

Guide - An Introduction to Township Council

This guide provides an important introduction for anyone who needs to know the powers and procedures of council or would like to know more about how the Township works.

Municipal Council Defined

Municipal Council (also called Township Council) is the body (group of people) that has the authority to make decisions for (or "govern") the Municipality. This authority is granted to the Municipal Council by the "Municipal Act".

The term "Municipal Council" also is used sometimes to mean the meetings that this group holds.

Municipal Powers

The powers of the Municipal Council depend greatly on the situation. In some situation the Municipal Council may have a broad set of powers and great latitude in their decisions, in other situations they may only be able choose from a limited set of options, and in other situations they may not have any options.

The "Municipal Act" defines the powers of Municipal Council, and the rules they must follow. The Act is a (sometimes complicated) legal document which mandates (gives) powers from the Province to the Municipality. Only the Province can change the Act.

The Municipality must also work within the laws of the Province of Ontario and the Government of Canada.

Composition of Municipal Council

In Central Frontenac, the Municipal Council is composed of 9 members: one (1) mayor and eight (8) councillors. It is the Mayor's duty to oversee the Municipal Council and provide guidance, and also to represent the Municipality. The Mayor is elected "at large" which means that every voter can cast a vote. The councillors duties are to represent the residents of the Township and make decisions in the best interest of the Municipality. The Councillors (or Council Members) are not elected "at large", but are instead elected "by ward". Central

Frontenac is divided into four (4) areas called wards (or districts). Two Councillors provide local representation for each ward. Voters may only vote for councillors within their ward.

Council Meetings

The Municipal Council can only use many of the powers granted to them by the Municipal Act during a Council Meeting. The Municipal Act defines that a Council Meeting must have at least 50% of Councillors in attendance and the Mayor. These meetings are usually held either once or twice each month.

Making Decisions

Municipal Council makes decisions on behalf of the Municipality at Council Meetings. In order for Municipal Council to vote to make a decision (called a resolution) a number of things must happen...

- The the issue (known as the "question" or "motion") must be recorded on paper
- The question must be endorsed (signed) by two Council Members
- The Municipal Council must have the authority to address the issue

If these criteria are met, the Mayor, performing his duty to oversee the meeting will allow the question to be voted on (this is known as "calling the question"). Members of Council will then vote on the question, either for (yea) or against (nea). The Mayor will count the number of votes. If over 50% of the Council Members vote for the issue (yea) then the question passes (and becomes a "resolution"), if less than 50% of the Council Members vote for the issues then the question is defeated. If a question is defeated, it cannot be voted on again (unless over 3/4 of Council Members vote to ask the question again).

Other Terms

Table or Tabled

When Council decides not to vote on an issue or pursue a discussion at a meeting it is "tabled". The issue may be raised at a following meeting ("lifted from the table").

Yea

A vote in favor.

Nea

A vote against.

By-law

A municipal law. Proposed By-laws must be approved by Municipal Council by reading the by-law three times before votes are cast.