

TOWNSHIP OF HAVELOCK-BELMONT-METHUEN

To: Mayor Martin and Members of Council
From: Bob Angione, Chief Administrative Officer/Clerk
Meeting Date: October 15, 2024
Subject: Electoral Ward System

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to present for adoption By-law 2024-074, being a By-law to dissolve the Ward System of Electoral Representation for the Corporation of the Township of Havelock-Belmont-Methuen and Institute an At-Large System of Electoral Representation.

Recommendation:

Whereas currently the positions of Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillor at Large are elected by all the eligible voters within the Township but the Township Ward Councillor and the Village Ward Councillor are elected solely by the respective eligible electors in that specific ward; and

Whereas Council has expressed a desire to review the electoral ward system currently in place within the Township of Havelock-Belmont-Methuen; and

Whereas Section 222(1) of the *Municipal Act, 2001* states that a municipality is authorized to *divide or redivide the municipality into wards or to dissolve the existing wards*; and

Whereas Council directed that a public consultation process be undertaken; and

Whereas the public consultation process commenced with a survey that was included in the general tax mailing early this year; and

Whereas that survey yielded a record 649 responses; and

Whereas the results of that survey broke down as 446 (69%) in favour of a change and 203 (31%) opposed to a change; and

Whereas two Public Meetings were held on July 16, 2024 to receive verbal input from

the residents of the Township; one in the morning and one in the evening; and Whereas three (3) verbal presentations and one written submission were received at the first Public Meeting with everyone expressing support for abolishing the ward system and replacing it with an at large system; and

Whereas six (6) delegations were received at the evening session with three (3) speaking in favour of abolishing the ward system and three (3) speaking in opposition to changing the current ward system; and

Whereas the ward numbers consistently reveal that the Village Ward voters are exclusively electing 20% of the Members of Council (Village Ward Councillor) with 12% to 13% of the eligible voters while Township Ward voters are exclusively electing 20% of the Members of Council (Township Ward Councillor) with 87% to 88% of the eligible electors; and

Whereas the ward numbers also reveal that the Township Ward member of council has been elected by at least 718 votes more than the Village Ward member of council in each of the last three elections; and

Whereas the principle of effective representation for the entire Township supports a change to the at large system of electing all Members of Council whereby voters can be equally represented and the relative parity of voting power is achieved by having all eligible electors voting for all positions of Council;

Be It Resolved That By-law 2024-074, being a By-law to dissolve the Ward System of Electoral Representation for the Corporation of the Township of Havelock-Belmont-Methuen and Institute an At-Large System of Electoral Representation be adopted in the by-law section of this Council Meeting whereby the roles of Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and three Councillor positions are all elected at-large.

Background:

At the Open Session Regular Council Meeting held on August 15, 2024 Council passed Resolution Number R-421-24 to eliminate the ward system and create an at-large system whereby the roles of Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and three Councillor positions are all elected at-large. Staff provided notice to the public via a posting on the Township website and via four postings on Facebook and four postings on Instagram during the months of September and October. The requirement for giving notice has been met.

The presenting of By-law 2024-074 follows an extensive public engagement process that included a survey of the community and two public meetings.

The public input survey, as attached to this report, was included in the general tax bill mailing of late February. Paper copies were also made available at the Township Municipal Office. The survey was also posted to the Township website from Monday, March 4, 2024 to Friday, April 19, 2024.

The first question of the survey asked;
Do you want the Municipal Election Ward System to change?

A total of 649 submissions were received. This represents the highest number of submissions to a Township survey. The results broke down as 446 (69%) in favour of a change and 203 (31%) opposed to a change.

A total of 545 (84%) surveys were submitted electronically via the Township website and 104 (16%) were submitted via paper.

Of the 446 submissions in support of the change, 396 voted to dissolve the ward system and have all voters vote for all Council positions. This represents 61% of the total submissions or 89% of the yes submissions.

Of the 446 submissions in support of change, 39 voted to leave the voting system as is but redraw the boundaries to have an equal number of voters in each ward. This represents 6% of the total submissions or 9% of the yes submissions.

Of the 446 submissions in support of change, 11 voted for the “Other” option and provided various comments. This represents 1.7% of the total submissions or 2.5% of the yes submissions.

Some of the comments received in the “Other” category include:

- Dissolve the Township and have governance and administration through the County of Peterborough.
- Three Council positions should be split between (1) the Village of Havelock (2) seasonal or lakefront residents (3) rural residents.
- Have one Council Member represent all cottages on all the lakes.
- Term limits for Members of Council.
- Voters should have the ability to vote in both wards.
- Eliminate Councillor-at-Large position and replace with another Township Ward Councillor or simply eliminate Councillor-at-Large position.

