



Staff Report for Special Council Meeting

Date of Meeting: September 29, 2021

Report Number: SRCFS 21.054

Department: Corporate and Financial Services

Division: Strategic Communications

Subject: **SRCFS 21.054 – Public Consultation Options for Vacancy in the Office of Mayor**

Purpose:

To present options and costs associated with options for the City to consult the public on options to fill the vacancy in the Office of the Mayor, as directed by Council on September 22, 2021.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That Council receive the report SRCFS 21.054, Public Consultation Options for Vacancy in the Office of Mayor;
- b) That Council provide direction on public consultation related to the vacancy in the Office of Mayor.

Contact Person:

Kathleen Graver, Manager, Strategic Communications, ext. 2418

Report Approval:

Submitted by: Sherry Adams, Commissioner of Corporate and Financial Services

Approved by: Mary-Anne Dempster, City Manager

All reports are electronically reviewed and/or approved by the Division Director, Treasurer (as required), City Solicitor (as required), Commissioner, and City Manager. Details of the reports approval are attached.

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Background:

At the September 22, 2021 meeting of Council, staff were directed to bring forward options and costs for consulting the public regarding options for filling the vacancy in the Office of the Mayor (see Attachment “A”).

Target audience for this consultation is Richmond Hill residents ages 18 years and older who would be eligible to vote in the event of a by-election.

Response Collection Options

Note: Using multiple platforms to collect responses (i.e. online survey and phone poll) could result in overlap (one person’s opinion being recorded more than once) and may skew the outcome

Option 1 – Online Survey: No additional cost

A simple survey with one primary question, accompanied by additional background information, would be embedded on a webpage on the City’s website with promotion driving directly to that page. The survey would ask residents to enter their postal code and would contain a reCAPTCHA to prevent bots/spam responses.

In addition, IP addresses would be limited to one response per device to reduce (but not eliminate) the risk of multiple votes from one individual.

The survey could be open for two weeks (approximately October 7-21, 2021) to allow for greater reach and opportunity for residents. This timing may be reduced, if desired, but may result in lower awareness and responses.

In addition, the promotion will include the number for Access Richmond Hill who can assist individuals who do not have internet access to complete the survey online. Callers can also access the Language Line translation service by calling Access Richmond Hill.

This work could be done in-house and has no additional cost.

Option 2 – Live-call Telephone Survey: \$8,000-\$10,000

A third-party CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) survey would involve contracting a vendor to call a random sample of Richmond Hill landline phone numbers and ask the survey question.

This option would limit the number and selection of residents who could participate. Estimated cost is based on approximately 800 responses.

This option limits the survey to those with a landline and to one person per phone number. There is little likelihood of being able to identify cell phone users who are specifically Richmond Hill residents.

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This method provides assurance respondents are only answering once.

While additional time would be needed up front to work with a vendor on preparing the execution, it is estimated it could be completed in 4-5 business days, providing results to Council by late October. Delays are possible if the vendor has challenges securing adequate participation.

Option 3 – Automated Telephone Survey: \$2,000

Another telephone option involves contracting a vendor to conduct an IPR (Interactive Press Response) automated telephone poll. Residents who answer would be asked to press “1” or “2” to choose the option they prefer. This method is restricted to landlines, as there is little likelihood of being able to identify cell phone users who are specifically Richmond Hill residents. However, it would be sent to all Richmond Hill residential landlines (estimated 30,000) rather than a random sample.

The data collection period would be contained to one day, providing quicker results. It does not guarantee results or a quantity of responses, and as an uncommon method of consultation from the City, there is a risk it may be perceived as a scam or spam call. This method would also only allow for one person per household/phone number to respond and would not include callbacks where there is no live answer.

Promotional Options

Telephone Survey Promotion

If a telephone survey option is selected as the sole mechanism for data collection, additional paid promotion would not be required, as the survey would be a direct call to potential participants. No-cost communication would continue in order to raise awareness of the legitimacy of the exercise, including website content, ARH messaging, organic social media posts and a Public Service Announcement to media.

Online Survey Promotion

The following promotional activities could be used at no additional cost to the City:

- Homepage graphic on RichmondHill.ca
- Public Service Announcement delivered to media outlets (90 media contacts, including 20 non-English outlets) and over 200 newsfeed subscribers
- Article in the City’s MyRichmondHill monthly email newsletter (October 14)
- Organic social media posts on the City’s corporate channels (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram)
- Email through the Clerk to the Citizen Advisory Committee
- Graphics and content shared with Members of Council for distribution through their communication channels
- Graphic on digital screen in lobby at Main Municipal Offices

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- Recorded message and content in auto response emails for those contacting Access Richmond Hill
- LED screens outside City facilities

Below is a menu of additional options for promoting the survey within the suggested timeline, with their estimated associated costs.

Robocall

Promotional robocall to approximately 30,000 landlines in Richmond Hill, with message driving to website and ARH phone number to complete the survey. Estimated cost is \$1700 plus tax for one 30-second recorded call.

