



Staff Report

Administration – Chief Administrative Officer

Report To: COW-Finance, Admin, Fire, Legal, Community Services
Meeting Date: February 27, 2023
Report Number: FAF.23.016
Title: Establishing an Agricultural Advisory Committee for the 2022-2026 Term of Council
Prepared by: Shawn Everitt, Chief Administrative Officer

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report FAF.23.016, entitled “Establishing an Agricultural Advisory Committee for the 2022 – 2026 Term of Council”;

AND THAT Council establish an Agricultural Advisory Committee for the 2022 – 2026 Term of Council and does appoint _____ as the Committee Chair;

AND THAT Council approve the draft Agricultural Advisory Committee Terms of Reference as presented in this report;

AND THAT Council direct staff to advertise the request for interested individuals to make application to be considered for appointment to the Town’s Agricultural Advisory Committee, and follow the required selection process including the completion of reference checks.

B. Overview

This report brings forward a revised draft Terms of Reference for Council consideration and requests direction from Council to advertise for interested individuals to make applications for membership on the Agricultural Advisory Committee.

C. Background

At the January 23, 2023, Council meeting, Council approved [Staff Report FAF.23.007](#) directing staff to initiate the formal process to establish a series of Committees of Council that included the following:

- Agricultural Advisory Committee
- Economic Development Advisory Committee
- Grants and Donation Advisory Committee
- Parks and Trails Committee
- Transparency and Accountability Committee

The Agricultural Advisory Committee has been in place since approximately 2008 and has been a valuable conduit to our Rural and Agricultural communities.

The proposed draft Terms of Reference document included in this report (Attachment 1) is being brought forward as a recommended starting point with the understanding that revisions may be required to ensure the document provides for the most effective, and efficient process while ensuring all the regulatory and accounting practices are met.

D. Analysis

Staff have brought forward a revised draft Terms of Reference that provides a proposed mandate, new membership criteria, purpose, and scope that staff believes provides more clarity and avoids “scope creep” that has impacted Committees in the past.

Staff recommend establishing the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AGAC) as outlined in [Staff Report FAF.23.007](#):

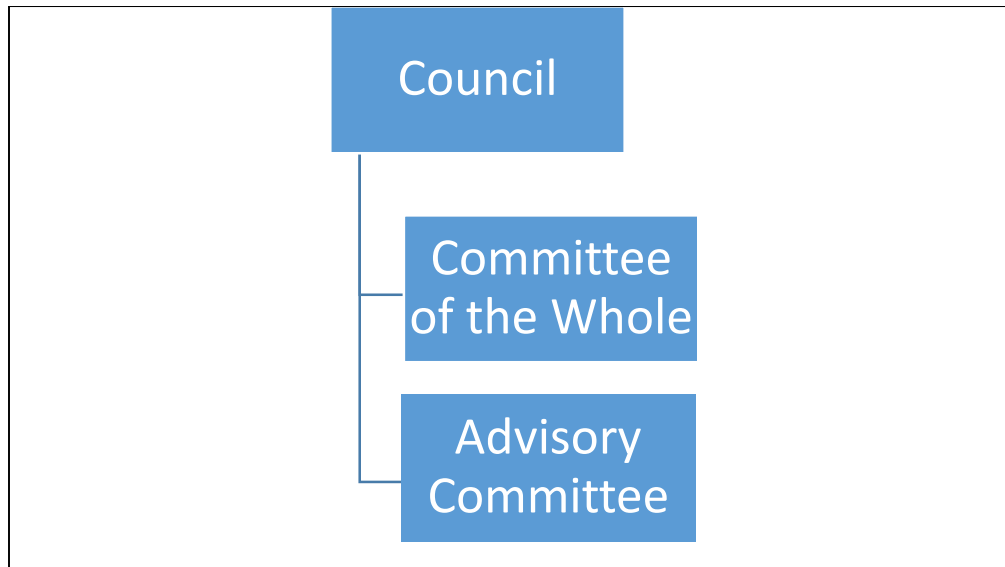
Advisory Committee

Staff suggested that Advisory Committees can be established by Council and that their mandates and scope of work be clearly described through a Terms of Reference document that would be reviewed by the Advisory Committee and Council twice per Term of Council.

An Advisory Committee would be required to follow the Town’s existing Procedural By-law and would require the support of an Administrative Assistant to provide for the Advisory Committee’s administrative needs. Advisory Committees also require Council approval for using additional staff time and resources where requested to complete the mandate of the Advisory Committee.

Staff recommend the following elements be incorporated by all Advisory Committees as they are significantly important to the Committee’s success, the facilitation of procedure, the management of meetings, the maintenance of respect and decorum, and adherence to Committee mandate(s):

- The Chair of an Advisory Committee shall be a member of Council;
- Advisory Committees are an extension of Council, however, do not provide direction to staff;
- Advisory Committee meetings are to be held virtually;
- Staff suggest that Advisory Committees are not permitted to establish sub-committees to remain focused on their specific mandate.



