Council passed a resolution to conduct meetings electronically in accordance with the requirements of Order M192. In addition, on September 1, 2020, Council passed the following resolution:

**That** Council direct staff to postpone the September 15 restart of in-person meetings, until which time staff are in a position to provide technology and resources to support both in-person and online meetings.

Since this resolution, a team of RMOW staff, including representation from Legislative Services, Information Technology and Human Resources, have been working closely with Maury Young Arts Centre (“MYAC”) staff to develop an overview of the options for supporting both in-person and electronic Council meetings. The recent change in caseloads, and the associated public health response, highlights that the COVID-19 landscape has evolved since this matter was last brought before Council, and staff have taken this into account in the assessment of the different options. Staff have also assessed the legal and health requirements, including the goals of Order M192 to ensure openness, transparency, accessibility and accountability in respect of Council meetings, the need to keep contacts to a minimum, the physical meeting location, and the procedures for RMOW Council meetings.

## Options

The three primary options considered within this report are as follows:

1. In-person only meetings
2. Hybrid (in-person and electronic) meetings
3. Electronic/Online only meetings

More operational details for each option are presented below including an overview of the application of

relevant COVID-19 safety protocols, an overview of technical and audio/visual requirements, a summary of forecast costs, as well as the relationship of each option with respect to relevant public health orders.

### **Option One: In-person meetings without the use of any electronic technologies**

#### Operational description

This option can best be described as being very similar to the pre-COVID meeting format, with the added layer of COVID-19 health protocols. The physical meeting location would be MYAC. This option does not have an electronic meeting element and does not provide for the ability to participate remotely.

An occupancy plan for MYAC has been developed by RMOW staff and spatial areas are determined using the WorkSafe Guidelines. Spatial requirements dictate that there can only be 23 people in the Theatre and 13 in the Gallery at any one time.

All members of Council and senior staff would be seated on the stage in the Theatre. Desks would be spaced out in accordance with the physical distancing requirements and plexi-glass barriers may need to be installed at each desk and at the presentation podium. Staff note that the following persons may be in attendance at any one time during a Council meeting:

- Seven members of Council;
- Eight senior RMOW staff members (Chief Administrative Officer, Corporate Officer, Council Coordinator, GM Resort Experience, GM Corporate and Community Services, GM Infrastructure Services, Director of Planning and Director of Finance);
- One RMOW staff “greeter” ensuring safe access and flow of people into and out of the Theatre;
- Two RMOW staff presenters (one presenter and one supporting senior staff member);
- One member of the media; and
- One member of the public or a delegation representative at the podium.

This totals 20, and given the spatial requirements setting out a maximum of 23 people in the Theatre at any one time, staff note that only three members of the public could be seated in the Theatre during the meeting. This allows for staff presenters, members of the public and delegations to rotate into the Theatre (one at a time) to either present or ask a question of Council. The Gallery space would be set up as an overflow area for 10 members of the public to hear and watch the Council meeting via an additional TV monitor.

Livestreaming and recorded videos of Council meetings would be provided via whistler.ca. The public would have the ability to email in questions to Council up to 4:00 p.m. on the Council meeting day. During the Public Q&A portion of the meeting, in addition to the public within the theatre, one member of the public (from the Gallery) at a time would have the ability to enter the Theatre and ask a question of Council from the podium.

A final RMOW WorkSafe Guideline and Risk Assessment would need to be completed for this option; prior to implementation however, staff have identified the following preliminary mitigative measures:

- One RMOW staff greeter at the entry to MYAC to explain safety protocols, collect contact information for the purposes of contact tracing, ask screening questions (and restrict access to persons experiencing COVID-like symptoms, those who have travelled out of country in the

previous 14 days and those who have been directed to isolate by a health provider).