Digital Ads

Paid digital ads through media partners is an alternative option to social media channels. Below are sample costs for digital ads (note: outlets who only run monthly digital ads were not included as they are outside of the projected timeline). Translation would be an additional cost. Tax not included in costs below:

- Metroland (geotargeted, multilingual): \$1000 for two weeks (100k impressions)
- Metroland Richmond Hill page takeover: \$640 for one day (20k impressions)
- Ming Pao news site: \$1,300 – 1,600 per week
- Ming Pao takeover: \$1,100 for one day
- Salam Toronto: \$105-180 per week
- Sing Tao news site: \$250 – \$1,240 per week
- Sing Tao page takeover: \$1,650 for one day (50k impressions)

Paid social media ads are **not likely to be available** as a tactic due to restrictions on advertisements deemed to be about “social issues, elections or politics.” It is anticipated any ad related to a survey about options for filling the Mayor’s vacancy would fall under this category and be rejected by the platforms. If social media ads are possible, geotargeted ads on Facebook and Instagram have a variable cost, influencing potential results. For example, \$1,000 would get an estimated reach of 10.9 - 31.5K; \$2,000 would get an estimated reach of 21 – 61K. Tax not included.

Consideration was given to advertising with media outlets through their **WeChat** channels, however, it is expected similar restrictions would apply and the post may be rejected by the channel. If possible, anticipated costs would be between \$150-\$1,100 per ad, per week, depending on the outlet, with no geotargeting capability.

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Print Ads

There are a significant number of placement options and sizes for print advertisements. Below are sample options. Translation included where appropriate. Note: some require design file minimum one week in advance. Tax not included in costs below:

Outlet	Quarter Page Cost	Half Page Cost
Chinese Canadian Times October 15 (distribution 8,000 weekly with 26 per cent in Markham and Richmond Hill)	\$500	\$840
Ming Pao Daily (distribution 227k; approximately 12 per cent of readership is Richmond Hill)	\$964 (add 20% for weekend)	\$1928 (add 20% for weekend)
Nasha Toronto October 14 (distribution 20k biweekly)	\$300	\$500
Sing Tao (distribution 400k; approximately 10 per cent of readership is Richmond Hill)	\$684	\$1370
The Liberal October 14 (distribution 69.6k weekly)	\$1075	\$1890
Today Commercial News October 15 (distribution weekly)	\$300	\$700

Radio Ads

Below are sample costs for local radio ads. Tax not included in costs below:

- 105.9 The Region (English programming): \$1,800 for a 15-second traffic tag, four times per day for two weeks
- 105.9 The Region (Chinese programming): \$900 for a 15-second spot, twice per day for two weeks (translation included)
- 105.9 The Region (South Asian programming): \$900 for a 15-second spot, four times per day for two weeks (translation included)
- A1 Chinese Radio AM1540: \$86 per 30 second ad, plus \$100 per translation
- Fairchild AM1430: \$90 per 30 second ad, plus \$100 per translation

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Print Mail Drop

To reach an estimated 66,000 households in Richmond Hill, including apartments, the City could send a print public notice through Canada Post at an estimated cost of \$13,000-\$14,000, including tax.

Signage

Staff considered, but did not include, paid signage (e.g. A-frames, Curbex) as a tactic, due to the lead-time required for design, procurement, printing, permitting and installation, as well as because the City has significant required signage currently in place due to COVID-19 protocols at facilities.

Proposed Survey Content

For consideration, below is **draft content** for the survey:

The role of Mayor of Richmond Hill is currently vacant, following the [retirement of former Mayor Dave Barrow](#). Members of Council are asking residents for their input on the options for filling the vacancy for the remainder of the 2019-2022 Term of Council. There are two options:

- **Appoint a current Member of Council**

The Mayor for the remainder of the current term of Council would be selected from among the current Members of Council. Interested Members of Council would be required to submit an application form in advance.

The Mayor would be chosen on a majority vote of Members of Council present and voting at a Special Council Meeting. If only two candidates remain and the vote is tied, the Mayor would be selected by the Clerk by lot (e.g. drawing the name of the winning person from a hat).

This process could take approximately four to six weeks. The cost would be minimal and could be accommodated within the Clerk's operating budget.

- **Conduct a citywide by-election**

The Mayor for the remainder of the term of Council would be elected by all eligible voters who choose to vote in the by-election.

This process would take approximately three to four months. The cost is estimated between \$575,000 and \$625,000.

Please answer the following:

The Mayor of Richmond Hill for the remainder of the 2019-2022 Council term should be chosen by (choose one):

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- ☐ Appointing a current Member of Council
- ☐ Conducting a citywide by-election

Please provide your postal code:

By submitting this form, you confirm you are over the age of 18, a resident of Richmond Hill and have not previously answered this survey.

Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

Information in this report provides estimates on operating costs to execute the various initiatives. Costs related to staff time are not reflected.

The cost for response collection options ranges from \$0 to \$10,000.

The cost for promotion of the consultation ranges from \$0 to \$30,000+.

Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities 2020-2022:

This staff report connects to Council's Strategic Priority of "Strong Sense of Belonging".

Climate Change Considerations:

Climate change considerations are not applicable to this staff report.

Conclusion:

Costs for consulting residents on filling the vacancy in the Office of the Mayor have a flexible range, depending on the options selected by Council for conducting the survey and the desired budget and reach for associated promotion.

Attachments:

- Attachment "A" - Extract from September 22, 2021 Council Meeting regarding Staff Report SRCFS.21.049

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRCFS 21.054 - Public Consultation Options for Vacancy in Office of the Mayor.docx
Attachments:	- 2021-09-22 Council Meeting - Extract - Staff Report SRCFS.21.049.docx
Final Approval Date:	Sep 27, 2021

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

Stephen Huycke - Sep 27, 2021 - 4:35 PM

Sherry Adams - Sep 27, 2021 - 4:35 PM

MaryAnne Dempster - Sep 27, 2021 - 4:49 PM