Summary of Key Changes to Terms of Reference as Recommended by Staff

Item	Section and Wording	Proposed Change
A.	Mandate (1) Be engaged, consulted, and comment as one common voice of an Advisory Committee of Council on proposed Official Plan Policy updates and reviews, Zoning By-law updates and reviews that affect the agricultural community and lands and provide a professional and expert agricultural community perspective;	Previously included Development review
B.	Mandate (2) Represent as many of the following groups as possible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grey Cattlemen’s Association; • Georgian Bay Fruit Growers Association; • Christian Farmers; • National Farm Union; • Ontario Federation of Agriculture; • Young Farmers; • Organic Farming; • Sheep Producers/Dairy Farmers; • Winery and Cidery Industry. 	Previously included in the Membership/Voting section Added Winery and Cidery Industry to the list

Item	Section Wording	Proposed Change
C.	<p>Mandate (4)</p> <p>Provide advice and recommendations on economic strategies, plans, or studies dealing with agriculture and other rural issues.</p>	Previously included Development review
D.	<p>Membership/Voting</p> <p>Composition is noted below:</p> <p>Voting Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) One (1) Member of Council (Chair) b) Six (6) Members of the public at large c) Mayor as ex-officio (not counted towards Committee membership) <p>An Alternate member of Council, including the Mayor, may be requested to attend to ensure quorum is achieved if the appointed Council Representative is not available. Notice of the Alternate's attendance and notification of the Alternate member assuming the Chair shall be made to the AGAC members as early as possible in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>Openings for the membership shall be publicly advertised as appointment opportunities arise.</p> <p>Voting members shall be eligible voters in the Town of The Blue Mountains (who meet elector qualifications outlined in the Municipal Elections Act) and be members of the Town's rural and agricultural community.</p>	<p>Proposed change from nine (9) members of the public to six (6) members</p> <p>Added the ability to have an Alternate member of Council</p> <p>Proposed composition changed the quorum number to four (4) while still requiring a Council Representative to be one (1) of the four (4) for the quorum</p> <p>Members are required to be and continue to be eligible voters for the purposes of the municipal election in The Blue Mountains</p>
E.	<p>Membership/Voting</p> <p>Possess relevant farm experience, technical training in an agriculture-based field, and/or current involvement in rural living and/or agricultural activities;</p>	Added the term "rural living"
F.	<p>Membership/Voting</p> <p>All AGAC members are expected to know and abide by relevant conduct policies of the Town. In addition, the following guidelines should be understood by AGAC members:</p>	Added this clause from the previous Joint Municipal Physician Recruitment and Retention Committee to add clarity to roles and responsibilities

Item	Section Wording	Proposed Change
	<p>a)Only the AGAC Chair can speak on behalf of the Advisory Committee;</p> <p>b)AGAC members shall not direct any messaging without the approval of the Chair;</p> <p>c)The AGAC Chair plays an important role in ensuring that a functional relationship with high integrity exists within the AGAC, with Council, with the public, and with staff;</p> <p>d)Constructive and informative debate and opinion sharing can be a constructive part of the group decision-making process. However, when the debate becomes ongoing, inappropriate, unconstructive, or offensive, and before becoming a conflict, the Chair may need to intervene with an appropriate dispute resolution mechanism.</p>	<p>Added the importance of providing a respectful environment</p>
<p>G.</p>	<p>Membership/Voting</p> <p>Members of the AGAC shall not be registered or have been previously registered on the Town’s Lobbyist Registry.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of the member to declare any affiliations and/or inclusion on the Town’s Lobbyist Registry to the Town Clerk as soon as possible in writing.</p>	<p>Added to reflect a possible implementation of a Lobbyist Registry</p>
<p>H.</p>	<p>Sub-Committees</p> <p>The establishment of Sub-Committees shall not be considered an option available to the AGAC.</p>	<p>Proposing that this not be an option for Advisory Committees</p>
<p>I.</p>	<p>Meeting Details, Agenda, Minutes, and Procedure</p> <p>The AGAC will meet three (3) times per calendar year at a time that is to be determined and scheduled at the Committee’s first official meeting and will be for the duration of the Term of Council and approved by the Committee.</p> <p>Additional meetings of the AGAC may be called by the Chair, with a minimum of five (5) business days' notice, to address urgent matters.</p>	<p>Proposed shift to meeting three (3) times per year instead of once per month</p> <p>Additional meetings, if required, can be called by the Chair</p>

Item	Section Wording	Proposed Change
J.	Meeting Details, Agenda, Minutes, and Procedure Meetings will be held virtually, are recorded and archived, and are available on the Town's Website. All meetings are open to the public to view virtually.	This recommends the recording of meetings and archiving of all meetings with access being through the Town's Website to promote openness, information sharing, and transparency
K.	Term of Agricultural Advisory Committee The AGAC will be in effect until March 31, 2026, or otherwise determined by Council.	Proposed Term to be consistent with the standing down of Committees in 2022 and to provide clarity and the ability to proactively plan activities
L.	Related Policies and Training Requirements	Updated list of Policies and Training
M.	Housekeeping and Consistency	Additional changes were made throughout the document for grammatical and consistency purposes

The key recommendation being brought forward by staff through the proposed Terms of Reference is the removal of "Development Review" by the Advisory Committee.

