



Halton Hills

Council Meeting Guide

Understanding the Town of Halton Hills
Council Meeting Processes

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Members of the Halton Hills Council meet throughout the year to make important decisions related to municipal planning, programs, services, and more.

This guide was created to educate residents about the processes of those Council meetings including report approval timelines, agenda item definitions, how a meeting is run, and guidelines for members of the public speaking at council meetings.

A glossary is also included to provide a plain language summary for some of the most common terms used during Halton Hills council meetings.

We hope this guide helps residents better understand how to engage in Council procedures whether participating in a meeting or simply understanding Council agendas and reports.

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Glossary

Adopt	The endorsement or approval of the recommendations contained within minutes.
Advisory Committee	A committee of Council which by legislation is deemed necessary (Heritage Committee, Accessibility Committee) and any committee Council deems necessary to implement in order to fulfill the mandate of the Town during a Term of Council (eg. Active Transportation Advisory Committee).
Automatic Hold	A report or memorandum is automatically held when there is a presentation or delegation related to it. A discussion or decision on the report will not be made until the presentation/delegation is heard.
Chair	The Mayor, Acting Mayor, Councillor or person presiding over the meeting and may also be referred to as the Presiding Officer.
Closed Session (or in-camera)	A meeting or a portion thereof, closed to the public in accordance with the Municipal Act, 1990.
Consent Item	For information only reports and memorandums that are presented for approval without debate and with no delegation or presentation.
Council	The Council of the Corporation of the Town of Halton Hills.
Delegation	Any person, group of persons, firm or organization, who is neither a Member of the General Committee, Council, or an appointed official of the Town and who is speaking to Committee or Council.
Final disposition	Council's final decision on the matter.
General Committee	All Members of Council sitting as a recommending body to Council where Council will move into General Committee during a Council meeting, for the purpose of discussion and approval of Consideration of Reports and any subsequent delegations/presentations.
Hold	A Member of Council may hold a report or memorandum on the agenda if they have questions or comments. A decision on the item would not be made until the Councillor who held the item gets to speak to the topic.
Immediate Action Item	A staff report that is a time sensitive matter which requires immediate disposition at the meeting it is presented at.
Member	Means a Member of Council or a Committee.
Motion	A proposal, moved by a member and seconded by another to resolve and effect a decision for consideration by Council.
Pecuniary/Conflict of Interest	A direct or indirect pecuniary Interest, within the meaning of the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act, 1990.
Presiding Officer	The Mayor, Acting Mayor or person presiding over the meeting and may also be referred to as the Chair.
Procedure By-law	A By-law to govern the calling, place, proceedings and providing public notice of meetings of the Council and its Committees; and to provide rules for the conduct of its Members.
Quorum	A majority of all the Members who are required to be present at a meeting, in order that business may be conducted.
Resolution	The decision of Council on any motion or committee recommendation.

Town Council and Council meetings

The Town of Halton Hills Council is elected by residents of Halton Hills for a four-year term of office through the municipal election process.

The Town of Halton Hills consists of four wards with eleven Members of Council. The eleven Members include the Mayor, two Regional Councillors and eight Local Councillors. More information on Town Council can be found on the Town's [Elected Officials page](#).

Council meetings are held to handle important affairs of the Town and while in attendance, Members make decisions related to policies, programs and services for the Town. Council meetings are governed through a Procedure By-law.

- **Procedure by-law**

The Town of Halton Hills' Council meetings are governed through the [Town's Procedure By-law](#). Section 238(2) of the [Municipal Act, 2001](#) requires every municipality and local board to pass a procedure by-law for governing the calling, place and proceedings of meetings.

The [Town's Procedure By-law](#) outlines application and principles, the duties of the Mayor, Acting Mayor, Chair and Town Clerk and the proceedings of Council meetings and workshops. It also defines and explains different aspects of a Council meeting such as motions, enactment of by-laws and delegations.

Council meetings are held in Council Chambers at Town Hall. Members are permitted to attend and participate electronically in meetings and have the same rights as the Members who are physically present. Town Council meetings begin at 3 p.m.

Members of the public can attend the open portion of Council meetings in person at Town Hall or watch the livestream through the [Town's website](#).

