

## **COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (WORKING SESSION) – MARCH 18, 2008**

### **EFFECTIVENESS OF CITY PAGE ADVERTISING**

#### **Recommendation**

The Director of Corporate Communications, in consultation with the City Manager, recommends:

That Council receive this report for information purposes.

#### **Economic Impact**

None.

#### **Communications Plan**

Not applicable.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide a review of the efficiency and impact of the City Page with respect to content, placement and distribution.

#### **Background - Analysis and Options**

This report addresses Item No. 5, Report No. 4 of the Committee of the Whole (Working Session), January 29, 2008 which was adopted without amendment by Council on February 11, 2008. The recommendation states that “staff review the efficiency and impact of the City Page with respect to content, placement and distribution.”

#### **Purpose of the City Page**

In 2000, Council authorized the establishment of a “City Page” to communicate City information to residents and other target audiences through the use of advertising published in a newspaper with the widest possible circulation in the City of Vaughan.

The Corporate Communications department was assigned responsibility for producing and managing the “City Page.”

The primary purpose of the “City Page” is to provide Vaughan residents with reasonable notice in order to meet statutory requirements. Approximately 70% of “City Page” space is used for statutory ads, which are considered priority content.

In terms of “Appropriate Form Of Notice,” the Municipal Act states that it is the responsibility of Council to ensure compliance with various provincial statutes that require Ontario municipalities to notify the public of proposed changes to by-laws and to provide public notice of various decisions.

Council determines what is an appropriate form of notice for the City, which can include newspaper advertising.

Section 251 of the Municipal Act, 2001, Part VI, states: “Where a municipality is required to give notice under a provision of this Act, the municipality shall, except as otherwise provided, give the notice in a form and in the manner and at the times that the council considers adequate to give reasonable notice under the provision.”

All statutory advertisements intended for general circulation to the residents of Vaughan can be published on the “City Page,” space permitting, with the exception of those statutory ads targeting a specialized audience, including tender advertising placed in specialized trade/business publications that reach a specific audience and recruitment advertising. It is the responsibility of each City department with statutory notice requirements to submit advertising content to the Corporate Communications department for inclusion in the “City Page.”

In addition, the “City Page” can include advertising in support of non-statutory City initiatives and programs, space permitting. Corporate Communications also coordinates these placements.

#### Placement of City Page advertising

Since 2000, the City has placed an annual contract with local community papers to publish the “City Page.” The selection of publications for City Page placements was the responsibility of the Commissioner of Economic/Technology Development and Communications, formalized in the Corporate Advertising Policy, passed by Council on June 15, 2005. For the past two years, Council has made the determination of “City Page” placements based, in part, on placement options provided by the Corporate Communications department.

The criteria used by Corporate Communications for presenting placement options for the “City Page” to Council include:

*Audited Circulation* – A newspaper audited by the industry-standard Canadian Circulation Audit Bureau (CCAB) can accurately report its circulation in the City of Vaughan. If this is not available, a publisher’s sworn statement detailing the circulation of the publication can be requested.

*City-wide Circulation* – Newspapers with the widest distribution in the City of Vaughan best fulfill the City’s statutory notice requirements.

*Weekly frequency* – A weekly publishing frequency is required for some statutory notifications. Placing the “City Page” as a weekly advertisement in one publication has the potential advantage of becoming recognized by residents as a regular feature of the paper, and regular weekly placements in one publication would meet any requirements of various City departments for consecutive placements of statutory notices.

*Placement Costs* – The advertising placement rate is negotiated by the Director of Corporate Communications.

*Editorial Content* – Newspapers publishing local news of interest to the residents and businesses of Vaughan.

*Community Engagement* – Certain newspapers reach specific communities or groups that may not be served by other publications.

#### Performance Measurements

To determine the effectiveness of the “City Page” for the purposes of this report, three approaches to performance measurement were reviewed:

1. Readership surveys
2. Complaints from Vaughan residents
3. Best practices

## 1. Readership surveys

Readership surveys have been used by the publishing industry for many years to market the effectiveness of print advertising. Most often, there are proprietary reasons for commissioning readership surveys and published results may selectively support this marketing purpose.