Following the survey, two public meetings were held on Tuesday, July 16, 2024. The first public meeting commenced at 9:30 a.m. and the second public meeting commenced at 6:00 p.m.

Three (3) verbal presentations and one written submission were received at the first Public Meeting with everyone expressing support for abolishing the ward system and replacing it with an at large system.

Six (6) delegations were received at the evening session with three (3) speaking in favour of abolishing the ward system and three (3) speaking in opposition to changing the ward system.

Between the two public meetings, seven (7) submissions expressed support for abolishing the ward system and three (3) submissions expressed opposition to change.

The Township of Havelock-Belmont-Methuen is currently comprised of two electoral wards for municipal elections; Township Ward and the Village Ward. The ward boundaries are described as follows:

Ward 01 – Township Ward

Being all properties lying within the descriptive boundaries known as Belmont and Methuen in the assessment roll of the municipality with map sub-division number of 010.

Ward 02 – Village Ward

Being all properties lying within the descriptive boundaries known as the Village of Havelock and appearing in the assessment roll of the municipality with map sub-division number of 020.

Currently one councillor is elected in the Township Ward and one councillor is elected in the Village Ward with the remaining three members of council (Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillor at Large) being elected at large by all the voters of the Township. The Township of Havelock-Belmont-Methuen was formed on January 1, 1998 via the amalgamation of Belmont and Methuen Townships with the Village of Havelock. The electoral wards have remained unchanged for twenty-five years since amalgamation.

In the 2014 municipal election there were a total 7,548 registered voters in the entire Township comprised of 6,613 eligible voters in the Township Ward and 935 in the Village Ward. These numbers equate to 88% of the eligible voters residing in the Township Ward and 12% of the eligible voters residing in the Village Ward. In 2014, voter turnout in the Township Ward was 2,334 (35.29%) with the winner receiving 1,000 votes. That same year the voter turnout in the Village Ward was 528 (56.47%) with the winner receiving 231 votes.

In the 2018 municipal election there were a total 7,255 registered voters in the entire Township comprised of 6,387 eligible voters in the Township Ward and 868 in the

Village Ward. These numbers equate to 88% of the voters being in the Township Ward and 12% of the voters being in the Village Ward. In 2018, voter turnout in the Township Ward was 2,460 (38.52%) with the winner receiving 1,255 votes. That same year the voter turnout in the Village Ward was 464 (53.46%) with the winner receiving 241 votes.

In the 2022 municipal election there were a total 7,498 registered voters in the entire Township comprised of 6,531 eligible voters in the Township Ward and 967 in the Village Ward. These numbers equate to 87% of the voters residing in the Township Ward and 13% of the voters residing in the Village Ward. In 2022, voter turnout in the Township Ward was 1,839 (28.17%) with the winner receiving 858 votes. That same year the voter turnout in the Village Ward was 355 (36.50%) with the winner receiving 140 votes.

With the voters electing a five-member council, the ward numbers consistently reveal that the Village Ward voters are electing 20% of the Members of Council with 12% to 13% of the eligible voters while Township Ward voters are electing 20% of the Members of Council with 87% to 88% of the eligible electors. The ward numbers also reveal that the Township Ward member of council has been elected by at least 718 votes more than the Village Ward member of council in each of the last three elections. It is important to note that the number votes required to win and the margin of victory in any given election is affected by the number of candidates running in each ward.

The Growth Analysis Report prepared for the County of Peterborough by the consulting firm Hemson forecasts a population growth of 600 to 1,000 citizens in the Township of Havelock-Belmont-Methuen by the year 2051. Even if all of this growth occurs in the Village Ward the proportion of eligible voters would remain unbalanced with 77% of the voters being in the Township Ward and 23% in the Village Ward.

All eligible voters are electing the three positions of Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillor at Large.

There are three (3) options available regarding the composition of the electoral ward system in the Township of Havelock-Belmont-Methuen:

1. Leave the electoral ward system unchanged.
2. Redraw the boundaries of the two current wards to allow for an equal number of eligible voters in each ward.
3. Eliminate the ward system and elect all Members of Council at-large whereby all eligible voters within the entire Township would be casting ballots for Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and three Councillors.

Municipalities have the legal authority to divide or re-divide the municipality into wards or to dissolve existing wards. This typically entails a Ward Boundary Review process, public consultation, and the passing of a by-law by Council. The by-law is subject to an

appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal and may be challenged by anyone including the Minister of Municipal Affairs although explicit provincial approval is not required.