- A second RMOW staff greeter in the Gallery to monitor and control distancing and to provide information on seating configurations. This role will also provide assistance with the coordination of staff presenters and members of the public as they enter the Theatre.
- A third RMOW staff greeter in the Theatre to monitor and control distancing, provide information on seating configurations, coordinate staff and public as they enter the Theatre, disinfect the podium after each speaker and manage the exit out of the Theatre.
- MYAC and RMOW staff are currently working on the configuration of furniture to allow for proper physical distancing between Council members and staff members; this includes the potential installation of plexi-glass barriers between each desk and at the podium.
- Signage and wayfinding in place to provide a clear message to public on wayfinding and messaging such as the use of masks and distancing requirements.
- Masks must be worn at all times.
- Safety protocols include the requirement to stay home if sick and proper hand washing/sanitizing.
- Cleaning and disinfection will be elevated to meet WorkSafe Guidelines and will include a full facility disinfection prior to Council and a full clean post Council. This additional effort extends to public spaces and washrooms, backstage and exit routes.
- No sharing of printed materials.
- Continue to encourage members of the public to watch the livestream and submit questions for the Public Q&A via email instead of attending in-person.
- Could require members of the public to request to attend in-person in advance of the meeting (preregister online one week in advance of the meeting).
- No mingling with the public before/after meetings.

#### Strengths of this option

This option demonstrates a compliant interpretation of the use of “best efforts” under M192 to allow in-person attendance at a Council meeting. No additional technical equipment or development is required to execute this option.

#### Challenges and risks associated with this option

One challenge with this option is that, because it does not provide for remote or electronic participation, if a Council member or staff member is unable to attend the meeting in-person (due to the need to isolate, for example) they would not be able to participate. For staff, there is the ability to designate an acting staff member, and the Mayor may call on the Acting Mayor; however, Council members would be absent and this may affect quorum.

Moreover, having a large number of attendees (staff, Council and members of the public) at the meeting place increases the risk of transmission of the virus. Given the recent recognition by Canada’s Public Health Agency of aerosol transmission of the virus, the duration of gatherings and ventilation capabilities are of great importance. Due to the length of Council meetings (often three to four hours or

more) the duration of this type of gathering is a potential concern. The ventilation capabilities of the Theatre would also need to be further explored as there are no opening windows. If an exposure event occurs at a Council meeting, there is the potential that all staff and members of Council (and their families) may be required to self-isolate for 14 days in response to the exposure, resulting in the possible disruption of key municipal operations.

Furthermore, the limited capacity for members of the public to attend a meeting in-person may not justify the increased mutual risk to staff, Council and members of the public. As highlighted above, the number of new cases is increasing and staff, Councilor's and members of the public may be reluctant to attend in-person meetings thereby moving away from the objectives of Order M192. Refusal to return to an 'unsafe workplace' is a serious and formal WorkSafe process guided by a fixed regulatory context and response protocol. If triggered by a refusal, a series of investigation steps, responses, filings and processes must be followed by law, and will consume a significant amount of our in-house health and safety capacity during an already high pressure, high volume workload period.

Staff also note that the need to wear masks during the Council meeting may pose challenges to some viewers of Council meetings from an accessibility perspective. Staff have begun exploring the implementation of a closed captioning system either through Zoom or eSCRIBE. Initial feedback on both options suggests that this service would be relatively expensive and potentially difficult to implement.

#### Associated costs for this option

The costs associated with this option are not insignificant. It is staff's current understanding that Plexi-glass barriers may need to be purchased and installed at the Council and staff tables and at the podium, this is estimated at \$7,000 (based on 14 barriers at \$500 each). Moreover, the rental and incremental staffing costs per Council meeting would be approximately \$2,100 (based on a four hour meeting); over the course of 2021 this would amount to approximately \$48,000. This is more than double the cost originally budgeted for Council meetings in the 2021 budget. The increased cost per Council meeting is due to the additional RMOW staff "greeters", additional MYAC staff time and technical equipment, and enhanced sanitization measures. Please see the cost tables at the end of this report and Appendix "B" for a more detailed breakdown.

### **Option Two: Hybrid (In-person and electronic)**

#### Operational description

The key element of the hybrid option is the ability to choose how to participate. The physical meeting location would be MYAC and the meeting would also be held electronically via Zoom. There are two alternatives associated with this option.