Survey results published by industry organizations do demonstrate that newspapers are an effective communications vehicle, as highlighted by the following findings:

- According to the Canadian Newspaper Association's *NADbank 2007 Readership Study*, 73% of adults in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) read a newspaper at least once a week.
- Across Canada, 50% of adults read a newspaper yesterday.
- Of those adults reading newspapers, 73% read local news.
- 22% of adults in the Toronto CMA read online editions of Canadian daily newspapers, but only 3% of that total read online editions only.
- According to the Ontario Community Newspapers Association, 73% of the Ontario adult population read their local community paper.
- Most community newspaper readers read almost every edition, and most or all of each issue.
- Community newspapers reach 68% of those not reading daily newspapers.

## 2. Complaints from Vaughan residents

As the City has not commissioned a readership survey of local community papers publishing the "City Page," there are no direct performance measurements available. However, an indirect measurement of providing "reasonable notice" through statutory ads published on the "City Page" can be made by tracking public complaints.

The Corporate Communications department surveyed City departments to track public complaints about insufficient notification of public meetings over a 12-month period (see attachment #1: Departmental survey of statutory public notice requirements). The survey results indicate that the City is not receiving public complaints about public meeting notifications.

The one telephone complaint received by Corporate Communications was from a resident who had not received the local community paper and who therefore could not read the "City Page."

In addition, about ten complaints are received for each mailing of public information meeting notices by the Traffic Engineering Division. These complaints are usually about no mailed notice being received or the "late" delivery of the notice. These complaints may not indicate lack of "reasonable notice" as the division does publish its notices on the "City Page," on the City website, and through standard newsletters delivered door-to-door to each household of affected residents.

In addition, the departmental survey provides information on specific policies, procedures or regulations for publishing statutory notices of public meetings or project announcements that are followed by various departments. This information is provided for reference purposes (see attachment #1: Departmental survey of statutory public notice requirements).

It is important to note that most City departments do place statutory notices on the “City Page” and post the information to the City website. Other forms of notification used by various City departments include mobile signs, mailings, and door-to-door notice distribution.

### 3. Best Practices

For the purposes of this report, Corporate Communications conducted a telephone and website survey of statutory notice practices by municipalities in York Region and the Greater Toronto Area. A total of 16 municipalities were surveyed. Highlights include:

- 12 of the 16 municipalities regularly place statutory notices on a weekly basis in the local community paper, most often formatted as a City or Town Page.
- 2 of the 16 municipalities only place statutory notices in community papers as needed (Town of Caledon, Halton Region).
- 2 municipalities do not place statutory ads in local papers (City of Mississauga, Township of Brock)
- All municipalities surveyed do post statutory notices on their websites.

### Evaluation

The “City Page” has been an effective tool in communicating to our citizens in recent years.

- The three local community papers under contract for 2008 placements of the “City Page” meet the criteria used by Corporate Communications for presenting placement options to Council for the “City Page,” including:
  - A stated city-wide circulation to the approximately 70,000 households in Vaughan – Vaughan Citizen/Liberal (63,750); Vaughan Today (69,000); and Vaughan Perspectives (52,000).
  - Editorial content covering local news of interest to the residents and businesses of Vaughan, including Council news and coverage of City programs and initiatives.
  - Minimum weekly publishing frequency.
- According to industry surveys, community papers are well-read and an important local news source.
- The use of a “City Page” published weekly in a local community newspaper is consistent with the best practices of other municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area.
- In addition to publishing the “City Page,” the City of Vaughan publishes statutory notices on the City’s website and uses other communications vehicles – such as mobile signs, mailed notices, and notices distributed door-to-door – to ensure the widest possible dissemination of City information to residents and local businesses.

The absence of complaints about insufficient notification of public meetings is a clear indication of the effectiveness of the “City Page.”

### **Relationship to Vaughan Vision**

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved.