The Municipal Act does allow the council of a municipality to determine the number of wards into which the municipality may be divided. Municipalities wanting to create, dissolve or change ward boundaries are required to comply with certain processes and requirements including:

- passing a by-law that sets out the new ward boundaries or at-large structure
- providing notice of the passing of the by-law to the public within fifteen days
- specifying the last date for the public to file a notice of appeal of the by-law.

The next municipal election is scheduled to be held in 2026. For changes to ward boundaries to be in effect for the next regular municipal election, by-laws must be passed before January 1, 2026. Passing the by-law today will establish the ward system in time for the next election barring an appeal.

The *Municipal Act, 2001* provides the framework for municipalities to conduct electoral Ward Boundary reviews. Section 222(1) of the Act states that a municipality is authorized to “divide or redivide the municipality into wards or to dissolve the existing wards.”

Section 222(3) of *Municipal Act, 2001* provides that the municipality is required to give public notice that the ward boundary by-law has been passed within fifteen (15) days after the by-law is passed. The notice must specify the last date for filing a notice of appeal. This will be the next step if the by-law is passed today.

Section 222(4) of the *Municipal Act, 2001* states that within forty-five (45) days of the Ward Boundary By-law being passed, it may be appealed to the OLT by the “Minister or any other person or agency.” The appeal is made by filing a notice of appeal with the municipality setting out the objections to the By-law and the reasons in support of the objections.

Section 222(5) of the *Municipal Act, 2001* states that the municipality is required to forward any notice of appeal to the OLT within 15 days after the last day for filing the notice.

The Township of Havelock-Belmont-Methuen was formed twenty-six years ago in 1998 through the amalgamation of Belmont and Methuen Townships and the Village of Havelock. While past Township Councils have considered a revision to the electoral ward system, no changes have been made since amalgamation.

Financial Impact:

There is no financial impact to adopting a by-law to change the electoral ward system and advertising that this by-law has been passed. A Notice of Passing will be posted on Facebook and Instagram as well as the Township website. The Notice of Passing will also be sent to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Should an appeal be filed with the Ontario Land Tribunal legal costs may be incurred to attend a tribunal hearing.

In Consultation With:

Skylar Soddy, Administrative Assistant
Leah Hutton, Executive Assistant and Acting Deputy Clerk

Attachments:

1. Public Notice of By-law to be Considered on October 15, 2024.
2. Public Input Survey that was included in the first tax bill mailing of the year.

Respectfully Submitted:

Bob Angione

Bob Angione,
Chief Administrative Officer/Clerk

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday, October 15, 2024

Electoral Ward System By-Law Adoption

At the Open Session Regular Council Meeting to be held on
October 15, 2024
a by-law will be presented for adoption that will dissolve the
existing ward system and replace it with an at-large voting
system whereby the positions of
Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and three members of council
are elected by all the voters of the Township.

**TOWNSHIP OF
HAVELOCK-BELMONT-METHUEN**
(P) 705-778-2308 (F) 705-778-5248 www.hbmtwp.ca



Electoral Ward System By-Law Adoption

At the Open Session Regular Council Meeting to be held on Tuesday, October 15, 2024, a by-law will be presented for adoption that will dissolve the existing ward system and replace it with an at-large voting system whereby the positions of Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and three members of council are elected by all the voters of the Township.

Stay informed.

Thank you!

Council would like your input regarding the Municipal Election Ward System



In the current system, you, like all voters in the Township of Havelock-Belmont-Methuen, can vote for the positions of Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillor-at-Large but you can only vote for one (1) position of Ward Councillor. You can vote for either the Township Ward Councillor or the Village Ward Councillor depending on which ward you live in.

Council is considering a change to the Municipal Election Ward System.

Do you want the Municipal Election Ward System to change? *

- Yes
- No

If you have selected "yes" above, please indicate which change you would prefer? *

- Dissolve the ward system completely and allow all voters to vote for the positions of Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and three (3) councillors. In this system, the candidate for Mayor with the most votes, the candidate for Deputy Mayor with the most votes, and the top three councillors with the most votes would be elected.
- Leave the positions as they are currently structured; Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Councillor-at-Large, and two ward councillors (Village Ward and Township Ward) but redraw the boundaries of each ward so that there are the same number of voters in each ward.
- Other suggestions; please specify.

If you have selected "other suggestions" above, please explain below*

Completed paper surveys can be delivered to the Township Office (via in person or mail).

To complete the survey online visit www.hbmtwp.ca or scan the QR Code