Option 2(a) would allow for all Councillors, staff and members of the public to be able to attend in-person or remotely via Zoom. Option 2(b) would allow for Councillors and necessary staff to attend either in-person or remotely via Zoom, but other staff and members of the public only allowed to participate remotely via Zoom.

Councillors and staff would sign into the Zoom meeting with their own computer (either from home or at their desk in the Theatre).

The operational requirements as set out in Option 1 would apply here as well. However, with Option 2(b) some of these requirements would not be necessary as the public would not be attending in-person. This would relieve the need for all three RMOW "Greeters" (please note that staff would need

to confirm with MYAC the new number of greeters required, but assume it would be just one), there would also no longer be the need to rent the TV monitor in the Gallery. Both alternatives of this option however would also require another additional staff member to operate the Zoom meeting and another to moderate the Public Q&A on Zoom webinar. It should also be noted that the element of choice in how to attend the meeting will require staff to keep an accurate count of the total number of people in the Theatre and Gallery at any one time, as this will likely be different for each meeting. As compared to Option One, this option requires two additional staff members to operate the Zoom meeting, and if all members of Council, essential staff, presenters, and media chose to attend in-person, only one member of the public would be able to sit in the Theatre. With Option 2(a), the Gallery would also be available to accommodate an overflow of up to 10 members of the public similar to Option One.

With Option 2(a), the public's ability to view and participate in the meeting would be the same as set out in Option One with the addition of the ability to ask questions during the Public Q&A portion of the meeting via Zoom webinar. With Option 2(b), the public's participation would be as set out in Option Three.

An RMO WorkSafe Guideline and Risk Assessment would need to be completed prior to implementing this option (similar to Option One). The mitigative measures identified in Option 1 would also be required for this option.

#### Strengths of this option

The main benefit of this option is the ability to choose how to participate in the meeting. Option 2(a) also demonstrates another compliant interpretation of the requirement to use of "best efforts" under M192 to allow in-person public attendance at a Council meeting.

#### Challenges and risks associated with this option

In addition to all of challenges and risks identified in Option One, this option also introduces the technical risk of successfully running the hybrid meeting. In order to mitigate this risk, staff note that adequate testing would need to be performed. Staff also note that the development, installation and testing required to establish this hybrid meeting format requires more resources than RMO IT and MYAC technician staff are able to provide, so an external contractor would need to be retained to complete this work. As this is new work for everyone involved, a contingency of 50 per cent has been added to all hourly rates associated with development, installation and testing. Costs associated with this testing are outlined in the cost tables at the bottom of this report. Moreover, the time required to complete the technical requirements of setup and testing for this option is difficult to establish. Staff estimate a minimum of three weeks for procuring technical equipment, development and installation, likely followed by a few weeks for testing. This timeframe would be subject to challenges and learnings encountered along the way and any changes in public health orders affecting or restricting access to the meeting and testing space. Alternative 2(b) may reduce the health risk associated with having the public attend in-person, but this also moves us away from the goals of Order M192, while still encountering the risks and challenges set out above.

#### Associated costs for this option

As noted above, this option will require a technical testing and development phase to achieve a fully vetted hybrid meeting format. It also requires additional technical and structural supplies, facility rental, as well as the highest level of additional staff involvement. It is the highest cost option, and while the

current draft budget for 2021 contemplates MYAC's new room rental fees (approximately \$20,000), it does not provide for these additional expenditures.

Meeting costs for Option 2(a) are estimated at approximately \$2,400 per meeting, which equates to \$54,500 per year. The purchase of additional technical and structural equipment is currently estimated at \$13,400. The cost to develop and test the hybrid meeting format is estimated at \$7,720; this amount includes fees from a private contractor as well as MYAC technicians' staff time. This amounts to a total cost of approximately \$75,600 if continued over the year. Please see the cost tables at the end of this report and Appendix "B" for a more detailed breakdown. For Option 2(b), equipment and testing and development costs would remain the same as for Option 2(a). The cost per meeting associated with Option 2(b) would be less than Option 2(a) because this format would likely only require one RMOW "Greeter" and there would not be the need to rent the TV monitor for the overflow area in the Gallery. This would amount to savings of approximately \$450 per meeting, or approximately \$10,300 over the year.

