



Administrative Report

To: Warden MacDonald and Members of Essex County Council

From: Sandra Zwiers, MAcc, CPA, CA
Chief Administrative Officer

Date: Wednesday, December 4, 2024

Subject: Essex County Administration Building: Access Control, Safety and Security

Report #: 2024-1204-CAO-R12-SZ

Purpose

The purpose of this Administrative Report is to provide Council with information regarding access to the County's Administration Building, related access control, safety, and security protocols and the County's responsibilities in relation to the holding of meetings open to the public and obligations under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

Background

At a meeting of Council held on April 5, 2023, there was an unexpected safety issue resulting in Council Chambers being over-capacity, and a large crowd outside Council Chambers. The conduct of the crowd and the resulting noise, despite the efforts of the Warden, resulted in members of Council unable to hear the meeting. The meeting was eventually adjourned.

Following that meeting, in May of 2023, Council adopted three policies: the Public Conduct Policy, the Visitors Policy, and the Trespass to Property Policy. These policies set the framework to provide the public with clear expectations with regard to their attendance at County facilities in general.

As a result of a Health and Safety Committee review and assessment of the County's Administration Building, it was determined that more controlled measures were needed to ensure the safety of occupants of the County's Administration Building, and the security of the facility itself. One of the measures put into place, was to limit access to the building at the end of the business day (4:30PM), when building occupants, including tenants and County staff went home. Members of Council and Committees were assigned

FOBs and provided access to the locked Administration Building on those evenings when meetings were scheduled to take place.

A registration process for Council meetings was established, to ensure that the public who wanted to attend public meetings in-person could still do so, and that the capacity limit for Council Chambers could be respected. This process further allowed County Administration to know in advance if a large crowd was to be expected, so that alternate arrangements to accommodate the registered attendees could be made. This process was publicized with each meeting notice, and to date members of the public have complied with the process.

The registration process until recently worked as follows:

- registrations are accepted up to the meeting date;
- walk-ins are permitted to register on-site, so long as capacity is still available; and
- 15 minutes following the start of the County Council meetings, and taking into consideration whether registered attendees had arrived, staff assigned to assist with attendee check-in were to be released from that post and access to the Administration Building would once again be locked as there would be no way to control access throughout the facility.

The public may also participate in County Council meetings by viewing meetings via our livestreaming service which has been in place for several years. Further, YourTV Cogeco records and broadcasts every public meeting of County Council live (with recorded replays) on their TV station each meeting.

Discussion

Following access concerns raised at the October 2, 2024 meeting of County Council, Administration adjusted the time of existing Facilities' staff member shifts to accommodate registration/reception service on meeting nights.

The West Entrance doors to the Administration Building now remain open for public access for the duration of all public meetings with a staff member present to register and direct members of the public to the second-floor council chambers.

Likewise, tenants and committee administrators have taken steps for access control on the evenings where their own meetings take place in the County's Administration Building, again, to ensure that walk-ins can also be accommodated for the entire duration of those meetings.

Meeting notices have been re-worded to encourage the public to pre-register to attend meetings; however, pre-registration is no longer a requirement.

Renovations

In May of 2023, when additional security protocols were implemented, the County's Administration Building had a number of areas that were not secured that the general public could gain access to.

However, with the recently completed Phase 3 renovations to the space used by the County's Human Resources Department and Community Services Division, all County staff now work within controlled access areas.

Further, there is now controlled access to the exterior entrances and procedures in place for parking and building access for visitors, ensuring ease of access and safety of visitors, tenants, Administration, and Members of Council and Committees.

Visitors, at any time to the County's Administration Building, are required to follow the check-in procedure upon arrival. This procedure is outlined in the [Visitor Policy](#). Further, visitors are required to abide by all policies of the County of Essex, specifically those relating to [Public Conduct](#).

Further renovations are scheduled in the coming years, to ensure that the remaining spaces in the County's Administration Building (the first of which will be the second floor meeting rooms, including a secure Closed Meeting room for Council) are modernized and comply with security requirements and the needs of the County and its Council. Consideration is also being given to the configuration of the main lobby and West Entrance to identify opportunities to improve accessibility and access to the second-floor council chambers.

