

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (WORKING SESSION) – NOVEMBER 9, 2004

PROPOSED PROTOCOL FOR RESPONDING TO CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESSED TO “MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL”

Council, at its meeting of June 28, 2004, adopted (in part) the following:

“That a further report reviewing the process relating to correspondence addressed to the Mayor and Members of Council, be brought forward to a Committee of the Whole (working Session) in the Fall.”

Recommendation

Local and Regional Councillor Linda Jackson recommends that this report be received for information.

Purpose

To provide a review of the protocol adopted by Council at its meeting of June 28, 2004 with respect to correspondence addressed to Mayor and Members of Council.

Background - Analysis and Options

Following the adoption of the proposed protocol by Council at its meeting of June 28, 2004, staff conducted a survey in October 2004 inclusive of all the Council Administrative Assistants and the Executive Assistant to the Mayor. It was felt that the assistants would be able to provide a clear indication of the effectiveness of the new protocol, given that they are the front-line staff dealing with correspondence addressed to “Mayor and Members of Council”. Of the 9 assistants surveyed, 6 responded by the cutoff date of October 20, 2004 and no responses were received after that date.

The questions asked with respect to correspondence addressed to Mayor and Members of Council were as follows:

1. Have you adopted the new protocol into your regular routine?
2. On average, how many letters/faxes/emails do you receive per week?
3. What percentage of these do you refer to the appropriate council member?
4. Do you correspond with the writer? If so, do you:
 - a) Send a generic response thanking the writer, i.e. advising him/her of council protocol, and advising of who the appropriate councillor would be, or
 - b) Send a response in resolution of the issue, without following protocol?
5. Do you believe this protocol has eliminated duplication of work by Council staff?
6. Do you believe this protocol has eliminated duplication of responses by City staff?

The responses to each of the survey questions were:

1. All six responses were indicative that “yes” the new protocol has been adopted.
2. Responses varied, but the average number of letters/faxes/emails received per week is 13.
3. Again, the responses varied. One assistant does not defer any correspondence to the appropriate Member of Council, one refers 1%, one refers 5%, and three refer 100%.
4. Four assistants have actively adopted option a), one assistant has adopted option b), and one assistant sends no response.

5. All six responses indicated agreement that duplication of work by Council staff has been reduced, with the exception of duplication where complaints are received "individually" by more than one councillor.
6. All six responses indicated agreement that duplication of work by City staff has been reduced, with the exception of instances where the originator of a complaint had already contacted staff, but subsequently contacted a councillor.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

Adoption of a standard protocol with respect to correspondence addressed to "Mayor and Members of Council" ensures delivery of quality services through streamlined communications.

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council.

Conclusion

The elimination of duplication by Council and City staff has not been fully achieved. Obtaining efficiencies in communication will require full participation by all parties in the protocol for responding to correspondence addressed to "Mayor and Members of Council".

Attachments

1. Survey email
2. Council Extract

Report prepared by:

Mirella Compagno, Council Administrative Assistant

Respectfully submitted,

Linda D. Jackson
Local and Regional Councillor

Compagno, Mirella

From: Compagno, Mirella
Sent: Friday, October 15, 2004 12:06 PM
To: DiPonio, Sandra; Iafrate, Marilyn; Ciafardoni, Joy; Panicali, Adele; Cardile, Lucy; Borello, Laura; Furfaro, Cindy; Traub, Debi
Cc: Jackson, Linda
Subject: Protocol for Correspondence

Importance: High

Hi Ladies,

In June 2004, Linda brought forward an item to CW(WS) titled "Proposed Protocol for Responding to Correspondence Addressed to "Mayor and Members of Council". It outlined a proposal that all responses to these letters/faxes/emails would be deferred to:

1. The appropriate ward councillor for correspondence dealing with City issues,
2. The appropriate regional councillor who sits on a related regional committee for regional issues, and
3. The Mayor where deemed necessary or appropriate.

Council, at its meeting on June 28, 2004, adopted (in part) the following:

That a further report reviewing the process relating to correspondence to the Mayor and Members of Council, be brought forward to a Committee of the Whole (Working Session) in the Fall. (Item 4, Report No. 54, CW (WS))

I now have the task of preparing this report which will illustrate how the protocol has worked since June 2004. To that end, please provide me with your responses to the following questions, no later than WED., OCT. 20/04. Thanks ladies!!

1. Have you adopted the new protocol into your regular routine?
2. On average, how many letters/faxes/emails do you receive per week?
3. What percentage of these do you defer to the appropriate council member?
4. Do you correspond with the writer? If so, do you:
 - a. Send a generic response thanking the writer, i.e. advising him/her of council protocol, and advising of who the appropriate councillor would be, or
 - b. Send a response in resolution of the issue, without following protocol.
5. Do you believe this protocol has eliminated duplication of work by Council staff?
6. Do you believe this protocol has eliminated duplication of responses by City staff?

Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. This is merely a survey to gather data for a review of the protocol.

Mirella Compagno
Ext.8837

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 28, 2004

Item 4, Report No. 54, of the Committee of the Whole (Working Session), which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on June 28, 2004.

**4 PROPOSED PROTOCOL FOR RESPONDING TO CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESSED TO
"MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL"**

The Committee of the Whole (Working Session) recommends:

- 1) That clause 1 contained in the following report of Regional Councillor Jackson, dated June 15, 2004, be approved;
- 2) That regionally related enquiries be responded to by the appropriate Local and Regional Councillor and/or the Mayor, who sits on the appropriate Region of York committee, i.e. Transit, Solid Waste Management; and
- 3) That a further report reviewing the process relating to correspondence addressed to the Mayor and Members of Council, be brought forward to a Committee of the Whole (Working Session) in the Fall.

Recommendation

Local and Regional Councillor Linda Jackson recommends that the following protocol be adopted to deal with correspondence addressed to "Mayor and Members of Council":

1. That municipally related enquiries be responded to by the appropriate Ward Councillor, and
2. That regionally related enquiries be responded to by the Local and Regional Councillor who sits on the appropriate Region of York committee, i.e. Transit, Solid Waste Management.

Purpose

To eliminate duplication of responses to residents,

To eliminate duplication of requests to City of Vaughan staff from Council members,

To eliminate possible contradictory responses to one enquiry from two or more Council members, and

To eliminate the need for multiple responses from City of Vaughan staff for one request to two or more Council members.

Background - Analysis and Options

The Mayor and Members of Council have been receiving an increasing amount of correspondence addressed to "Mayor and Members of Council". This creates duplication of efforts by staff if more than one Member of Council responds to the enquiry.

A protocol dealing with this type of correspondence will ensure consistency, professionalism and will portray a favourable image to the public.

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 28, 2004

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Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

Adoption of a standard protocol with respect to correspondence addressed to "Mayor and Members of Council" will ensure delivery of quality services through streamlined communications.

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council.

Conclusion

The foregoing will eliminate the need for duplication and will ensure consistency and professionalism.

Attachments

None

Report prepared by:

Mirella Compagno, Council Administrative Assistant