### **Option Three: Electronic/Online only**

#### Operational description

The RMOW has been holding electronic/online meetings using Zoom since April 7, 2020. Members of Council and staff all log on to the Zoom meeting via their own computers. Staff present a PowerPoint presentation to accompany the video and audio recording of the Council meeting on RMOW's live streaming service. The livestream as well as recorded video of Council meetings are available on [whistler.ca](http://whistler.ca).

Public input is being provided through our regular channels for receiving Council correspondence, as well as the ability to email questions up to 4:00 p.m. on the day of the Council meeting. More recently, at the October 6, 2020 Council meeting, Council meetings moved over to the Zoom 'webinar' format, which allows members of the public to participate in the meeting as "attendees" and ask questions during the Public Q&A via phone or Zoom. Delegations are also possible through Zoom. To manage the Public Q&A, an additional staff member is needed to act as the Zoom moderator for this portion of the meeting.

#### Strengths of this option

By comparing the number of outbound clicks to view both live and recent Council meetings on [whistler.ca](http://whistler.ca), from June 2019 to June 2020, RMOW staff have recognized a significant increase in online viewing of Council meetings. There are 8- 10 times as many people watching Council meetings online now than in 2019 and this represents approximately 30 to 50 more people per meeting. Looking back to pre-pandemic meetings, rarely would there have been 30 members of the public attend in-person. While anecdotal in nature, these findings do support the conclusion that total participation and viewership has increased during the pandemic. With the recent launch of the new interactive software (eSCRIBE), Council meeting information, including the viewing of Council meetings, will be further improved and will help advance our shared commitment to an open, transparent and accessible government.

The Public Q&A portion of the electronic meeting is also seeing increasing uptake from the community. At the last Council meeting on November 3, there were eight questions asked of Council through the Zoom webinar platform.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this option is also the safest option from a public health



perspective. As noted in the discussion of Options One and Two above, even with mitigative measures in place, having participants attend the meeting in-person introduces an elevated risk of exposure. In accordance with Dr. Bonnie Henry’s guidance to minimize contact where possible, and our current RMOW COVID-19 Exposure and Safety Plans, this option prioritizes avoiding unnecessary contact between staff and/or members of the public as the primary strategy and most effective control for limiting potential exposure to the virus.

Challenges and risks associated with this option

Most notably, this option does not allow for members of the public to attend a meeting in-person. However, the Zoom webinar option allows members of the public to ask questions to Council in real time.

There is the continued risk of technical challenges and connectivity issues that may arise during an electronic meeting. Staff and Council members are continuing to get more comfortable with this new format but short connectivity issues are likely to continue. Finally, not all members of the public are familiar with online meetings or the Zoom application and this may be a deterrent to their participation.

Associated costs for this option

As compared to the other two options, this option presents significant cost reductions. This is due to not needing a physical meeting location, or the additional staff required to safely hold the meeting, not needing to purchase any additional technical or structural equipment, and not needing to develop and test the hybrid meeting format.

Moving to electronic meetings since April 7, 2020 and for the remainder of this year will result in cost reductions of approximately \$11,000. It is also worth noting that even without taking any additional COVID-19 precautions into account, the room rental rate at MYAC is set to double in price for 2021, making the difference in meeting costs even more pronounced. Given the current economic climate and the strain on municipal revenues, this is a notable strength of this option.

The only additional cost associated with this option versus historic practice is the one additional RMOW staff member currently required as the moderator for the Public Q&A portion of the meeting.

