

Water and Wastewater Rates Community Committee

Terms of Reference

Mandate

1. To provide public engagement and user collaboration regarding the financial sustainability of the County's water and wastewater systems including service delivery, long term planning, asset management, user rates and capital charges, to inform the 2027-2031 Rate Study.
2. Ensure that the 2027-2031 Rate Study and any proposed changes to the water and wastewater system support the County's legislated requirements associated with the financial operation, and maintenance of the water and wastewater systems.

Goals

1. Identify ways to reduce the overall costs for water and wastewater services so that any savings discovered can be redirected to stabilize and if possible, reduce user rates.
2. Review current assets and identify future capital projects as part of long-term asset management planning for water and wastewater systems.
3. Improve public understanding and help inform a municipal communications plan about how the water and wastewater rates are set, and how the systems operate.

Purpose

The Water and Wastewater Rates Community Committee will discuss and provide input where possible on areas that impact either the Capital or Operating costs of the County's water and wastewater systems, to inform the 2027-2031 rate study, including:

- The scope and purpose of the Rates Study (including past and current background studies and reports prepared to support the Rates Study)
- Background on the Regional Water and Wastewater Analysis (Environmental Assessment) underway and the financial implications of options under consideration.
- Current Provincial regulations and financial requirements for the operation and maintenance of our WWW systems.

- Agreements supporting the purchase of water from Belleville and Quinte West to support the system.
- Options for operational and administrative changes that could be considered to stabilize or reduce ongoing operating costs.
- Water metering and possible use of technology.
- Current Water and Wastewater revenues to clarify and understand the impacts associated with debt financing as well as any potentials for rate adjustments.
- User-based fees and charges for operational services outside of the Rates Study framework.
- Impact of growth to finance infrastructure, including the use of upfront financing agreements, development charges and connection charges.
- The County's long-term WWW Capital plan, informed by the Asset Management Plan required by the Province.
- Reserves and long-term capital financing.
- Overview of the Municipal Rate Relief water and waste water services Program outcomes and opportunities.
- Explore the public commission model.
- Explore alternatives for sustainability, green alternatives and new environmental technologies.
- Identify advocacy opportunities with other levels of government.
- Other activities as requested through motion of Council.

Membership

1. Three (3) members of Council who represent a ward within the service area of one of the Municipal Drinking water or Wastewater systems.
2. Six (6) public representatives appointed by Council for the term of the Committee, all of whom must maintain a permanent residence in the County within the service areas and receive a water bill. Representatives will collectively represent the geography of the Municipal Drinking water or Wastewater systems.
3. CAO (and any staff as required to support the Committee) as non-voting support.
4. A Chair and Vice-Chair will be elected by members at the first meeting.

5. Council may terminate the appointment of any member without notice.

Roles

1. Members will actively participate and provide input to support recommendations to Council.
2. The Chair will facilitate meetings, ensure participation by members, maintain decorum, and be the primary contact of the Committee.
3. The Committee members will be required to participate on a site tour of the existing municipal water and wastewater facilities to inform their work.
4. Council appointees will act as a liaison between the Committee and Council. They will serve as voting members and count towards meetings quorum.
5. The CAO's Office in collaboration with the chair will manage the meeting agenda content and required materials.
6. The Clerk's Office will manage administrative functions, and provide procedural and legislative guidance to the committee.

Responsibilities of the Water and Wastewater Rates Community Committee

1. It is the responsibility of all appointed members to comply and work with County procedures, by-laws and Provincial legislation, with guidance from staff:
 - a. Council's Code of Conduct
 - b. County Accountability and Transparency Policy
 - c. County Procedural By-law
 - d. Other applicable County by-laws and policies
 - e. *Clean Water Act*
 - f. *Safe Drinking Water Act and Standard of Care Act*
 - g. *Municipal Act*
 - h. *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*
 - i. *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act.*
2. The Committee will make recommendations to Council on various issues related to the Committee's mandate, through meeting minutes, motions.
3. The Committee may take on additional initiatives as recommended by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and/or approved by Council.

Term

The term of the Water and Wastewater Rates Community Committee will be until the 2027-2031 Rate Study is approved by Council, or the term of Council, whichever comes first.

Staff Support

While the Clerk's Office provides procedural support, the entire Corporation will provide input and support to the Committee as required, with the approval of the CAO and/or the relevant Director.

Reporting Relationship to Council

The Committee will act as an advisory body and does not have any delegated authority. Recommendations for implementation must first be considered and approved by Council through meeting minutes and motions on Council agendas.

The Committee will report to Council. All Committee minutes will form part of the next applicable Council agenda.

Finances

No member shall receive remuneration for services.

A member is entitled to reimbursement for any reasonable out-of-pocket expenses that have been pre-approved by the CAO or Council.

Attendance

If a Committee member is absent for three consecutive meetings they have forfeited their membership, unless their absence has been approved by the Chair.

Meetings

The Water and Wastewater Rates Community Committee shall meet no less than four (4) times per year, and more frequently at the discretion of the Chair. Meetings shall be governed by The County's Procedural By-law as may be amended from time to time. The meeting, agenda, and minutes will be available to the public on the municipal website. The Committee meetings will not be livestreamed, Committee reports will be available to the public, on the municipal website through Council agendas.