

## Report CCR-CS-05-16

**To:** Chair and Members of the Corporate Services Committee  
**From:** Heather Morrison  
**Meeting Date:** January 12, 2016  
**Subject:** **One Member One Vote Option for Voting During Council Meetings**  
**Status:** Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution CS14-16; Endorsed by County Council February 2, 2016 per Resolution CC23-16;

### Recommendation(s)

**WHEREAS Grey County currently has a weighted vote system in place during requested recorded votes at County Council of one vote for every 1,000 electors or part thereof;**

**AND WHEREAS staff were directed at the June 23, 2015 Corporate Services Committee to bring back a report on a “one member one vote” system for recorded votes at County Council;**

**AND WHEREAS a democratic process whereby electors’ voices are heard through their elected representatives must be maintained;**

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Report CCR-CS-05-16 be received;**

**AND THAT in order to maintain proportional representation of votes for council members to number of electors per municipality, the current weighted vote system in Grey County, being one vote per 1,000 electors or part thereof be maintained.**

### Background

Currently there is a weighted vote at County Council meetings, when requested, on a one vote per 1,000 electors or part thereof. A resolution from the Town of The Blue Mountains was received requesting support to change the weighted vote from electors to assessment value. This resolution was not supported by Grey County Council. Subsequent to that at the June 23, 2015 Corporate Services Committee (Resolution

CS72-15) staff was directed to bring forward a report on a “one member one vote” system for recorded votes at County Council.

As noted in Report CCR-CS-20-15, there have been several reviews of the weighted vote system through the various Governance Task Forces established over the past seven to eight years. The last Governance Task Force, established in 2011 recommended “THAT Grey County Council support the current recorded vote structure at one vote per 1,000 or part thereof. This resolution was endorsed by County Council September 4, 2012.

The current recorded vote structure of using the number of electors per municipality to determine the number of votes per member of County Council was passed by the County of Grey Act, 1993. The County of Grey Act followed in line with the Municipal Act 1990 that spoke generally to counties having representation based on the number of electors rather than population. Similar to today, in the early 1990’s there was a higher number of electors than population in areas such as the Town of the Blue Mountains and thus the County of Grey Act was passed to be consistent with the Municipal Act 1990 to allow for representation by electors.

### *Current Representation*

Grey County Council is an upper tier municipality with each of the Mayors and Deputy Mayors indirectly elected to their position of County Councillor. The population, number of electors or assessment does not impact how many members from each municipality sit as a member of County Council. Currently the number of electors of the local municipalities within Grey County range from 5,474 to 16,902. In order to account for the variances in elector representation and to ensure that each elector has a voice through their elected officials, Grey County currently has a weighted vote system in place.

In looking at the population of the local municipalities in Grey County there is a large degree to variation between the electors and populations municipality to municipality as shown in the chart below.

Municipality	Current Electors 2014	Current Number of Weighted Votes	% of Vote	2011 Pop’n	% of Vote	2016 Pop’n <sup>1</sup>	% of Vote
Owen Sound	16,902	17	18.9%	21,688	23.4%	21,740	23.0%
West Grey	11,406	12	13.3%	12,286	13.3%	12,620	13.3%
Town of Blue	10,704	11	12.2%	6,453	7.0%	6,850	7.2%

<sup>1</sup> Hemson Consulting Grey County Growth Management Study

Municipality	Current Electors 2014	Current Number of Weighted Votes	% of Vote	2011 Pop'n	% of Vote	2016 Pop'n <sup>1</sup>	% of Vote
Mountains							
Southgate	6,193	7	7.8%	7,190	7.8%	7,380	8.0%
Meaford	9,952	10	11.1%	11,100	12.0%	11,260	11.9%
Hanover	5,474	6	6.7%	7,490	8.1%	7,620	8.0%
Georgian Bluffs	9,865	10	11.1%	10,404	11.2%	10,840	11.5%
Grey Highlands	9,974	10	11.1%	9,520	10.3%	9,800	10.4%
Chatsworth	6,182	7	7.8%	6,437	7.0%	6,550	6.9%

There are four municipalities that have less than or equal to 8% of the population of Grey County. On the other end of the scale is Owen Sound with 23.4%, or almost three times the population of the municipalities cited above. The remainder of the municipalities falls within the 10.3% to 12.0% range. While it is realized that the weighted voting uses the number of electors, when completing research for this report, staff noted that 2011 and 2016 estimated populations show that the percentage of electors versus population were relatively the same with the exception of Town of Blue Mountains which has a variance of 5% from electors to population.

### *What Are Others Doing?*

A review in preparation for Report CCR-CS-20-15 was completed that surveyed upper tier municipalities on the number of members on council criteria to become a member of County Council (direct versus indirect election) and weighted vote and its calculation if applicable. 18 responses were received with 11 of the respondents having a weighted vote and seven having a one member one vote method.

When reviewing the current voting practices of other counties, those that have a weighted vote system in place, the vast majority use the number of electors to determine weighting. In instances where there is no weighted vote, as noted below, the population seems to be more evenly distributed throughout the municipalities, providing each representative with a similar base of residents or in a few cases, an additional member from a municipality with a higher population to sit at the County Council table.

In a review of those respondents that do not have a weighted vote system in place, several have a fairly evenly distributed electoral base. For example the County of Essex, which has a 14 member council comprised of the Mayors and Deputy Mayors from the seven local municipalities currently, has no weighted vote. Looking at the electors only; the electors of each of the townships within the County of Essex ranges from 12% to 20% with only two of the seven municipalities having higher than 14% of

the electors therefore having five of seven between 12-14% of the electoral base. Similarly the County of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, having six local municipalities with each having a Mayor and Deputy Mayor on County Council has electors ranging from 10% to 20% with only one being below 16%.

Other counties such as Oxford, containing the City of Woodstock have the Mayors from each local municipality plus 2 councillors from the City of Woodstock. Elgin County also accounts for the difference in electors by having two councillors from the Municipality of Central Elgin and Township of Malahide and one member from each of the other six municipalities.

### *Considerations to Changing Voting System*

The basis of Canadian democracy is representation by population. When looking at a voting system, consideration must be given to ensuring a democratic process is maintained and that constituents from where the elected officials come from have their voices heard.

Should Grey County Council decide to move to a one member one vote system for recorded votes at County Council, the representational balance currently achieved through the weighted vote system would be lost.

Another option that might be considered in order to maintain a democratic system is a council reorganization to change the size of council to reflect the differences in size of municipalities by either electors or population. As an example, this is the Oxford County model. This would eliminate the need to have weighted recorded votes. This avenue was considered by the last Governance Task Force and the decision was to not pursue a different size of council. Should council wish to go this route, it would require a triple majority and would need to be implemented no later than the end of 2017 to be effective for the 2018-2022 council term.

Based on the above, it is staff's recommendation to maintain the status quo.

## Financial / Staffing / Legal / Information Technology

### Considerations

Under The Municipal Act, 2001, as amended, a triple majority plus a public meeting is required before a by-law can be passed to change the method of voting. As well, Section 219 (3) of the Municipal Act, 2001, as amended, any changes made to the weighted voting system would not come into effect until the first meeting of council after the next municipal election in 2018.

Any additional staffing time required can be absorbed into the current approved operating budget.

There are no IT considerations related to this report.

## Link to Strategic Goals / Priorities

Not applicable

Respectfully submitted by,

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Director Sign Off: *Sharon Vokes*