

Report to Committee of the Whole (COW)
Meeting Date: April 13, 2026
**Report Title: Utilization of Local Newspapers
– Public Notice Policy**

Department: Administration
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Position: Clerk
Report #ADM-2026-08



RECOMMENDATION

Be it resolved that Committee of the Whole recommends to Council that By-Law 2007-64 (Giving of Public Notice Policy) be rescinded and a By-Law to adopt a new Public Notice Policy be brought forward to Council for approval, as presented in CoW report ADM-2026-08.

STRATEGIC PLAN COMMENTS:

Sector #8: Governance – Strategic Initiative #4 – Township Council will ensure openness and transparency in its operations.

BACKGROUND:

At the Committee of the Whole Closed session meeting held January 26, 2026, Council directed staff to provide a report on the utilization of local newspapers and the potential for cost savings.

Municipalities have traditionally used local newspapers to publish statutory notices in accordance with provincial legislation, as well as non-statutory public notices to inform residents of municipal initiatives, meetings, planning matters, and community events.

This report outlines:

- Current municipal newspaper usage and associated costs
- Legislative requirements for public notice
- The need for a New Public Notice Policy

DISCUSSION:

Staff have reviewed the number of advertisements placed in the local print Newspaper for the year 2025 as well as the legislative requirements for providing notice.

The Municipality currently utilizes a local print newspaper for:

- Statutory public notices (e.g., planning applications, By-Law notices, etc.)
- Public meetings and hearings
- Council highlights or informational advertisements (where applicable)

Over the year 2025, \$4,774.76 was spent on advertising in the local print newspaper. These costs are minimal and included advertising for the Ward 3 By-Election, the De-designation of a Municipal Property, Community Grants, Swim Programs, Business Awards and Minor Variance and Zoning Notice. With any newspaper, costs vary

depending on frequency, advertisement size, and statutory requirements.

There have also been numerous discussions within this term of Council on using any means available to get communication out to the taxpayers in order to be open and transparent and provide awareness of ongoing Township business.

In conducting research for this report, staff also reviewed the current Giving of Public Notice Policy under By-law 2007-64 (attached) and recommend that the current Policy be updated due to changes in legislation.

The current By-Law was passed under the former Section 251 of the *Municipal Act* which required the municipality to give notice in the manner required under the Municipality's notice provisions. Section 251 has since been repealed and replaced by Section 270(1)(4) as follows:

A municipality shall adopt and maintain policies with respect to the following matters The circumstances in which the municipality shall provide notice to the public and, if notice is to be provided, the form, manner and times notice shall be given.

Notice to the public is required under several different *Acts* including, but not limited to, the *Municipal Act*, the *Planning Act*, the *Development Charges Act, 1992* and the *Ontario Heritage Act*. These *Acts* (and/or associated regulations) generally outline the circumstances where such notice will be given and often prescribes the form and content of such notice.

Sections 26(4) and 39.1(3) of the *Ontario Heritage Act* state when a municipality is required by Part IV and Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act* to publish a notice in a newspaper having general circulation in the municipality. However, notice given in accordance with a policy adopted by a municipality under Section 270 of the *Municipal Act* is deemed to satisfy this requirement. Therefore, the Municipality's Notice By-Law would satisfy the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

Typical Notices published under Parts IV and V of the *Ontario Heritage Act* may include:

- Intention to Designate a Property;
- Passing, amending or repealing a Designation By-law;
- Creation of a Heritage Study Area; or,
- Designation of a Heritage Conservation District and District Plan.

Additionally, changes arising out of the Strong Mayors legislation render some sections of the Notice By-law unnecessary or not applicable. At present, the current Policy doesn't take into consideration modern forms of communication and legislative changes.

Staff have reviewed Notice Policies of other municipalities and have drafted the attached policy based on the review, with input from the Senior Management Team.

The current Policy is very specific in identifying situations where public notice is required and does not account for common legislative public notice requirements such as those found in the *Planning Act* and other provincial legislation.

The current Policy refers to notice regarding budget and budget amendments, which has effectively been changed as a result of the changes to the *Municipal Act* arising from the Strong Mayor powers.

The current Policy also requires that notice shall be published once in a newspaper of general circulation and on the Township website. Currently there is only one local newspaper which alone is not effective at reaching the broader public compared to other contemporary forms of communication, including the municipal website, Facebook and e-newsletter.

The proposed new Public Notice Policy (attached) establishes criteria to be applied when determining if public notice is required. For example, when determining whether a matter is of sufficient public interest to warrant the giving of public notice, the policy requires staff to consider:

- the number of people affected by the matter;
- the financial implications of the matter for the municipality;
- the time period or duration for which the matter is applicable; and
- the extent of any geographic area affected.

By applying these criteria, public notice can be issued for a wider range of matters, and in a more consistent manner across the organization. This policy also establishes minimum requirements for the form, manner and time for giving notice. The form describes the content that all public notices should contain, including:

- the authority and/or legislation under which the notice is being given;
- a description of the matter, and any decisions to be made in relation to it;
- a map or description of the lands affected by the matter;
- the date, time and location of any meeting at which the matter may be considered;
- a description of how comments and/or questions regarding the matter may be submitted;
- contact information of the employee, person, or organization responsible for the matter;
- how to exercise any applicable rights of appeal; and
- any other information deemed necessary by the municipality.

The proposed new Policy would also provide for staff to waive notice provisions, where it is deemed necessary, and under certain circumstances.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

None

ATTACHMENTS:

- Proposed Public Notice Policy
- Current Notice By-Law

e-signed

April 2, 2026

Mary Ellen Truelove, Clerk

DATE

e-signed

April 8, 2026

Shellee Fournier, CAO

DATE