

**THE CORPORATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF NEEBING**

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL**

Held using GoToMeeting Web Conference System and in-person at Blake Hall

On Wednesday, October 27, 2021

**PRESENT:** Mayor Erwin Butikofer  
Blake Councillor Mark Thibert  
Councillor at Large Gordon Cuthbertson  
Crooks Councillor Brian Wright  
Pearson Councillor Gary Gardner  
Pardee Councillor Curtis Coulson  
Scoble Councillor Brian Kurikka

Erika Kromm, Clerk-Treasurer  
Laura Jones, Deputy Clerk-Treasurer

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:**

Linda Cuthbertson

**1. PRELIMINARY MATTERS:**

(a) Call to Order: Mayor Butikofer called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

(b) Attendance: Attendance was recorded.

(c) Declarations of Interest:

No declarations of pecuniary interests under the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act were brought forward.

**2. PUBLIC MEETING RELATING TO THE REVIEW OF COUNCIL COMPOSITION**

**2.1 Report from Clerk-Treasurer Regarding Council Composition**

There was roughly equal feedback through the survey of people wanting to keep the current composition of seven Councillors and people in favour of reducing the number of Councillors.

**2.2 Hear from Members of the Public Regarding Council Composition**

A list of questions was submitted by resident Tracy Gardner. Her list of question was addressed as follows:

- 1. Councillor Cuthbertson ... How do you see the jobs/committees that you now hold distributed among 4 councillors and who around the table would be willing to take on the work? Please be specific.**

Councillor Cuthbertson responded that he only committee where he sits alone as a Councillor is the Lakehead Rural Planning Board. He can not say who would take on that committee work as

he does not know who the next Council will appoint. The other committees he is involved with have two or three members of Council on them and he does think than the number of representatives being reduced by one person would have any effect.

- 2. Councillors Gardner and Coulson...You have both volunteered to do work involved with maintaining and upkeeping the rinks at Blake Hall and Alf Olsen Park. Considering the difficulty in attracting volunteers for these jobs, how do you see this work distributed if one of your seats on council is eliminated?**

Councillor Coulson responded that he can still volunteer without being a member of Council, and whomever is on Council will pick up the slack.

Councillor Gardner stated he would still volunteer whether or not he was on Council.

Mayor Butikofer stated that volunteering for Blake Hall, or Alf Olsen Park, or other work, is not part of the Council job description or expectation. A future Councillor may be a person with disabilities, or unable to volunteer for other reasons.

- 3. If council is to eliminate 2 positions and the workload be absorbed, then can we expect an increase in the amount of honourarium a Councillor receives?**

This Council does not foresee an increase in the Honorarium outside of the annual cost of living increase given to all staff. However, Council acknowledges they cannot control the decisions made by a future Council.

The Mayor stated that he did not anticipate the workload to increase and would likely remain as 2 meetings per month on average plus committee work. There is no extra remuneration for participating on committees.

- 4. Seeing as council is now (since Sept. meeting) moving towards reducing council numbers by combining Pearson/Pardee as one ward, should then all of the tax payers of these two wards be contacted and consulted as this affects them directly?**

Various Councillors spoke. Another round of consultation would delay the bylaw. This project has been in the works since 2019: It was in the Neebing News; it was on Facebook; It was on our Website.

Shannon Loukola, a member of the public joined the meeting in person.

A Councillor asked what would happen if the bylaw was approved at Council and a resident appealed the bylaw.

Ms. Kromm stated that the bylaw appeal period is 45 days. In order to allow for the appeal period, the bylaw would have to be passed at the November 3 Council meeting. If there was an appeal it would be addressed by the Ontario Land Tribunal and their ruling is final. The tribunal changed their structure and she does not know the timeline for the new tribunal meetings.

Mayor Butikofer confirmed that if Council chooses to pass the bylaw to reduce Council size, and someone objects, and the tribunal upholds Neebing's bylaw, then the bylaw would take effect in 2026 election period.

The Mayor invited Shannon Loukala to speak. Ms. Loukala asked about public consultation. The Neebing News article in September stated we would consult for over the next months.

Council was asked if anyone had contacted them about this issue. Councillor Gardner has received four calls. No one else received any calls.

Ms. Loukala stated that Neebing should not take a non-response as agreement. This process should have been started earlier. It is not fair to residents. Ms. Loukala asked Council could place an end-date on the survey and advertise the end-date so the public would know that the consultation period is ending.

Ms. Kromm stated that if the process was extended it would not be valid for the next term of Council. She also stated that having a question on the next election ballot may be challenging because often Council seats are acclaimed in Neebing. If there is no election, MMAH may require us to pull the question. If Council chooses, the survey can run until to November 3 at noon, and we can advertise that fact on Facebook and on the website.

### 2.3 Debate from Council

Councillor Gardner stated that once the new Council is in charge, he does not know if the Honorarium will change. He prefers the seven-member Council as each Councillor brings a different set of skills to the table.

Councillor Coulson stated that he supports the existing seven Councillor composition, however he can also see the reasoning behind why the change is being recommended. He stated that more volunteers might lighten the load.

Councillor Cuthbertson stated that he has dealt with neighbouring Municipalities that function with five Councillors. He acknowledged Councillor Gardner's comment about diversity of skill, but he still supported a Council comprised of five members.

Councillor Wright stated that he had mixed thoughts about the issue. He noted that other Municipalities function well with five Councillors and that overall he thinks that five will be enough for Neebing.

Councillor Kurikka stated that he has a 50-50 opinion on this issue. He noted that Neebing does not have in-house expertise and we have to hire expertise. The next Council will have the same issue. He acknowledges that skill is picked up by the committees, so he would support either outcome.

Councillor Thibert stated he has received no feedback from residents and is voicing his personal opinion. He has been a part of a number of organizations that have undergone downsizing and he supports an approach that favours saving money, so he supports a five-member Council.


Mayor Butikofer stated that he favours downsizing. He would rather see funds directed to more staff, rather than more management. There is no guarantee who will run, and no guarantee of their skill set. Overall, he represents Neebing and Neebing will still be represented by a five-member Council.

Shannon Loukala was thanked for her participation in the meeting.

**3. ADJOURN THE MEETING:**

There being no further business to attend to, Mayor Butikofer adjourned the meeting at 6:10 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING OF COUNCIL

  
Erwin Butikofer  
MAYOR

  
Erika Kromm  
CLERK-TREASURER