



Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review

Municipality of Trent Hills

Discussion Paper

January 27, 2020

Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.
905-272-3600
info@watsonecon.ca



Table of Contents

	Page
1. Discussion Paper	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Current Structure of Trent Hills Council	1
1.3 Considerations for this Review	2
1.4 The Deputy Mayor	5
1.4.1 The Role of a Deputy Mayor in Ontario.....	5
1.4.2 The Selection of a Deputy Mayor in Ontario	6
1.4.3 The Role of a Deputy Mayor in Northumberland County and Trent Hills.....	6
1.4.4 The Selection of a Deputy Mayor in Trent Hills.....	6
1.5 The Composition of Council.....	8
1.6 Ward System or an At-Large System?.....	10
1.7 Number of Wards (District Magnitude).....	13
1.8 Establishing Ward Boundaries: Principles	14
1.9 Establishing Ward Boundaries: Keep the Status Quo or not?.....	16
2. Next Steps.....	17



1. Discussion Paper

1.1 Background

Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. (Watson), in association with Dr. Robert J. Williams, hereafter referred to as the Consultant Team, was retained by the Municipality of Trent Hills to conduct a comprehensive Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review (the Review).

The primary purpose of the study is to prepare Trent Hills Council to make decisions on:

- whether to change the way the Deputy Mayor is selected;
- whether to change the composition of Council; and
- whether to maintain the existing ward structure or to adopt an alternative arrangement.

The first phase of the Review will address the two initial decisions, and the second phase the third one.

1.2 Current Structure of Trent Hills Council

The Municipality of Trent Hills was created through a Municipal Restructuring Order that established a new Municipality on January 1, 2001, under the name of "The Corporation of the Municipality of Campbellford/Seymour, Percy, Hastings" which was later changed to the Municipality of Trent Hills. The Order also set out the wards of the new Municipality, as follows:

- Ward 1 consists of the former Municipality of Campbellford/Seymour;
- Ward 2 consists of the former Township of Percy; and
- Ward 3 consists of the former Village of Hastings.

The Order also established the current Council structure of seven members, including the Mayor and six Councillors, elected in three wards and that one of the Councillors is selected by Council to serve as Deputy Mayor.



The ward system in Trent Hills is not typical in Ontario since the wards each elect a different number of Councillors: Ward 1 (Campbellford-Seymour) elects three, Ward 2 (Percy) elects two, and Ward 3 (Hastings) elects one.

Given that the system of representation was established about twenty years ago and given that it was based on the pre-amalgamation municipalities, it is timely to step back to consider the viability of this arrangement today. If there is a reluctance to increase the number of municipal officials in Trent Hills, any modifications to the present system, for example to align Council representation with the distribution of population, would require an adjustment in the wards, either in terms of the representation attached to each ward or the number and design of the wards themselves.

It is the responsibility of the Consultant Team to help move this review process forward. To address these questions thoroughly and systematically, it is helpful to understand what is open to change and what is not.

The *Municipal Act, 2001*, establishes that the Council of a “local municipality” must consist of “a minimum of five members, one of whom shall be the head of council” (s. 217 (1) 1) and that the head of council (the Mayor) “shall be elected by general vote” (s. 217 (1) 3). Furthermore, the “members, other than the head of council, shall be elected by general vote or wards or by any combination of general vote and wards” (s. 217 (1) 4).

From that starting point, it is possible to design a number of different alternatives to elect the members of Council, including the Deputy Mayor. To do so, the review requires a series of choices that lead to particular alternative configurations for representation in Trent Hills.