Local Municipalities

Administration consulted with local municipalities to gain perspective on the methods deployed for ensuring controlled access and security assurance for their facilities and access for public meetings. The following is a summary of what the local municipalities, the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, and the City of Windsor are doing with respect to their public meetings:

Town of Amherstburg

- chambers are on the main floor of the Town's administration building, with access immediately following the main entrance to the facility;
 - Windsor Police Service officers are in attendance as needed;
 - capacity is limited and overflow is in the hallway with audio feed; and
 - there is public livestream available.
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Town of Essex

- the main floor chamber capacity is very limited, which is noted on the Town's public website;
- members of the public may pre-register by contacting the Clerk's office and requests for in-person attendance is on a first come first serve basis, and subject to availability;
- overflow is in the hallway; and
- the public is encouraged to participate via livestream.

Town of Kingsville

- has some capacity for in-person attendance in its chambers, however chambers are currently not being used for regular meetings;
- on a temporary basis and for meetings with expected higher public attendance, meetings are held at the Unico Community Centre; and
- the public can access meetings via livestream.

Municipality of Lakeshore

- has some capacity in its second-floor chambers; and
- does permit in-person public participation whenever possible, but does encourage public attendance via livestream.

Town of LaSalle

- has capacity for attendance at in-person meetings in its chambers;
- chambers are located on the main floor of their facility near the main entrance;
- the Town has its own police service, with their Chief attending Council meetings; and
- the public can also access meetings via livestream.

Municipality of Leamington

- has capacity for attendance at in-person meetings in its chambers;
- chambers are located on the main floor of the Municipality's administration building; and
- the public can also access meetings via livestream.

Town of Tecumseh

- has capacity for attendance at in-person meetings in its chambers;
 - has chambers that are on the main floor and are accessible from a dedicated entrance separate and secure from staff areas of the Town's administration building;
 - in-person attendees are required to complete and sign the Sign-In Sheet to confirm their intent to abide by the conduct requirements for attendance; and
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- the public can also access meetings via livestream.

Municipality of Chatham-Kent

- has capacity for attendance at in-person meetings in its chambers;
- its chambers are on the second floor of their administration building, which is a distance from the main entrance to the building;
- external contracted security is present at every meeting and Chatham-Kent Police also attend meetings from time to time as well; and
- the public can also access meetings via livestream or by viewing the YourTV Cogeco broadcast.

City of Windsor

- has capacity for attendance at in-person meeting in its chambers;
- capacity can be increased by opening a wall to the hallway abutting chambers;
- its chambers are on the main floor and accessed near the main entrance of the City administration building;
- external contracted security and Windsor Police Service officers are present at every meeting; and
- the public can also access meetings via the YourTV Cogeco broadcast.

Financial Implications

The adjustment of the shift start time for the Facilities team member has no impact on the budget. There is an opportunity cost however of having this employee stationed at the West Entrance for the duration of the council meeting. Previously, the shift hours were spent responding to facility work orders and performing preventative maintenance throughout the building. To maintain a presence at the entrance, maintenance tasks cannot be performed and this work must be rescheduled or re-assigned to other team members.

Consultations

During the preparation of this report, consultations with the following individuals took place:

- David Sundin, Director, Legislative and Legal Services/County Solicitor
- Local municipal staff and websites
- Brady Boghean, Manager, Health and Safety

Strategic Plan Alignment

Working as Team Essex County	Growing as Leaders in Public Service Excellence	Building a Regional Powerhouse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Scaling Sustainable Services through Innovation <input type="checkbox"/> Focusing “Team Essex County” for Results <input type="checkbox"/> Advocating for Essex County’s Fair Share 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Being an Employer with Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A Government Working for the People <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Promoting Transparency and Awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Providing Reliable Infrastructure for Partners <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Dynamic and Thriving Communities Across the County <input type="checkbox"/> Harmonizing Action for Growth <input type="checkbox"/> Advancing Truth and Reconciliation

Recommendation

That Essex County Council receive report number 2024-1204-CAO-R12-SZ, Essex County Administration Building: Access Control, Safety and Security as information.

Approvals

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra Zwiers

Sandra Zwiers, MAcc, CPA, CA, Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix	Title
N/A	N/A