**Cost Tables**

**Technical and structural equipment**

	<b>OPTION 1 (In-person)</b>	<b>OPTION 2(a) or 2(b) (Hybrid)</b>	<b>OPTION 3 (Electronic)</b>
NDI Encoder*	N/A	\$2,000	N/A
2 Laptops	N/A	\$3,900	N/A
Cabling & accessories	N/A	\$500	N/A
Plexi-glass barriers	\$7,000	\$7,000	N/A
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$7,000</b>	<b>\$13,400</b>	<b>\$0</b>

\*An NDI Encoder is a device that supports the input and output of multiple streams of audio and video

*simultaneously*

**Testing and development costs**

	<b>OPTION 2(a) or 2(b) (Hybrid)</b>
Contacteur technician to build & install	\$800
Contractor technician to test	\$400
Contractor technician for first Council meeting	\$400
2 MYAC technicians for build, install & test	\$960
2 MYAC technicians for testing with RMOW (x2 tests)	\$320
1 MYAC Zoom operator for testing (x2 tests)	\$320
MYAC facility rental for testing (x2 tests)	\$2,920
RMOW IT staff for building & testing	24 hours of staff time
<b>TOTALS</b>	\$6,120
<b>TOTALS</b> (with 50% contingency added to hourly rates)	<b>\$7,720</b>

*\*Testing and development costs do not apply to Options 1 or 3*

**Cost per Council meeting**

	<b>OPTION 1 (In-person)</b>	<b>OPTION 2 (a) (Hybrid)</b>	<b>OPTION 2(b) (Hybrid w/o public)</b>	<b>OPTION 3 (Electronic)</b>
<b>Total Cost per Council meeting*</b>	\$2,103	\$2,370	\$1,921	\$106

*\*Based on a four hour meeting*

*\*\*For a further breakdown of Council meeting costs please see Appendix "B"*

**Total annual cost**

	<b>OPTION 1 (In-person)</b>	<b>OPTION 2(a) (Hybrid)</b>	<b>OPTION 2(b) (Hybrid w/o public)</b>	<b>OPTION 3 (Electronic)</b>
Council meetings*	\$48,369	\$54,510	\$44,183	\$2,438
Equipment	\$7,000	\$13,400	\$13,400	N/A
Testing & development	N/A	\$7,720	\$7,720	N/A

<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$55,369</b>	<b>\$75,630</b>	<b>\$65,303</b>	<b>\$2,438</b>
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*\*Based on 23, four hour long Council meetings*

### **Public Hearings**

Public hearings may continue to be held by means of electronic or other communication facilities as permitted by the previous Order M139. The new Order M192 does not introduce any requirement to use “best efforts” to allow in-person attendance at a public hearing. Section 465(2) of the *Local Government Act* affords anyone who believes their interest in property is affected by a bylaw considered at a public hearing must be afforded a reasonable opportunity to be heard by Council. If a public hearing is of strong interest to the community, it is likely that the number of public wishing to attend would be high, and may exceed the PHO Order respecting the number of persons permitted at a gathering. Moreover, under the law relating to public hearings, Council may not limit the number of speakers who appear at a public hearing. This context places Council and staff in a very difficult position of needing to limit the number of persons in the meeting place, but also not being able to limit the number of speakers under the law.

If switched to an in-person approach, this would result in needing to manage a que outside of the building and needing to ensure that all those in the line would also have the opportunity to hear all submissions being made during the public hearing (in order to ensure that every person has the same opportunity to participate). If a public hearing is of great interest to the community, and many members of the public wish to attend the hearing, this greatly increases the risk given the higher numbers and associated longer duration of the meeting. Given that the number of speakers cannot be limited for a public hearing, staff recommend the continued use of the solely electronic meeting format for public hearings. The RMOW’s previous electronic public hearing has demonstrated that this format works well with high levels of public engagement.

### **Committee of the Whole Meetings**

As noted in the staff report of September 1, 2020, staff are not able to transition to in-person sessions for Committee of the Whole meetings that are typically hosted in the Flute Room at Municipal Hall. WorkSafe guidelines and municipally-developed COVID Safety Plans for Municipal Hall limit the occupancy of the Flute room to five people or fewer. This limitation is not expected to change until Phase Four of the Provincial Restart Plan and until such time, staff recommend the continued use of the electronic meeting format for Committee of the Whole Meetings. It was beyond the scope of this report to consider the physical, COVID safety, livestreaming and access constraints associated with potential alternate locations for Committee of the Whole meetings.

