

**SUBJECT:** Advisory Board and Committee (ABC) Review for the 2018 – 2022 Term of Council

**PREPARED BY:** Kimberley Kitteringham, City Clerk, ext. 4729  
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**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. That the report titled “Advisory Board and Committee (ABC) Review for the 2018-2022 Term of Council” be received; and,
2. That Council maintain the ABCs as outlined in **Appendix “E”**; and,
3. That Council re-classify, amalgamate or dissolve the ABCs as outlined in **Appendix “F”** as of June 30, 2019, and Council extend its sincere thanks to all citizen appointees and City staff liaisons of these ABCs for their contribution to Markham over the years; and,
4. That the composition of the Appointment Committee be maintained and that this Committee conduct interviews for the Heritage Markham Committee, Committee of Adjustment, and the Library Board; and, that a panel of City staff conduct interviews for all other ABCs and present the slate of candidates to Council for approval on an as needed basis; and further,
5. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

**PURPOSE:**

Markham City Council’s governance structure includes a number of advisory boards and committees (ABCs) that provide input into decision-making in the City. These bodies are reviewed at the beginning of a Council term to ensure they continue to contribute to a sustainable legislative structure that enhances Council’s ability to achieve its objectives. This report provides a comprehensive review of Markham’s existing ABCs and recommends changes to same for the 2018-2022 term of Council.

**BACKGROUND:**

ABCs have traditionally been created by municipal councils to provide feedback/advice on specific projects, events or issues. ABC members are appointed by Council and can provide valuable expertise and perspectives that add richness and authenticity to initiatives and projects, etc. In Markham, appointments to ABCs are conducted in accordance with the City’s Board & Committee Appointment Policy (**see Appendix “A”**). ABCs can also facilitate communication between community members and can serve as a liaison between municipal staff, local partners and community members. Additionally, an ABC can provide an important mechanism for engagement and information exchange. The mandate, purpose and objectives of ABCs are usually captured in a Terms of Reference document and the approved minutes of ABC meetings are usually included on the relevant Standing Committee agendas for information purposes. It is considered a best practice (for continuity and to encourage the exchange of new ideas) to stagger the terms of ABC member appointments such that they do not

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all expire at the same time. Municipal Councils are under no obligation to take the advice or recommendations put forward by ABCs.

ABCs generally require significant municipal resources to support. For instance, in Markham, ABCs typically have a Staff Liaison(s), whose role it is to serve as a conduit between the City and the committee, and provide support and direction. The majority of Markham's ABCs also have some form of secretariat and/or communications support provided by the City.

Many ABCs were created before electronic and social media tools were in general use and were the primary way for councils to receive advice directly from citizens about specific issues. Over the past several years however, there have been significant improvements in municipal government approaches to citizen engagement. This has increased the ability of citizens to interact directly with their elected representatives and municipal staff in less formal ways and without participation on ABCs. In fact, the City of Markham has recently launched a new online web tool **YourVoiceMarkham.ca** to facilitate and increase public engagement on City projects, programs and initiatives.<sup>i</sup> This changing public consultation landscape in local government has coincided with an emerging trend of reducing the number of ABCs in Ontario municipalities.

At the end of 2018, Legislative Services staff undertook a review of Markham's ABCs which included the following:

- A municipal survey comparing the committee structure of 8 other municipalities with Markham's committees (Brampton, Georgina, London, Mississauga, Newmarket, Oshawa, Pickering, and Whitchurch-Stouffville) to determine Advisory Committee practices and trends in other municipalities;
- An internal survey of the Appointment Committee on the appointment process;
- An internal survey of Council/Committee Coordinators and Staff Liaisons on the amount of time they spent supporting their assigned Advisory Committee;
- An internal survey of Committee Chairs and Staff Liaisons of Advisory Committees, excluding working groups, Community Centre Boards, foundations and tribunals and inactive committees, on the efficiency and effectiveness of their committees and on the appointment process; and,
- Research on meeting attendance, ABC accomplishments, and on the diversity of volunteer applicants (this information was obtained from attendance records, meeting minutes, input from staff, and from the voluntary diversity survey applicants complete when they submit their application form).