### **Regional Implications**

Not applicable.

### **Conclusion**

City Page advertising continues to provide an effective vehicle for communicating statutory notices to Vaughan residents and businesses, and for advertising City programs and initiatives.

### **Attachments**

1. Departmental survey of statutory public notice requirements
2. Municipal survey of statutory ad postings

### **Report prepared by:**

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Respectfully submitted,

**Madeline Zito**  
Director of Corporate Communications

## Departmental survey of statutory public notice requirements

*Purpose:* Council has requested a staff report on the effectiveness of the City's statutory public notices and the weekly City Page advertisements.

The following information is required from every department in order to complete this report.

1. Have you received any public complaints (# over a 12-month period) about insufficient notification of public meetings?
  
2. Does your department follow specific policies, procedures or regulations for publishing statutory notices of public meetings or project announcements? (For example, a requirement to publish an ad in the same local paper for two consecutive weeks). Please identify the regulation or policy.

DEPARTMENT	NOTICE COMPLAINTS	SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS
<b>Strategic Planning</b>	none	none
<b>ITM</b>	none	none
<b>Finance</b>	none	Public notice required (15 -21 days prior) for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operating Budget</li> <li>• Public input forums</li> <li>• User fee changes</li> <li>• Council remuneration</li> </ul>
<b>Parks Development</b>	none	none
<b>Legal</b>	none	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OMB hearings and prehearings</li> </ul>
<b>Development Planning</b>	none	<p>Statutory Notice requirements stipulated by the Provincial Planning Act:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• minimum of 20 days prior to Public Hearing</li> <li>• minimum distance for notification of 120 metres</li> </ul> <p>Notification by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personal service, or</li> <li>• ordinary mail, or</li> <li>• by publishing a notice in the newspaper, or</li> <li>• by posting a notice clearly legible and visible from a road or other place to which the public has access.</li> </ul> <p>Current practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mail the notice to all landowners within 120 metres</li> <li>• City-wide amendment through the newspaper (one time ad).</li> </ul>

DEPARTMENT	NOTICE COMPLAINTS	SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS
<b>Reserves and Investments</b>	none	Public notice required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capital Budget</li> <li>• Legislative notice requirements per DC Act</li> </ul>
<b>Recreation and Culture</b>	none	Statutory requirements under the Ontario Heritage Act for a municipality designating property under the act: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One notice of "Intention to Designate" in a local paper with a 30-day waiting period for any objection to be received by the City Clerk.</li> <li>• One notice of "Passing By-law" in a local paper once the by-law is passed.</li> </ul>
<b>VBEC</b>	none	none
<b>Building Standards</b>	none	Building Code Act requires notice in local papers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• holding of a public meeting where permit fees are to be increased</li> <li>• each year for annual report</li> </ul>
<b>Parks and Forestry</b>	none	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenders, as per purchasing guidelines.</li> <li>• Notices for free mulch days are posted 2 weeks in advance. The Mobile signs are posted 10 days prior to the event.</li> </ul>
<b>Clerks</b>	none	Public notices for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Official Plan Amendments</li> <li>• Zoning By-laws</li> <li>• Road Closings and</li> <li>• Road Re-namings.</li> </ul> <p>The Planning Act requires Official Plan and Zoning By-law notices be published once, a minimum of 20 days prior to the Public Hearing.</p> <p>The Municipal Act requires road closings and re-namings be advertised for 2 consecutive weeks.</p>
<b>Waste Management &amp; Water/Wastewater</b>	none	<p><b>Waste Management:</b> Advertising is published on the City Page, generally two weeks prior to a particular collection change. Advertise changes such as holiday schedules two weeks before; Leaf and yard up to three weeks before, as well as after the date in question.</p> <p>Public meetings for Phase 2 of Greening Vaughan were advertised in as many papers as possible for a number of weeks (no statutory requirement to do so).</p> <p><b>Water/Wastewater:</b> No statutory notice requirements identified. Advertise to inform residents about programs such as watering restrictions, lead testing etc.</p>

