

**CLERK'S REPORT
REPORT 23-01**

TO: Mayor and Members of Council

FROM: Amanda Knight, Clerk/Director of Legislative Services

MEETING DATE: January 16, 2023

SUBJECT: **Accessibility Report for the 2022 Municipal Election**

RECOMMENDATION:

Be it resolved that Council has received Clerk's Report 23-01 regarding the Accessibility Report for the 2022 Municipal Election; and

That Council accepts this report for information.

BACKGROUND:

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, promotes accessibility for voters and candidates with disabilities. Section 12 of the Act requires that the Clerk submit a report to Council, within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

The Clerk is responsible for conducting the election under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, and is required to have regard to the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities. In preparing for and executing the 2022 Municipal Election, the Clerk and the Election Team considered accessibility needs when reviewing facilities, providing voter support, preparing communications, training and support for candidates.

1. Facilities

Accessibility Audit

The Election Team reviewed the accessibility features of the facilities used for Voter Kit Return Stations, candidate information sessions and training. The Election Team evaluated facilities on the following accessibility features of each voting location: parking spaces, ramps, doors, automatic doors, accessible washrooms, handrails, lighting and elevators (where required).

Service Animals

In accordance with the Township's Accessibility Policy, service animals and support persons were permitted in all Voter Kit Return Stations and election locations.

Voter Kit Return Stations

The setup of tables and voting screen stations in Voter Kit Return Station took into account the need for interior routes free of obstructions to allow for voters to move easily around voting screens and tables. Voting booths in Voter Kit Return Stations were set up with large-font, written and infographic instructions for voter assistance.

Election Team Assistance

At facilities used for Voter Kit Return Stations, Election Team staff were available at all times during hours of operation to assist with questions or any accommodation needs for voters with disabilities.

2. Voter Support

Voting Method

Vote by Mail provided voters with the opportunity to complete their ballot at their own convenience during the voting period. With this voting method, voters with mobility issues or without access to a car would be able to vote in the comfort of their own home, without having to travel to a polling station.

Procedure

A procedure for assisting a Voter with the Completion of a Voting Kit was approved by the Clerk and followed by the Election Team to ensure assistance is provided to voters who request assistance with the completing their voting kits, including voters who require curbside voting.

Special Assistance

When the Election Team was contacted by a voter with mobility issues or a disability who was not on the Voters' List and eligible to vote, staff traveled to their location to assist them in completing the necessary paperwork to have their name added to the List so that they could receive their voting kit.

Support for Local Care Facility

The Election Team attended the Eden House Care Centre to assist residents and patients with completing their voting kits. Due to an outbreak, the Long-Term Care side was inaccessible. However, staff was able to coordinate an effort to drop off the relevant ballots and ensure they still got their vote.

Feedback

All comments and suggestions regarding accessibility and other election-related matters will continue to be documented and will be used to further improve our practices and to prepare for the 2022 Municipal Election.

Assistive devices

Assistive devices, such as magnifying sheets, large print documents and instructions with images were available in Voter Kit Return Stations.

3. Communications**Printed Materials**

All printed materials adhered to the Township's Accessible Communications Guidelines, which sets out the proper font, font size, contrast and alignment to be used within printed materials. Adhering to such guidelines ensures that all individuals, including those with vision loss, are able to read our communications. As much as possible, the Election Team advertised that alternate formats of communications were available upon request.

A "How to Vote by Mail" infographic was designed by the Election Team and included within each voting kit. This infographic used images to accompany the written Vote by Mail instructions to provide further assistance to voters in the completion of their voting kit.

Printed postcards with information about the election website and dates, times and locations of Voter Kit Return Stations were mailed to every property within the Township of Guelph/Eramosa.

Posters with information about the election website and dates, times and locations of Voter Kit Return Stations were posted in variety of locations throughout the Township, including: Marden Library, Royal Distributing Athletic Performance Centre, the Rockwood Library, the Rockwood Post Office and various local businesses within Guelph/Eramosa.

Web Content

All web content was posted to the Township of Guelph/Eramosa's website www.get.on.ca, which adheres to WCAG 2.0 guidelines. These guidelines are used as a standard for making web content more accessible to a wider range of people with disabilities, including blindness and low vision, deafness and hearing loss, learning disabilities, cognitive limitations, limited movement, speech disabilities, photosensitivity and combinations of these.

The domain www.getvoting.ca was purchased and used throughout the election to provide greater ease to voters and candidates in finding web content and for branding purposes.

A "How to Vote by Mail" instructional video was posted to the Election webpage in early September, as a visual tool to further assist voters in the completion of their voting kit.

Social Media

Beginning in early 2022, social media content was posted regularly on the Township's Facebook and Twitter accounts with regard to how to vote, the dates and times of Voter Kit Return Stations, as well as contact information for the Election Team.

Other Communications

A variety of media was used for the distribution of election messages: the Township's e-newsletter, local newspapers, the hard copy and electronic version of the Township's Community Guide, mobile signage and direct mail inserts. The use of various types of media adheres to the Election Team's commitment to ensuring that information and communications are available and accessible to all voters, including voters with disabilities.

Outreach at Community Events and Locations

The Election Team attended the Rockwood Farmers' Market, the Royal Distributing Athletic Performance Centre (RDAPC), Guelph/Eramosa's 2022 Party in the Park, a park pop-up and two All Candidates' Meetings on various occasions to provide voters with information and to assist voters in reviewing the Voters' List and making any required changes to their information.

4. Staff Support and Training

Accommodations were offered for election staff who made specific accessibility requests.

Training materials with regard to Accessible Customer Service and the Township's Accessibility Policy were provided to Election Team members to ensure that voters were assisted in accordance with the Township's Accessibility Policy and Accessible Customer Service procedures.

5. Candidate Support

Candidate forms, documents and information materials were made available in printed format, as well as electronically on the Township's election website at www.getvoting.ca, including a Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections.

The Election Team for the 2022 Municipal Election worked hard to be responsive to the needs of all voters and candidates and to recognize the diverse needs of all of voters and candidates by striving to provide services and facilities that are accessible.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact to the 2023 budget as a result of this report.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Reviewed By:

Amanda Knight
Clerk/Director of Legislative Services

Ian Roger, P. Eng.
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