1.3 Considerations for this Review

There are essentially up to four “layers” of sequential decisions for Council to make that may be summarized as:

1. Confirm the method of selection for the position of Deputy Mayor;
2. Agree on the size of Council beginning in 2022 (what the *Municipal Act, 2001* calls the “composition” of Council);



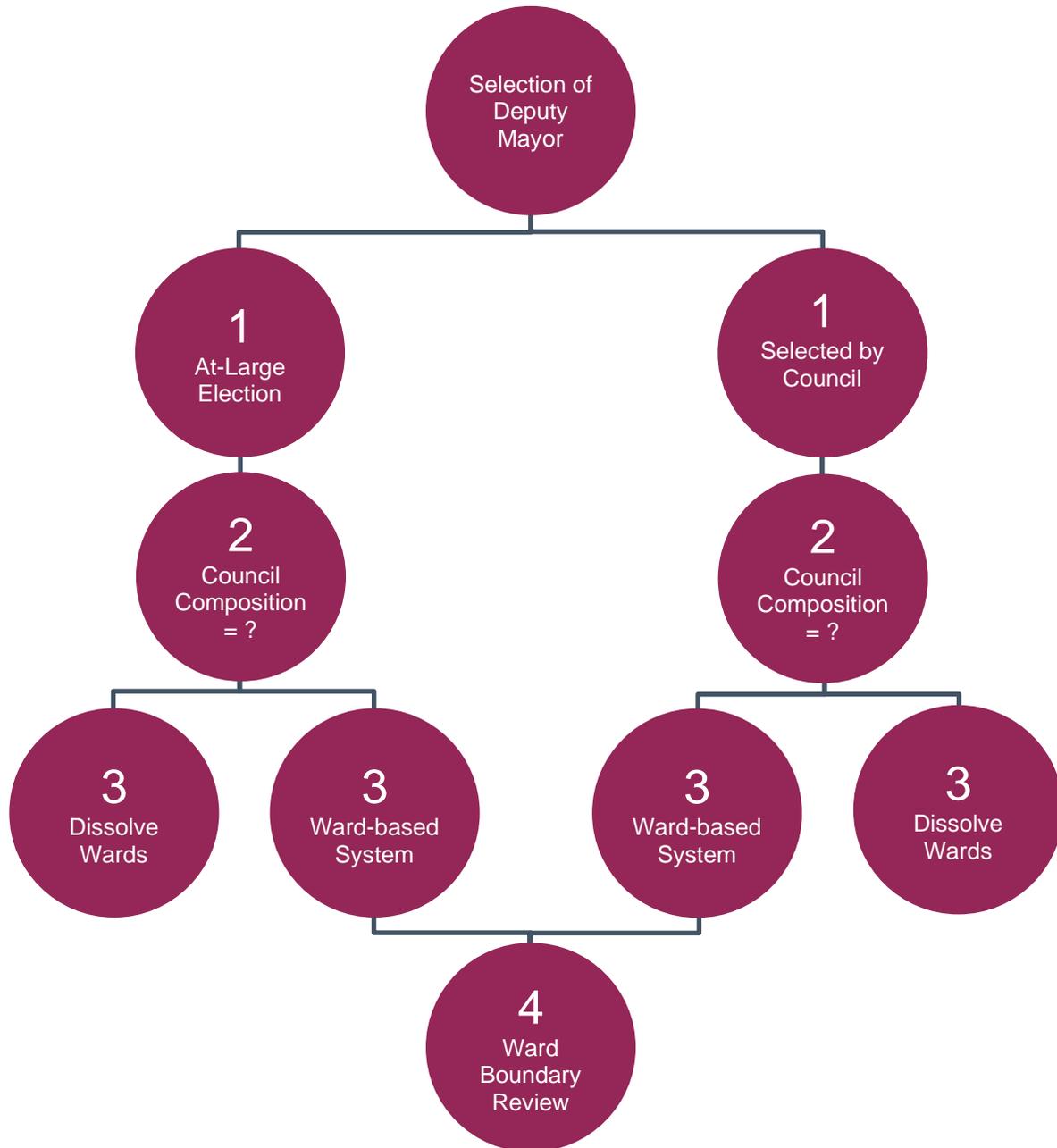
- 3a. Decide whether to retain a ward system or to dissolve the wards in favour of electing all members of Council by general vote (that is, at-large);
- 3b. If wards are to be used, to determine the number of wards; and
4. If wards are to be used, to initiate a review of the boundaries to ensure that the wards constitute an equitable and effective electoral arrangement.

If wards are to be dissolved, the fourth consideration is unnecessary.

The direction of the Review is presented in Figure 1, which visualizes this series of decisions.