DEPARTMENT	NOTICE COMPLAINTS	SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS
<p><b>Engineering Services</b></p>	<p>none</p> <p>none</p> <p>none</p> <p>none</p> <p>10 (average per notice mailed)</p>	<p><b>Construction Services Division:</b> Statutory public notices are not issued for this division. The division does notify residents of the start of construction for projects in the area through door-to-door delivery of a standard newsletter. No record of any complaints about this process.</p> <p><b>Design Services Division:</b> Follow the statutory public consultation process stipulated by the Environmental Assessment Act and the associated Municipal Class Environmental Assessment guidelines as amended last in 2007. These documents stipulate the minimum criteria for public consultation requirements associated with specific studies or infrastructure construction projects related to municipal services.</p> <p><b>Construction Services Division:</b> This Division does notify the residents of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• activity in their areas regarding pre-engineering, design of infrastructure reconstruction projects through door to door delivery of a standard newsletter.</li> <li>• For any Public Consultation Centre meetings, the Division ensures the public notice ad is placed on the City page in the appropriate local newspapers 2 weeks prior to the date of the meeting.</li> <li>• Meeting notice is placed on the City's website.</li> </ul> <p>The Division has not received any complaints in the last 12 months regarding insufficient notification.</p> <p><b>Infrastructure Management Division:</b> Statutory public notices are not issued for IM projects or initiatives.</p> <p><b>Traffic Engineering Division:</b> This Division does not issue statutory public notices for its initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Division does issue standard newsletters for its construction projects through door to door delivery to affected residents.</li> <li>• Notice of public information meetings is placed on the City Page in various local newspapers 2 weeks in advance of the meeting date.</li> <li>• Notices are also placed on the City website and</li> <li>• mailed to residents in the specified area.</li> </ul> <p>Staff have received complaints about no notice or late delivery of notice and may receive as many as 10 complaints per notice mailed.</p>
<p><b>Purchasing</b></p>	<p>none</p>	<p>none</p>



DEPARTMENT	NOTICE COMPLAINTS	SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS
Development/Transportation	none	<p><b>Development Review Sections:</b> For Public Consultation Centre meetings (PCC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Notice ad is advertised in 3 local newspapers 2 weeks prior to meeting date (Vaughan Citizen, Vaughan Weekly, Lo Specchio and depending on the project, also advertise in the Toronto Star).</li> <li>• Notice posted to City website 2 weeks prior</li> <li>• Public notices to all residents of the specific boundary area are also mailed out 2 weeks before the meeting.</li> </ul> <p><b>Planning &amp; Studies Section:</b> Statutory public consultation process stipulated by the Environmental Assessment Act and the associated Municipal Class Environmental Assessment guidelines set out the minimum criteria for public consultation requirements associated with overall Master Plan Studies or specific infrastructure construction projects related to municipal services including transportation.</p> <p>Minimum process for the majority of Municipal Class EA Study projects includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice of Study Commencement - Published in the local papers, on City website and mailed directly to all affected landowners within a particular study area. No advance notification done for the commencement of the study.</li> <li>• Notice of a Public Information Session - Published in the local papers, on City website and mailed directly to all affected landowners within a particular study area. Sent in advance usually a 2 weeks prior to meeting.</li> <li>• Notice of Study Completion - Published in the local papers, on City website and mailed directly to all affected landowners within a particular study area. No advance notification done upon completion of the study.</li> </ul>
Access Vaughan	none	No policy/procedure for publishing notices of public meetings or project announcements. Public announcement about the launch of Access Vaughan was handled by Corporate Communications.
Corporate Communications	1	none
Policy Planning and Urban Design	none	<p>Statutory Public Hearing notices placed in local papers as required by the Planning Act (this is a minimum requirement for Public Hearings).</p> <p>The same process is followed for study open houses and other meetings (e.g. Block Plans, studies, etc).</p> <p>Other notification practices include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sending notices to the surrounding contact area</li> </ul>