Staff are recommending this change on the basis that the review of Development projects within the Town shall go through a formal Planning process that already has the requirement of applications being subject to a formal Public Meeting. The Formal Public Meeting allows individuals and agencies to have the opportunity to provide comments regarding the specific subject proposal. The Advisory Committee is an extension of Council and therefore it is not appropriate for an Advisory Committee to provide comment on a development that is going through a formal Planning process. This also allows for a member of an Advisory Committee to provide their individual comments at a Public Meeting without concern that the individual would be speaking on behalf of an Advisory Committee. However, to be clear, this point does not eliminate the potential perception that the individual is speaking on behalf of or as a member of an Advisory Committee. In these cases, there are existing processes in place that can be utilized to determine whether the individual did or did not speak on behalf of an Advisory Committee.

Staff, however, would have the benefit of being able to engage Advisory Committees proactively to understand issues, concerns, and impacts, related to past or present development or other applications or proposals. It would be the responsibility of staff, and the expectation of management, that engagement with an Advisory Committee would be sought where the mandate and scope of the Advisory Committee would clearly provide staff with applicable well-informed experience.

Council may also wish to consider consistency in the number of Council Representation on Advisory Committees. For this purpose, staff have provided an alternative motion that would have two (2) Council representatives appointed as members of the Agricultural Advisory Committee instead of the previous and currently recommended one (1) member of Council.

Optional Recommendation:

AND THAT Council establish an Agricultural Advisory Committee for the 2022 – 2026 Term of Council and does appoint _____ as a member of the Committee and _____ as the Committee Chair.

Potential Advisory Committee Name Change

At the February 13, 2023 Council meeting, Council received [correspondence from Dennis Ouellette](#) regarding potentially changing the name of the Agricultural Advisory Committee to the “Agricultural and Rural Affairs Advisory Committee”. Prior to this correspondence being received by Council, staff also received an inquiry from a member of Council regarding naming the Advisory Committee “Rural and Agricultural Advisory Committee”.

Staff took the opportunity to add the term “rural” within the Terms of Reference document in a couple of sections, however, staff seek direction from Council regarding this matter. Staff have included the following optional recommendations for Council to consider and note that, if approved, the Committee name will be revised in Attachment 1:

THAT Council receive Staff Report FAF.23.016, entitled “Establishing an Agricultural and Rural Affairs Advisory Committee for the 2022 – 2026 Term of Council”;

AND THAT Council establish an Agricultural and Rural Affairs Advisory Committee for the 2022 – 2026 Term of Council and does appoint _____ as the Committee Chair;

AND THAT Council approve the Agricultural and Rural Affairs Advisory Committee draft Terms of Reference as presented in this report;

AND THAT Council direct staff to advertise the request for interested individuals to make application to be considered for appointment to the Town’s Agricultural and Rural Affairs Advisory Committee, and follow the required selection process including the completion of reference checks.

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.

3. Community

We will protect and enhance the community feel and the character of the Town, while ensuring the responsible use of resources and restoration of nature.

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

The Advisory Committee will be a key advisor on many environmental aspects of our Community, region and province.

G. Financial Impacts

Historically, the Agricultural Advisory Committee has met outside of typical business hours and therefore requires modifications to staff work hours or tracking of overtime hours.

Expected costs for the initial advertising for potential members, as outlined in the previous staff report, are as follows:

- Initial newspaper advertising for all Committees costs approximately \$1,000 (cost shared amongst all Committees)
- Reference Checks costs \$105 (per person)

Where additional advertisements are required, one-off newspaper advertising for a single Committee cost approximately \$350.

H. In Consultation With

Senior Management Team

Town Clerk

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. However, any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Shawn Everitt, Chief Administrative Officer cao@thebluemountains.ca.

J. Attached

1. Proposed AGAC Terms of Reference
2. 2018 – 2022 AGAC Terms of Reference

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Everitt
Chief Administrative Officer

For more information, please contact:

cao@thebluemountains.ca

519-599-3131 extension 234

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	FAF.23.016 Establishing an Agricultural Advisory Committee for the 2022-2026 Term of Council.docx
Attachments:	- Attachment-1-Proposed-AGAC-Terms-of-Reference.pdf - Attachment-2-2018-2022-AGAC-Terms-of-Reference.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Feb 15, 2023

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

Shawn Everitt - Feb 15, 2023 - 9:37 AM