

Staff Report

Report To: Council

Report From: Jamie Eckenswiller, Director of Legislative Services/Clerk

Meeting Date: January 17, 2023

Subject: 2022 Election Accessibility and General Overview

Recommendations:

That in consideration of staff report '2022 Election Accessibility and General Overview', council receives the report for information purposes.

Highlights:

- The voting period was open from October 14-24, 2022
- The voting method used for the 2022 municipal election was internet and telephone voting
- Voter Assistance Centres were available throughout the municipality during the voting period

Strategic Plan Alignment:

This report supports the delivery of core services.

Previous Report/Authority:

None.

Analysis:

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* requires that within 90 days after voting day (October 24, 2022), the clerk must prepare a report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and that the report will be available to the public. The purpose of this report is to meet the above requirement and provide an overview of the 2022 municipal election.

Accessibility, in relation to the 2022 election was taken to encompass accessibility for persons with disabilities and general accessibility to information, voting opportunities

and assistance for all voters. The following steps were taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility:

1. Voting method – internet and telephone voting methods were used to improve accessibility during the election:
 - a. Voters had the option to vote without leaving their home.
 - b. Persons with accessible needs had the option to use their own assistive tools.
 - c. The internet voting method provided accessible features including the ability to increase font size.
 - d. The internet voting method was compatible with screen readers.
 - e. Persons traveling outside of the municipality and non-resident electors could vote anywhere provided they had access to the internet or a touchtone phone.
 - f. In extraordinary circumstances, elections staff were able to provide voter credentials to voters who were unable to attend the municipal office or a voter assistance centre.
2. Voting period:
 - a. A 10-day voting period was instated to allow voters more flexibility in accessing the voter system.
3. Training – all election staff members received:
 - a. West Grey Accessible Customer Service Training and specific Election Training to recognize and ensure that persons with disabilities are serviced in a way that accommodates their individual needs.
 - b. Election specific training with a focus on accessibility including assisting electors upon request, using accessible features to improve voting experiences and enabling service persons to assist voters.
4. Accessibility plan:
 - a. An accessibility plan specific for the election was created and reviewed by the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee.
 - b. The accessibility plan was posted on the municipality's website.
5. Election website:
 - a. West Grey's election webpages provided all voting information including a video on how to vote using the internet; the date, time and location of voter assistance centres; the date, and details on the voting period.
 - b. The website is W3C Consortium WCAG 2.0 Level AA compliant for web content accessibility standards.
6. Voter Assistance Centres:
 - a. Voters could attend a voter assistance centre to receive assistance with voting.
 - b. Voter assistance centres were available October 14, 17-21, and 24 at accessible locations throughout the municipality.

- c. A voter assistance centre was provided at Rockwood Terrace to assist residents with voting.
 - d. Magnifying sheets were available at all voter assistance centres.
 - e. Chairs were available at all Help Centres for persons needing to rest in line or sit while accessing the voting system.
- 7. Election Helpline:
 - a. Voters who were experiencing difficulties or who had general election questions could call the municipality for assistance during office hours.
- 8. Communication:
 - a. Election information was communicated through various channels and alternative formats including email, social media, newspaper, and radio.

Financial Implications:

The budget for the 2022 election was \$62,500 and the amount spent was within budget.

Communication Plan:

This report is available on the municipality's website for review by the public.

Consultation:

Election Team

Attachments:

None.

Recommended by:

Jamie Eckenswiller, AMP
Director of Legislative Services/Clerk

Submission approved by:

Laura Johnston, Chief Administrative Officer

For more information on this report, please contact Jamie Eckenswiller, Director of Legislative Services/Clerk at clerk@westgrey.com or 519-369-2200 Ext. 229.