DEPARTMENT	NOTICE COMPLAINTS	SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS
		<p>beyond the minimum required distance) to ensure no one is missed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sending notices for studies directly to those within the study area boundaries.</li> <li>• After the study is underway, individuals can ask to be added to the notice list and future notices will be sent directly to their house.</li> </ul> <p>Finally, all meetings are posted on the City website (as are study materials, reports, maps, etc.)</p> <p>Occasionally have complaints in Committee and/or Public Hearings or at an open house by individuals who heard about the meeting from a neighbour, or by some other "informal" method.</p>

## Municipal survey of statutory ad postings

Municipality	Print Media	Other Media
<b>Town of Aurora</b>	Publishes statutory ads in weekly local newspapers. The page is called the "notice board."	Newspaper page can viewed on the website by clicking on the "public notices and the town's weekly notice board" link.
<b>Town of East Gwillimbury</b>	Posts public notices in weekly newspaper the "Era Banner."	Notices on website under the "Town Hall" section and clicking on "notices."
<b>Town of Georgina</b>	Publishes its public notices in the local weekly newspaper called "The Advocate."	On website, under "Municipal Government Services" and then on "Public Notices."
<b>Township of King</b>	The Township of King publishes all public notices and statutory ads in the weekly newspaper called "the King Weekly" under the section called "The Township Page".	Notices on website in the "Local Government" section under "Public Notices"
<b>Town of Markham</b>	Publishes notices in the newspaper which is issued twice a week called "The Economic Sun".	Internet notices can be found by clicking on "Town of Markham Services" and then choosing "Public Notices"
<b>Town of Newmarket</b>	Publishes public notices and community events in the weekly newspaper called the "Era Banner." The newspaper comes out three times a week but Town publishes the notices every Tuesday. The name of the page is called the "Town Page."	Page posted in the "Resident Services" section of town website under "Newmarket Town Page"
<b>Town of Richmond Hill</b>	Publishes statutory ads in the weekly newspaper called "The Liberal"	View notices online under "Town Hall" and then clicking on "News" and then "Notices"
<b>Town of Ajax</b>	Community Page in the Ajax News Advertiser every Wednesday for statutory ads.	Community Page online under "Town Hall" and then "community Page"

<b>Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville</b>	Publishes its public notices in their newspaper called "The Stouffville Sun Tribune." The paper comes out twice a week but Town publishes notice page on Thursday.	View the notices online under "Council Meeting Calendar, Agendas and Minutes."
<b>City of Brampton</b>	Post notices and statutory ads in local weekly newspaper called "The Brampton Guardian"	View notices online through their municipal websites by clicking on "City Hall" and then "Public Meetings and Notices"
<b>Township of Brock</b>	Does not publish statutory ads in the local newspaper.	Council meeting notices can be found on their website under the "Planning and Development" section.
<b>City of Burlington</b>	City of Burlington publishes city notices in the local newspaper called "The Burlington Post." The paper comes out three times a week but the notices come out on Fridays.	View notices online under "Online Documents" and then choosing "Public Notices."
<b>Town of Caledon</b>	The Town of Caledon has two local newspapers, "The Caledon Citizen" and "The Caledon Enterprise." They publish their notices in "The Caledon Enterprise." They do not put out a community page weekly, they only publish the notices as they come up in order to meet the 20 day notice in their municipal act.	
<b>Regional Municipality of Halton</b>	The Regional Municipality of Halton publishes its public notices every week in several community newspapers. Some include: "Metro-land," Oakville Beaver" and "The Burlington Post."	
<b>City of Mississauga</b>	The City of Mississauga does not publish notices in the local newspaper. All notices can be found online by looking under the "City Hall" section and then clicking on "Public Notices"	Sometimes distribute brochures and if variances or changes are up for change in a certain area, letters are distributed to those residents who may be affected.

<b>City of Pickering</b>	Publish statutory ads in the Wednesday edition of the "Pickering News Advertiser."	Posted on website under the "Planning and Development" section in the "Notice of Public Meeting" section.
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