Agendas, minutes and recordings of Council meetings are posted to the [Town's municipal calendar](#). Members of the public looking to access Council meeting agendas, minutes or recordings can refer to the posting timelines below.

- **Posting timelines for Council meeting agendas and minutes**

As per the [Town's Procedure By-law](#), agendas for regular meetings of Council must be posted to the [Town's website](#) a minimum of 48 hours in advance of the meeting. However, staff endeavor to follow the posting timeline below in order to provide the public with ample notice of Council meeting agendas to allow time for review prior to the meeting. Special Council meetings may be called on 48 hours notice if necessary.

Lack of receipt of the notice, due to an emergency and/or timely business manner, shall not affect the validity of holding the meeting now should any action taken during the meeting.

File upload	Posted
Agendas	10 days prior to meeting
Revised agendas	4 days prior to the meeting and will include any addendum item reports
Recordings	2 days post meeting, while livestreaming can be viewed online during the meeting
Minutes	After being approved by Council at the following meeting

More information on the Town's municipal calendar can be found in the following section.

What can I find on the Town's municipal calendar?

You'll find all things Council related on the Town's [municipal calendar page](#) - this includes all Council and committee meeting dates, agendas, minutes and meeting recordings. Below are the types of Council and committee meetings you will find on the municipal calendar:

- **Types of meetings**

Council Meetings	These are regular meetings of Council. All regular meetings of Council are livestreamed and recorded.
Council Workshops	These are held for the purpose of educating and training Members and can be held in closed or open session.
Special Council Meetings	The agenda for a Special Council Meeting will specify the purpose of the meeting which will be the only business conducted at that meeting.
Advisory Committee Meetings	These are meetings for the Town's Advisory Committees and are usually held virtually or in a meeting room at Town Hall. These meetings include the appointed Council Members and members of the public who have been appointed as members to the committee for the Council term.
Strategic Committee Meetings	These meetings are for the Town's two special committees of Council which provide a forum for in-depth discussion on options and/or direction on potential strategic plan implementation projects. These committees consist of staff and appointed Members of Council.
Statutory Public Meetings	These meetings are legislated through the Planning Act, 1990 . Town staff are required to adhere to the Planning Act, 1990 and the Town's Public Notification Policy when a Statutory Public Meeting is being held.
Public Information Centres (PICs) and/or Open Houses	These meetings are held for public information regarding specific projects and can be held virtually or in a variety of locations throughout the Town.

What's included on a Council meeting agenda?

A Council meeting agenda is broken down by categories which guide the order of business for the meeting.

- **Moved into closed session**

A meeting, or portion thereof may be closed to the public in accordance with the [Municipal Act, 2001](#). The reason for Council considering an item in closed session will always be listed on the agenda.

Section 239(2) of the [Municipal Act, 2001](#) states that a meeting or part of a meeting may be closed to the public if the subject matter being considered is,

- a. The security of the property of the municipality or local board;

- b. Personal matters about an identifiable individual, including municipal or local board employees;
- c. A proposed or pending acquisition or disposition of land by the municipality or local board;
- d. Labour relations or employee negotiations;
- e. Litigation or potential litigation, including matters before administrative tribunals, affecting the municipality or local board;
- f. Advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege, including communications necessary for that purpose;
- g. A matter in respect of which a Council, board, committee or other body may hold a closed meeting under another Act;
- h. Information explicitly supplied in confidence to the municipality or local board by Canada, a province or territory or a crown agency of any of them;
- i. A trade secret or scientific, technical, commercial, financial or labour relations information, supplied in confidence to the municipality or local board, which, if disclosed, could reasonably be expected to prejudice significantly the competitive position or interfere significantly with the contractual or other negotiations of a person, group of persons, or organization;
- j. A trade secret or scientific, technical, commercial or financial information that belongs to the municipality or local board and has monetary value or potential monetary value; or
- k. A position, plan, procedure, criteria or instruction to be applied to any negotiations carried on or to be carried on by or on behalf of the municipality or local board.

- **Disclosures of pecuniary/conflict of interest**
A Member must declare any pecuniary or conflict of interest items for the public record at meetings. All disclosures are recorded in the minutes and posted to the Town's [Disclosures of Interest page](#).

Section 5 (1) of the [Municipal Conflict of Interest Act, 1990](#) states where a Member, either on his or her own behalf or while acting for, by, with or through another, has any pecuniary interest, direct or indirect, in any matter and is present at a meeting of the Council or local board at which the matter is the subject of consideration, the Member,
 - a. Shall, prior to any consideration of the matter at the meeting, disclose the interest and the general nature thereof;
 - b. Shall not take part in the discussion of, or vote on any question in respect of the matter; and
 - c. Shall not attempt in any way whether before, during or after the meeting to influence the voting on any such question.
- **Resolution to adopt General Committee items from the previous Council meeting**
This item is a resolution read out by the Mayor to adopt and approve items from the previous meeting's General Committee. All reports and memorandums listed in the General Committee portion of an agenda do not receive final disposition until the following Council meeting unless they are considered Immediate Action Items. Learn more about Immediate Action Items on page 9.
- **Public presentation/delegation**
This item is any presentations or delegations who are speaking to a topic not listed on the current agenda or listed outside of the General Committee portion of the agenda.
- **Consent items**
Consent reports and memorandums are 'For Information' items only and do not include direction in their recommendations. They receive final disposition at the meeting they are presented at unless Council or a

member of the public is speaking to the item, at which time it gets moved to the General Committee portion of the agenda and receives final disposition at the following meeting under 'Resolution to adopt General Committee items from the previous Council meeting'.

- **General Committee**

Council sits as 'General Committee' during a Council meeting to receive reports and hear presentations and delegations. During this portion of the meeting, Members rotate as presiding officers while the Mayor chairs the Council portion of a meeting. Information on the process of General Committee can be found below in the 'Meeting processes' section (pg. 8).

- **Resolution to adopt immediate action items from General Committee**

Certain reports and memorandums in the General Committee portion of the agenda can be listed as Immediate Action Items with an 'IA' beside the report number on the agenda. This means that the report or memorandum is time sensitive and requires immediate action by Council at the meeting it is presented at.

- **Resolution to adopt closed session items**

This resolution adopts confidential items discussed in closed session. At this time, Council will reconvene into closed session if discussion was not completed at the beginning of the meeting. Items listed on the closed session portion of the agenda receive final disposition at the meeting that they are presented at.

- **Motions/communications/petitions**

These are items listed on the agenda that are presented through Council and not Town staff. A motion will be voted on by Council.

- **Notice of motion**

Members will bring forward a Notice of motion stating the topic of the motion to advise Council, Town Staff and the public that they will be bringing forward the motion to a future meeting date.

- **Requests for reports**

Members may bring forward a request for a report regarding a topic that they would like staff to research and bring forward a report on.

Meeting processes

Based on agenda categories, certain sections of a Council meeting are guided by specific processes which are outlined below. These processes include how General Committee is run, when reports receive approval and how by-laws are passed.

- **General Committee**

When Council convenes into General Committee, the Mayor will step down as Chair and a presiding officer (another Member of Council) will take over for this portion of the meeting. The first thing that the presiding officer will do is vet the agenda. This means that they will read through the list of reports in order and ask Council if they would like the report moved or held. If the report is moved with no questions from Council then there will be no discussion on the topic. The report will be approved by Council at the following meeting unless it is listed as an IA (Immediate Action) item.

Should a Member ask to hold a report, then it will be discussed after any presentations or delegations scheduled in General Committee. Some reports may have an 'Automatic Hold' marked beside them on the agenda. This means that there is a scheduled presentation or delegation pertaining to that report and it cannot be moved until after the speaker has presented.

After vetting the agenda and making note of what has been moved or held, the presiding officer will introduce any speakers in the order of which they are listed in the agenda. Once the speaker is finished presenting, Members may ask questions. The presiding officer will then ask for the report to move forward so that the discussion on the report itself can occur. Once Council has discussed the report, the report can be approved by Council.

If there were any consent items held for discussion, the presiding officer will introduce those items after all reports listed on the agenda in the General Committee portion have been discussed.

- **Immediate action items**

Immediate action items are reports that are time sensitive and require immediate action by Council. The reports will be listed in the General Committee portion of the agenda with an IA beside the report number. They will be adopted through a resolution read out by the Mayor at the meeting they are presented at.

- **Report approvals/final disposition**

Receiving final disposition means that a report or memorandum is approved or adopted by Council. Some reports and memorandums receive final disposition at the meeting they are presented at while others receive it at the following Council meeting as per the chart below.

Type of Report/Memorandum	Timeline of receiving final disposition
Confidential	Confidential items receive final disposition at the meeting they are presented at.
Consent	Consent items receive final disposition at the meeting they are presented at OR the following Council meeting should the report be held by a Member for discussion.
Immediate Action	Immediate Action items receive final disposition at the meeting they are presented at.
General Committee	Items in General Committee receive final disposition at the following Council meeting (unless they are deemed as an Immediate Action item).

Receiving final disposition means that Town staff can take action and implement the recommendations contained in their report as it means that they have Council approval to move forward.

Reports will be approved as presented or as amended. If a report is approved as presented, it means that Council approves the report as staff have written it with no changes. If a report is approved as amended, it means that Council voted on a suggested change as presented by a Member and that the report is being approved with the amendment.

- **By-laws**

The enactment of by-laws is defined in section 11 of the [Town's Procedure By-law](#). Every by-law shall be listed on the agenda by an identifying number, followed by a brief description of the intent of the by-law.

By-laws are passed by Council at the meeting they are listed on the agenda at and are signed by the Mayor and the clerk and sealed with the seal of the corporation.

What can I expect when attending a Council meeting?

Any member of the public can attend the open session portion of a Council meeting. Council meetings are held in the Council Chambers at Town Hall. Upon arrival at Town Hall, members of the public can enter Council Chambers for the meeting and sit in the audience.

Council Chambers has been arranged for Council and senior staff to sit in a “horseshoe” area with members of the public seated behind the wooden railing and roped barrier areas in the “gallery”. Only Council Members and senior staff are permitted in the horseshoe area. Members of the public must remain in the gallery area at all times and should not attempt to speak with Council or senior staff unless properly addressed through the chair.

Food and drinks are not permitted in the Council Chambers.

Those attending meetings are not permitted to take photos, videos or audio recordings. The open session portion of Council meetings are recorded and posted to the Town’s website for public access.

Members of the media must register at the Service Halton Hills counter prior to the Council meeting to receive their media badge. Media must request permission to take any photos during a Council meeting by speaking to the Director of Communications.

As per Section 9.3 of the [Town’s Procedure By-law](#), attendees at a meeting must maintain order and quiet and shall not display signs or placards, applaud, heckle, or engage in telephone or other conversation, or any behaviour which may be considered disruptive, inconsiderate, disrespectful, or intimidating to others.

When attending a Council meeting as a member of the public you are there to observe, you are not permitted to speak unless you have registered as a delegate or it is a Statutory Public Meeting. Further information on speaking at a Council meeting can be found in the sections below.

Any person that disrupts a meeting shall be asked by the Chair to stop the disruptive behaviour, and if the person persists, they shall be asked to leave the meeting.

How can I speak at a Council meeting?

- Delegations**

We refer to those speaking at a Council meeting as a delegation or delegate. Those wishing to speak at a Council meeting must fill out the [Application to Appear before Council](#). The application must be submitted by 4:30 p.m., one business day before the Council meeting.

Members of the public who wish to observe a meeting but not speak at it do not need to register in advance.

Members of the public wishing to submit written correspondence instead of speaking at a Council meeting may submit comments via email to the Town Clerk’s office at clerks@haltonhills.ca. Those comments will be distributed to Council and will also become part of the public record.

- **Before registering to speak at a meeting**

Some matters like general or even specific questions about Town programs can be addressed by Town staff or your Councillors directly. Before you make a request to delegate, we suggest you contact the Town Clerk's Office at clerks@haltonhills.ca to see if there is an alternative to a formal appearance as a delegate.

- **Registering to speak at a meeting**

Delegates are only permitted to speak on matters that are on an agenda for an upcoming Council meeting. If you wish to speak to a matter that is not on an agenda, please contact the Town Clerk's Office at clerks@haltonhills.ca.

If you would like to appear as a delegate you must fill out the [Application to Appear before Council](#). The application must be submitted by 4:30 p.m., one business day before the Council meeting. Delegates will receive written confirmation from the clerks department after submitting their application.

Delegates will be allotted a maximum of five minutes to speak at the Council meeting and may attend virtually via Zoom or in person. Those with presentations are permitted to have a maximum of twelve slides.

- **Speaking at a Statutory Public Meeting**

Statutory Public Meetings are legislated through the [Planning Act, 1990](#). Those wanting to speak at a Statutory Public Meeting must pre-register by 6 p.m. on the meeting date. You can pre-register by submitting a written request via email to clerks@haltonhills.ca or by completing a registration card at Town Hall.

Delegates will be limited to speaking once for a maximum of 5 minutes and may attend via Zoom or in person. All speakers will be webcast online during the meeting. All comments made at a Statutory Public Meeting become part of the public record and must relate to the matter under consideration at the meeting.

What can I expect when speaking at a Council meeting?

- **Appearing as an in-person delegation**

- Please enter Town Hall via the main entrance and head towards the Council Chambers past the Service Halton Hills counter. The entrance to Town Hall is an accessible entrance.
- Pending the topic they are speaking to, delegations typically are scheduled to be heard during the General Committee portion of the meeting.
- The chair will call you up to the podium when it is time for your delegation. The Town Clerk will control your mic for you.
- You will have five minutes to speak.
- Town staff will share any presentation materials on the Council Chambers' screen and you can request that slides be advanced by saying "next slide please" or use the clicker at the podium.
- Please direct your remarks to and respond to any questions through the Chair, and abide by the decorum guidelines for delegations set out in Section 12.2 of the [Town's Procedure By-law](#).
- After your delegation, please return to your seat in the gallery. Alternatively, you may leave the meeting if you wish to at that point.
- If you are scheduled for an in-person delegation but are feeling unwell or are unable to arrive at the meeting location, it may be possible to switch to a virtual delegation. Please contact the Deputy Clerk via email at melissal@haltonhills.ca as soon as you are aware you will not be able to attend in-person.

- **Appearing as a virtual delegation**

- Pending the topic they are speaking to, delegations typically are scheduled to be heard during the General Committee portion of the meeting.
- The Deputy Clerk will provide you with a Zoom link the morning of the meeting. This link will allow you to join the meeting. When it is your turn, the meeting host will enable you to speak.
- In order to avoid confusion, please do not share your Zoom link with anyone else. Others may watch the meeting through the [livestreaming](#) option.
- Ensure you have a stable internet connection prior to the start of your delegation. If your connection is lost and cannot be re-established, the meeting will proceed without your delegation being completed.
- Ensure your Zoom username is the name you registered your delegation with. If you intend to delegate by phone, kindly advise of the phone number you will be dialing from. Anonymous or unknown accounts will not be granted access to speak.
- You will have five minutes to speak.
- You will be given access to share any presentation materials during your delegation. If you prefer to have Town staff share your presentation for you, please contact the Deputy Clerk at melissal@haltonhills.ca and you can request that slides be advanced by saying “next slide please”.
- Please direct your remarks to and respond to any questions through the Chair, and abide by the decorum guidelines for delegations set out in Section 12.2 of the [Town's Procedure By-law](#).
- After your delegation, Town staff will take away your speaking permissions but you may stay signed in to watch the meeting.
- If you are scheduled for a virtual delegation but are feeling unwell and will not be able to appear before Council as scheduled, please contact the Deputy Clerk as soon as possible at melissal@haltonhills.ca.

- **Tips for an effective delegation**

- Review the meeting agenda or report you may be speaking to prior to the meeting. Agendas and related documents can be found on the municipal calendar.
- Introduce yourself and the name of the organization you are representing (if applicable) at the start of your presentation.
- Keep your introduction brief and move onto your main point(s) as quickly as you can.
- If you are asked a question, address your response through the Chair by starting your answer with “Chair, through you...” or “Through you, Chair...”.
- Please be mindful of the time limit. You may ask if you are not sure how much time you have left.

What happens after your Delegation?

After all of the delegates have spoken regarding the certain report/topic, a motion will be passed to bring the report forward for discussion. At this time, Members will discuss the report and ask any questions of staff that they may have. The report will either receive final approval at the meeting it is presented at or at the following Council meeting pending if it has been listed as an immediate action item or not.

If you have questions regarding the status of approval of the report or what the next steps are regarding the report topic or project, the report author can be contacted directly. If you are unsure how to get in touch with the report author, please contact the Deputy Clerk at melissal@haltonhills.ca.