Figure 1: Four “Layers” of Decisions





1.4 The Deputy Mayor

In the 2018 municipal election, five of the seven lower-tier municipalities in the County of Northumberland elected their Deputy Mayors in an at-large vote. The two exceptions were Port Hope and Trent Hills. Staff Report CLK-2019-17, placed before Council in May 2019, noted this fact and recommended consideration of altering the selection process for the Deputy Mayor so that the position would be filled through an at-large vote of electors rather than through appointment by Council.

The report also recommended that the composition of Council be reviewed to ensure appropriate representation based on any changes in ward boundaries. As will be evident, any decision about the composition of Council would necessarily follow confirmation of the method adopted to select the Deputy Mayor.

1.4.1 *The Role of a Deputy Mayor in Ontario*

The position of Deputy Mayor and the role incumbents are expected to play are almost entirely subject to local arrangements since there is no specific reference to the office of Deputy Mayor in the *Municipal Act, 2001*. Not all municipalities have a Deputy Mayor but where the office exists, there are generally two models found across the Province. In some municipalities, the title Deputy Mayor is assigned to Councillors (often on a rotational basis) who are appointed by Council to perform additional local responsibilities related to, for example, routinely chairing committee meetings of Council (*Municipal Act, 2001*, s. 238 (4) and s. 242) or performing certain duties in the absence of the head of council (s. 226). Such roles may be codified through a procedural by-law or other Council directive but in these municipalities the position itself is filled on a temporary basis.

The second model is derived from the system of representation used in Counties. A County in Ontario is an upper-tier municipality; that is, it is “a municipality of which two or more lower-tier municipalities form part for municipal purposes” and in which municipal responsibilities are divided between an upper- and lower-tier of government. The County Council is comprised of representatives of the member municipalities with one seat automatically allocated to the head of council of each lower-tier municipality. In many instances, additional seats are also assigned to some or all municipalities, to be filled by a Deputy Mayor or by a County Councillor (who sometimes does not sit on



the lower-tier Council). In this arrangement, then, such County representatives normally serve for the entire municipal term of office (that is, four years).

1.4.2 The Selection of a Deputy Mayor in Ontario

There is no consistency across Ontario related to the way the office of Deputy Mayor is filled. Some municipalities have determined that the position ought to be one of the offices filled by election, in parallel with the mandatory arrangement to determine the head of council. That is, any eligible elector can seek the position through the ballot and the position is a separate component of the Council structure.

In other municipalities, the determination of the Deputy Mayor is the prerogative of Council and the only eligible candidates are those already elected as members of Council. In such cases, the Deputy Mayor remains a member of Council while performing whatever duties are assigned to the Deputy Mayor in addition to her or his responsibilities as a Councillor.

1.4.3 The Role of a Deputy Mayor in Northumberland County and Trent Hills

In Northumberland County, each municipality is only entitled to a single seat on County Council that is filled by the head of council. As a result, a Deputy Mayor in Northumberland County does not routinely play this additional role. Until recently, in fact, no substitutions were permitted on County Council, so only the seven heads of council in the County could participate in Council business. As of 2018, County By-law No. 2018-37 provides for an appointment of an Alternate Member of a Local Council “to attend meetings of the County of Northumberland Council when the Mayor of the Local Council is unable to attend.” Trent Hills’ Council has determined that the alternate member would be the Deputy Mayor but, as noted, the Deputy Mayor would only participate in County Council business in the absence of the Mayor. The Deputy Mayor in Trent Hills acts in the absence of the Mayor, including chairing meetings. There are no other specific duties assigned to the Deputy Mayor.

1.4.4 The Selection of a Deputy Mayor in Trent Hills

In this Review, the first decision involves determining whether Council will select the Deputy Mayor from among the six ward Councillors (the present method) or whether electors will determine the Deputy Mayor through an at-large election (that is, a general vote). Since there is no mandatory requirement for a Deputy Mayor in Trent Hills and



many responsibilities can be assigned as circumstances dictate, the method of determining how the position is filled is tied to the role the Deputy Mayor will play.

