



Staff Report

Administration – Town Clerk

Report To: Council Meeting
Meeting Date: January 27, 2025
Report Number: ADM.25.005
Title: 2026 Municipal Election, Method of Voting
Prepared by: Corrina Giles, Town Clerk

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report ADM.25.005, entitled “2026 Municipal Election, Method of Voting”;

AND THAT Council direct that Internet and Telephone Voting, be approved as the voting method for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election, and direct staff to provide a by-law to a future meeting of Council for enactment.

B. Overview

This staff report is seeking Council direction on the preferred method of voting for the 2026 Municipal Election.

C. Background

At the January 13, 2025 Committee of the Whole meeting, the Committee received staff report [2026 Municipal Election-Selection of Method of Voting, ADM.25.003](#), and in response to this staff report, provided the following recommendation:

THAT Council receive Staff Report ADM.25.003, entitled “2026 Municipal Election - Selection of Method of Voting”;

AND THAT Council direct staff to provide a report to the January 27, 2025 Council Meeting regarding the additional cost of vote by mail, and/or providing a paper ballot option available in the Town Hall, Carried.

As requested, this report provides information on the election costs, by method of voting.

D. Analysis

For reference, staff provide the method of voting selected by Grey County municipalities below:

Chatsworth	-	Mail in ballots, no tabulators
Owen Sound	-	Internet and Telephone
Hanover	-	Internet and Telephone
Southgate	-	Internet and Telephone
West Grey	-	Internet and Telephone
Grey Highlands-		Internet
Meaford	-	TBD
Georgian Bluffs-		TBD

In response to the recommendation above, as quotes have not been received for a specific method of voting, through research from other municipalities, staff provide the following additional information.

1. Vote by Mail, with Tabulators

Vote by mail is reliant on Canada Post for the mailout of voter kits, as well as the return of the voter kits to the Town (with the exception of voter kits dropped off at the Town Hall). The Town pays postage for the voter kits that are mailed to all voters on the voters list, and the Town is charged postage for all voter kits that are returned by mail to the Town. If this method of voting is selected, staff recommend the use of tabulators to tabulate the ballots. Vote by Mail was utilized in The Blue Mountains 2006, 2010 and 2014 elections, and if selected as the method of voting, will require significant voter education and communications. Vote by mail shortens the voting window for those that are required to mail their voter kit back to the municipality in advance of election day. Voters do have the option of dropping their voter kit off at the Town Hall, on or in advance of election day. This method of voting disenfranchises those electors that are not on the voters list, have not received a voter kit in the mail, and are unable to attend the Town Hall to receive their voter kit in advance of election day. Vote by mail offers increased accessibility to those that have accessibility concerns and are unable to attend a polling station to vote. No polling stations will be set up. Tabulators will be required to count the ballots, it being noted that the election results will take additional time to tally. Grey County municipalities that offer the same method of voting are able to share in the cost of advertising (newspaper, radio) and communications to the electors, and are also able to collaborate on the development of election procedures. This collaboration greatly assists Grey County Clerks in providing cohesive communications across Grey County. If Vote by Mail is selected, the election advertising and communications budget will be increased.

Additional staff would be required for vote by mail for the purposes of tallying the results with tabulators, but it is anticipated that the funds currently allocated for the election would cover the cost of a vote by mail method of voting.

2. Internet and Telephone Voting (recommended)

Vote by internet and telephone is the least expensive option and is the most accessible option available to electors. Electors are familiar with this method of voting as it was utilized in the 2018 and 2022 municipal election, both in The Blue Mountains, and in surrounding municipalities. Internet and telephone voting allows voters to vote 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from anywhere in the world. Those voters that have not received a voter kit in the mail are able to contact the municipality and, following a process to provide proof of eligibility to vote in The Blue Mountains, are able to receive a voter kit via email and be able to vote up to 8:00 pm on election day. This process improves accessibility for those electors that have not received a voter kit in the mail and are unable to personally attend the municipality to provide proof of eligibility. Voter kiosks are set up in the Town Hall during the advanced voting period (ten days in advance of the election), during normal Town Hall hours, and during specific extended periods for those that wish to vote in person using Town devices (computer or telephone), and/or to receive assistance to vote. As in past elections, it should be noted that Grey County municipalities that offer the same method of voting are able to share in the cost of advertising (newspaper, radio) and communications to the electors, and are also able to collaborate on the development of election procedures. This collaboration greatly assists Grey County Clerks in providing cohesive communications across Grey County.

No additional staff would be required for internet and telephone voting, and it is anticipated that the funds currently allocated for the election would cover the cost of an internet and telephone method of voting.

3. Paper Ballots (Hybrid with Internet and Telephone Voting or Vote By Mail)

Paper ballots would allow voters to vote on select, limited dates, in the Town Hall. Providing a Paper Ballot, while also offering another alternative method of voting, will require additional voter education and communications as paper ballots have not been utilized in The Blue Mountains since 2003. Adding a paper ballot option would result in the conduct of two separate elections at the same time, resulting in the need for two sets of policies and procedures, more staff training and materials. Additional staffing and resources would be required to count the ballots after the close of voting at 8:00 pm on election day, resulting in a delay in the release of the election results. If paper ballots are added as a method of voting, staff are recommending an additional budget allocation of \$10,000 to cover estimated staffing and resources.

Staff continue to recommend internet and telephone voting for the 2026 municipal election. Internet and telephone voting is the most accessible, offers voter familiarity, satisfies the request of those that are unable to personally attend a polling station to vote and those that wish to attend the Town Hall to vote using Town devices or to receive assistance to vote, provides an accurate ballot count, allows for collaboration with other Grey County municipalities to reduce advertising costs, and does not require additional staffing.

E. Strategic Priorities

1. Communication and Engagement

We will enhance communications and engagement between Town Staff, Town residents and stakeholders

2. Organizational Excellence

We will continually seek out ways to improve the internal organization of Town Staff and the management of Town assets.

4. Quality of Life

We will foster a high quality of life for full-time and part-time residents of all ages and stages, while welcoming visitors.

F. Environmental Impacts

None

G. Financial Impacts

The method of voting selected will result in a financial impact to the municipality. The cost of the 2022 Municipal and School Board Election was \$72,000, this does not include any allocation of Clerk's staff time. The Town has transferred \$30,000 in 2023; \$35,000 in 2024 and expects to transfer \$35,000 in 2025 to the municipal election reserve, and it is anticipated that these funds will cover the costs of internet and telephone voting or vote by mail. If Council directs that a paper ballot option shall be added for the 2026 election, staff recommend an additional budget allocation of \$10,000 to cover additional staffing and resources.

H. In Consultation With

Adam Smith, Acting CAO and Director of Planning & Development Services
Monica Quinlan, Director of Corporate and Financial Services

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has not been the subject of a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre as neither a Public Meeting nor a Public Information Centre are required.

Comments or questions regarding this report should be submitted to Corrina Giles, Town Clerk townclerk@thebluemountains.ca .

J. Attached

None

Respectfully submitted,

Corrina Giles
Town Clerk

For more information, please contact:
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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	ADM.25.005 2026 Municipal Election, Method of Voting.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Jan 23, 2025

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

No Signature - Task assigned to Shawn Everitt was completed by delegate Adam Smith

Shawn Everitt - Jan 23, 2025 - 4:20 PM