### **Closed Meetings**

Closed Council meetings are also typically held in Flute Room and we are faced with the same occupancy limits as noted directly above. Furthermore, the goal of Order M192 is to ensure openness, transparency, accessibility and accountability in respect of meetings of Council that are open to the public. Given that closed meetings are not open to the public and that meetings hosted in Flute cannot be held in accordance with PHO orders, staff recommend the continued use of the electronic meeting

format for closed Council meetings.

## **ANALYSIS**

Through the discussion and consideration of each of the options above, staff have taken into account the goals of providing meaningful public access, public health and safety as well as fiscal considerations. Given the thorough assessment of these objectives, staff continue to recommend Option Three: Electronic meetings as achieving the best balance of these outcomes.

Given the public health orders and recommendations, staff recognize that it is challenging to achieve significant in-person public attendance at Council meetings. To balance this restriction against our commitment to ensuring openness, transparency, accessibility and accountability, the RMOW is currently providing various avenues for viewing and participating in Council meetings. The public engagement numbers support staff's conclusion that current efforts through the use of electronic communication facilities is working well, and effectively allowing members of the public to watch and hear, and participate in, open meetings of Council.

Moreover, the recent increase in cases within local health authorities, combined with new understandings of aerosol transmission of the virus, further elevate the known health risk associated with conducting meetings in-person at this time. Addressing aerosol transmission requires many measures; distancing, masks and ventilation all help, but none of these controls eliminates the risk entirely. Given the duration of Council meetings, and the need to ensure compliance with Public Health orders and guidance, staff support the continued use of the electronic/online meeting format until the COVID-safety landscape improves, and provincial public health guidance is meaningfully altered.

Staff also highlight the significant difference in costs associated with the options. Option Three is the least costly option.

## **POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Official Community Plan**

The report recommendation is aligned with OCP Policy 8.11.1.4 to foster a community culture that prioritizes prevention and holistic care as the approach to combatting illness, as well as Goal 8.7 to ensure that Whistler is a safe and secure resort community.

Conversely, the report recommendation, and the broad reality of the pandemic response itself, does not advance toward OCP Objective 8.3.1 to support community's initiatives that aim to create greater social connectedness, and to provide opportunities for residents to connect with each other during municipal initiatives, event and activities.

### **Other Relevant Policies**

Relevant policy at the Provincial level is noted in the discussion section above. Most notably, this report includes consideration of Ministerial Order M192 in relation to each of the options. Continuation of electronic meetings as per current practice is consistent with this Order and is aligned with WorkSafe guidance for reducing the transmission of the COVID-19 virus, as well as the municipal COVID-19 Safety Plan, and the RMOW COVID-19 Exposure Plan.

## **BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS**

An overview of costs associated with each option is presented in the discussion above. The draft 2021 budget currently allocates approximately \$20,000 for Council meetings (up from \$11,000 in 2020). This budget is based on MYAC facility rental fees that do not include extra staffing or sanitization requirements to meet COVID-19 health and safety guidelines. Additional budget would be required for both Options One and Two.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

N/A

## **SUMMARY**

In summary, staff have undertaken Council's request to investigate the feasibility of returning to in-person Council meetings. As identified in this report there are significant challenges with a return to in-person meetings at this time. Most notably, the health risks associated with in-person meetings may not be justified given a viable alternative exists. Our current RMOW COVID-19 Exposure and Safety Plans, developed in accordance with WorkSafe BC guidance, prioritize avoiding unnecessary contact between staff and/or members of the public as our primary strategy and most effective control for limiting exposure. As requested by Dr. Bonnie Henry this past weekend, we have a responsibility "to ensure every step is being taken to protect everyone". With this in mind, staff recommend the continuation of Option Three: Electronic meetings and support stating a renewed commitment to meeting the requirements under M192. In addition, staff are proposing to return to Council with an updated report to reconsider this issue in four months' time. Finally, staff are also recommending the continued use of electronic meetings for Public Hearings.

Respectfully submitted,

Brooke Browning  
MUNICIPAL CLERK

for  
Ted Battiston  
GENERAL MANAGER OF CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES