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**Item No. 12.1.2**  
**Executive Standing Committee**  
**March 22, 2021**

**TO:** Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:**  (Original Signed)  
Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** January 19, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Amendments to COVID-19 Administrative Order 2020-009-ADM

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**ORIGIN**

Staff initiated report to extend the *COVID-19 Administrative Order*.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Clause 20(1)(b) of the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, as follows:

- 20 (1) The Council may make policies
- (b) regulating its own proceedings and preserving order at meetings of the Council;

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Executive Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council adopt the amendments to Administrative Order 2020-009-ADM, the *COVID-19 Administrative Order*, as set out in Attachment 2 of this report.

## **BACKGROUND**

On March 22, 2020, Minister Porter, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, directed that municipalities:

**Effective at 2 pm on March 22, 2020**, discontinue holding their meetings in person, instead only virtual meetings may be held by video or telephone. Those virtual meetings must be recorded, and the minutes posted on a public website within 24 hours of the meeting.

In response, on May 12, 2020 Halifax Regional Council adopted the *Allocation of Grants and Withdrawals from Reserves During COVID-19 Administrative Order* (subsequently renamed the *COVID-19 Administrative Order*).

This Administrative Order allows Council to allocate grants and withdraw from reserves without a recommendation from the HRM Grants Committee or the HRM Special Events Advisory Committee. This Administrative Order is meant to be temporary and expires the earlier of the end of the fiscal year (March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021), or the date Council decides it ends.

On May 26, 2020 Council adopted amendments to rename the Administrative Order to the *COVID-19 Administrative Order* and to allow public hearings to resume, providing they were held virtually.

On July 29, 2020 Minister Porter repealed and replaced the March 22, 2020 order such that:

1. **Effective at 8am on July 29, 2020** may hold meetings exclusively in person if all the following are met:
  - (i) the total number of persons present does not exceed a gathering limitation imposed in a *Health Protection Act* order;
  - (ii) all physical distancing requirements or other requirements imposed in a *Health Protection Order* are met.
2. If the conditions set out in (1) cannot be met, the municipality or village **must not hold meetings exclusively in person and must instead hold the meeting partly or wholly as a virtual meeting by video or telephone**, and ensure that all the following conditions are met:
  - (i) the total number of persons present for any in person portion of the meeting do not exceed a gathering limitation imposed in a Health Protection Order; and
  - (ii) for any in person portion of the meeting, all physical distancing requirements or other requirements imposed in a *Health Protection Act* order are met.

On September 1, 2020, Council adopted amendments to the Administrative Order to allow public engagement meetings to be held virtually.

## **DISCUSSION**

The existing *COVID-19 Administrative Order* remains in force until the end of the 2020 fiscal year (March 31, 2021). As of the date of this report, the July 29<sup>th</sup> public health order remains in effect.

Staff are recommending extending the Administrative Order until March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022. This will allow meetings to occur in a virtual setting until public health orders and in person gathering restrictions are eased allowing for in person meetings to occur again. As restrictions are eased or removed the processes used for meetings will be reassessed.

Council retains the option to terminate the Administrative Order earlier, when appropriate, or if the public health order is rescinded by the Province of Nova Scotia.

Over the past year, COVID-19 has significantly changed the way business has been done across the globe as well as within the Halifax Regional Municipality. Processes for meetings have been adapted to allow meetings to be held virtually, respecting public health orders and the safety of all attendees. Meeting processes have adapted throughout the year to increase accessibility for individuals attending or viewing meetings.

This includes the transition to ZOOM. The intention of the move to this technology is to allow for increased public streaming of live web broadcasts as well as reduce barriers to participation in public hearings.

Further initiatives are being pursued to allow for meeting participation, including partnering with libraries, to ensure interested members of the public are able to view and participate in meetings as requested.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The increased costs of holding virtual meetings has been considered in the proposed 21/22 operating budgets in A121(Municipal Clerk), A742 (Technology Infrastructure) and A749 (ICT Service Support). Additional staffing includes two new Service Desk Analyst positions estimated at \$170,000 to provide dedicated support and new annual licensing costs estimated around \$7,600 can be accommodated under the proposed operating budgets.

### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

There are no significant risks to the Municipality associated with the recommendation in this report.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

No formal public engagement has been undertaken in preparing this report.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no negative environmental implications to the recommendation in this report.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Council may choose not to extend the Administrative Order. This is not the recommendation of staff because meetings may not be able to be held as scheduled given the existing Public Health Orders and limitations on in person gatherings.
2. Council may choose a different end date for the Administrative Order. However, as noted in the discussion section of this report, the Administrative Order will terminate sooner if Public Health Orders change or if directed by Council.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment 1 Showing Proposed Changes to the COVID-19 Administrative Order  
Attachment 2 Amending Administrative Order

A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by:      Iain MacLean, Municipal Clerk (902) 237-2860

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**Attachment 1  
(Showing Proposed Changes)**

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NUMBER 2020-009-ADM  
RESPECTING COVID-19**

**BE IT RESOLVED AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER** of the Council of the Halifax Regional Municipality under the authority of the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, as follows:

**Termination Date**

4. Subject to subsection 3B(4), this Administrative Order terminates on the earlier of
- (a) the date and time determined by Council, by resolution; or
  - (b) at 11:59 pm on March 31<sup>st</sup>, ~~2021~~ 2022.

**SCHEDULE 1  
RULES FOR PUBLIC HEARING DURING COVID-19**

**Speakers' List**

5. (1) A Speakers' List will be prepared by the Office of the Clerk.
- (2) A person wishing to speak at a public hearing shall provide to the Office of the Clerk their name, community of residence, and any other information required in the advertisement under subsection 2(4) of this Schedule.
- (3) If a speaker represents a group, they shall indicate the name of **the** group they represent both on the Speakers' List and when they address the Council or the Community Council during the public hearing.
- (4) A person who provides the required information within the date and time indicated in the advertisements will be added to the Speaker's List.

**ATTACHMENT 2  
(Amending Administrative Order)**

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NUMBER 2020-009-ADM  
RESPECTING COVID-19**

**BE IT RESOLVED AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER** of the Council of the Halifax Regional Municipality under the authority of the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, that Administrative Order 2020-009-ADM, the *Covid-19 Administrative Order*, is further amended as follows:

1. Clause 4 (b) is amended by:

(a) striking out the number “2021” after the number and comma “31<sup>st</sup>,” and before the period at the end of the clause; and

(b) adding the number “2022” after the number and comma “31<sup>st</sup>,” and before the period at the end of the clause.

2. Subsection 5(3) of Schedule 1 is amended by adding the word “the” after the words “names of” and before the word “group”.

Done and passed this    day of                    , 2021.

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Mayor

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Municipal Clerk