On February 26, 2019 Council passed a resolution regarding the following Advisory Committees of the Development Services Committee: Markham Centre Advisory Committee, Historical Unionville Community Vision Committee, Cornell Advisory Group, Markham Main Street Committee, planning matters related to the Langstaff Area, and the Milliken Mills Main Street Advisory Committee (**see Appendix "B"**).

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**OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:**

Attached to this report as **Appendix “C”** is a document entitled “Report on Markham’s Citizen Advisory Boards and Committee 2014-2018.” A summary of its key findings follows.

**Key ABC Review Findings****1. Number of ABCs**

Markham currently has 61 ABCs including 32 with citizen appointments, 3 comprised of Council Members only, 2 Foundations, 15 Sub-Committees of Council, 3 tribunals, and 6 Community Centre Boards, (**see Appendix “D”**). This is considerably more than most other Ontario municipalities.<sup>ii</sup> Some of these ABCs are considered inactive (they met less than three times in the previous Council term). Significant municipal resources are required to support these bodies (see page 3 of **Appendix “C”**). In fact, with the recent amendments to the Municipal Act (via Bill 68) some of Markham’s ABCs may also now constitute “local boards” under the Act. The implications of this designation are numerous and far-reaching. For instance, this would require them to abide by many of the same rules as Council (e.g. adherence to open meeting requirements, implementation of codes of conduct, retaining an Integrity Commissioner, maintaining a conflict of interest registry, etc.). Staff are in the process of reviewing which of Markham’s current ABCs may fall under these new requirements.

To ensure the City is better able to provide adequate support to each ABC and to offer a meaningful volunteer experience for those ABCs with citizen members, staff suggest that the City reduce its current number of ABCs by combining ABCs with similar mandates, with the expectation that any outstanding deliverables would be transferred to the inheriting Committee. Staff also recommend dissolving inactive ABCs or those which have already completed their mandate.

It is also suggested that the ABCs created to support specific special events (e.g., Canada Day Committee) be reclassified as “Task Forces” with a 2-year term of appointment.<sup>iii</sup> This will allow these bodies to function with greater flexibility and less formality and will alleviate the issues some have experienced achieving quorum for meetings.

Legislative Services staff will be reporting back prior to June, 2019 with recommendations regarding a new legislative framework for the hearing of all quasi-judicial matters currently presented to the Licensing Appeal Hearing Committee and the Property Standards Committee.

Reducing the number of ABCs will allow the City to better balance the benefits of ABCs with the staff and Council resources required to support them. A list of ABCs proposed to remain “as is” is attached as **Appendix “E”**. A list of ABCs to be modified or dissolved is attached as **Appendix “F”**.

**2. ABC Effectiveness**

Based on the research conducted, it is clear that many of Markham’s ABCs are active in some form. Their accomplishments vary from hosting an event, community outreach,

raising funds for a City program or initiative, hearing deputations on matters regarding their mandate, or providing feedback to Council on City policies or programs. However, in reality, Markham's ABCs do not generally "advise" Council in a direct or obvious sense. For instance, only a few of them actually made a presentation at a Standing Committee or Council Meeting or provided recommendations to Council.

### 3. ABC Appointments

The ABC Appointment Committee is currently comprised of the Mayor and all Regional Councillors. In order to convene the Committee, three Members must be present. On average, the Appointment Committee meets from 10-20 times per year and conducts approximately 60 -120 interviews annually. The current process is both time consuming and challenging in terms of coordinating suitable interview times with the schedules of five busy Members of Council. As such, it is recommended that the Appointment Committee be tasked with conducting the interviews for the following statutory bodies: Committee of Adjustment, Heritage Markham and the Library Board. Interviews for all other ABCs would be conducted by an internal Staff panel (comprised of a member of the Legislative Services Department and the Committee Staff Liaison) with recommendations brought forward for Council's approval. This streamlined appointment procedure will result in a more efficient process that is less demanding on the schedules of the Mayor and Regional Councillors.

### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

Based on an estimated average cost of \$50 for refreshments per meeting as noted in the Review Report (See page 12 of **Appendix "C"**), at an average of 10 meetings per year (monthly meetings, save and except July & August) the reduction of 29 ABCs will result in approximately \$1,450 savings on refreshment costs. This is a very rough estimate as some Committees recommended to be dissolved met less than 10 times per year and/or were not provided refreshments on a regular basis.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Since their inception, Markham's ABCs have provided tremendous value to the City. However, they also require significant resources to support and have resulted in other ongoing challenges as discussed in this report. The resourcing requirements will likely continue to increase with the enhanced legislative requirements contained in the Municipal Act. The proposed changes in this report will reduce the number of ABCs by 29 (leaving 32 ABCs) thereby reducing the amount of City resources required for support. This will allow time for staff to: 1. focus on updating the Terms of Reference for each remaining ABC to ensure they reflect Markham's strategic priorities; 2. review the terms of appointment for ABC members; and 3. focus on providing a more meaningful volunteer experience for ABC members.

The public is interested in greater accountability from government and more transparency in decision making. At the same time, local governments are looking for opportunities to gather greater public input. Not surprisingly, this has resulted in the emergence of other (and arguably more effective) public consultation methods (public open houses, online surveys, social media). It is clear that the traditional "one-size-fits-all" approach to public engagement exemplified by a traditional ABC-centric governance model is no longer appropriate for the City. As issues emerge in the future, it is recommended that

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the City explore alternative public engagement options such as the ones noted above or create time-limited Task Forces.

Upon approval, Legislative Services staff will notify the Chairs and members of all impacted ABCs. Councillor appointments to ABCs will then be undertaken, followed by any outstanding citizen appointments to same. All outgoing ABC members will be formally recognized at Council's Volunteer Appreciation event scheduled for the fall.

**ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

This report recommends changes to the City's ABC structure to ensure advisory bodies operate efficiently and in a manner that supports the City's Strategic Plan "Building Markham's Future Together".

**BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:**

ABC Staff Liaisons and Committee Chairs were consulted in the preparation of the ABC review conducted by Legislative Services staff.

**RECOMMENDED BY:**

Kimberley Kitteringham  
City Clerk/Director of Legislative Services  
& Corporate Communications & Engagement

Trinela Cane  
Commissioner of Corporate Services

**ATTACHMENTS:**

**Appendix "A"** – Board & Committee Appointment Policy

**Appendix "B"** – Council Extract from February 26, 2019 Meeting RE: DSC Advisory Committees

**Appendix "C"** – "Review Report on Markham's Citizen Advisory Boards and Committees 2014-2018"

**Appendix "D"** - Current List of Markham ABCs (Citizen and Non-Citizen)

**Appendix "E"** – ABCs to Remain As Is for the 2018-2022 Term of Council

**Appendix "F"** - Proposed Changes to ABCs

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<sup>i</sup> Designed to reach out and educate, seek input, submit ideas and opinions, YourVoiceMarkham.ca is a versatile platform that is easy to use. As participants visit the site, they are encouraged to identify what areas of our business interest or concern them, allowing the City to keep them informed of projects that they have already engaged in and new ones as they develop.

<sup>ii</sup> The 8 municipalities surveyed by Legislative Services staff had, on average, only 14 Advisory Committees.

<sup>iii</sup> In 2015, the City of Vaughan dramatically reduced its Sub-Committees and Advisory Committees and replaced them with time-limited Task Forces with specific mandates. In 2019, the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville reduced their ABCs to 4 (from 18) and established Staff Working Groups.