A number of arguments can be posed to support each alternative, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Approach to Select Deputy Mayor and Perceived Implications

Deputy Mayor Selected by Councillors (current system)	Deputy Mayor Determined in an At-Large Election
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many residents are not well-informed about the expectations for a Deputy Mayor; members of Council are thus better able to judge the qualities needed for the position.• The selection of the Deputy Mayor by Council is not an “all or nothing” situation; that is, those not selected to fill the office continue to serve on Council.• The Deputy Mayor would continue to be the point of contact for residents of one particular ward, and as a ward Councillor would still be expected to pay close attention to issues that are ward specific.• There is no apparent public pressure to make a change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Deputy Mayor should have the confidence of electors across the whole municipality, not just in one ward.• The present arrangement only requires Councillors to make their case to one another to win the position rather than seeking public endorsement.• The present selection process may be based on personal relationships rather than demonstrated capacity.• An at-large election involving the entire community is clearly more democratic but also potentially costly for candidates.• Establishing a separate elective office has implications for the overall size of Council.

These are legitimate contrary views. Our purpose here is not to influence Council’s direction but to ensure that some implications of changing the format for selecting the Deputy Mayor are understood and considered, and to confirm that Council and the community recognize and accept the consequences of such a change.

As previously discussed, the first choice in this Review is to have Council determine whether to select the Deputy Mayor from among the ward Councillors (the present system) or to elect the Deputy Mayor through a separate at-large (or general vote) election in which all electors of Trent Hills can participate.



1.5 The Composition of Council

Despite the long history of municipal institutions in Ontario, the premises and practices used for determining the overall composition of Councils has never been satisfactorily or definitively addressed, either in legislation or regulation. There are no clear principles at play, no “standards” and no formulas to apply. Each municipality has its own history, its own traditions and its own attributes. Furthermore, there is no established timetable to require that municipal Councils review the continuing validity of the number of places at the Council table.

The *Municipal Act 2001* establishes the minimum size for the Council of a local municipality in Ontario as five, “one of whom shall be the head of council” who must be elected by general vote (s. 217 (1) 1 and (1) 3). There are no references to a maximum or to an “appropriate” size associated with, for example, the population of the municipality. This absence contrasts with the provisions of regulations issued under the *Education Act* (O. Reg. 412/00) which include a detailed formula to determine both the number of trustees and their distribution across each school board’s area of jurisdiction before each regular municipal election.

As a result, the composition of local Councils in Ontario varies widely and is noticeably quirky. The Trent Hills Council is composed of seven members, two above the minimum of five, a configuration that can be compared to the other municipalities in Northumberland County. See Figure 3 (below).

The composition of Trent Hills Council has stood at seven since amalgamation including a Mayor and six Councillors, one of whom also serves as Deputy Mayor. The *Municipal Act, 2001* gives a Council the authority to determine the overall size of Council and, as noted earlier, Staff Report CLK-2019-17 recommended that the composition of Council be reviewed “to ensure appropriate representation based on any changes in ward boundaries.” Before that step is taken, however, the implications of Council’s decision on the future status of the Deputy Mayor (as just discussed) must be addressed.

If Council determines that the position of Deputy Mayor is to be filled in future by an at-large vote (that is, by creating a separate elective office), would the Deputy Mayor be an additional member of Council (making an eight-member Council) or would the number of Councillors be reduced from six to five to retain a seven-member Council? It is also



possible that, even if the Deputy Mayor continues to be selected from within Council, the number of Councillors could be changed.

The Consultant Team recommends that Council include a confirmation of the composition of Council for 2022 as part of its decision about the selection format for the Deputy Mayor.

Figure 3: Council Composition, County of Northumberland

Municipality	Population 2016	Council Composition	Method of Election
Township of Alnwick/Halldimand	6,869	Mayor + Deputy Mayor + 3 Councillors Total 5	At-large vote
Municipality of Brighton	11,844	Mayor + Deputy Mayor + 5 Councillors Total 7	At-large vote
Town of Cobourg	19,440	Mayor + Deputy Mayor + 5 Councillors Total 7	At-large vote
Township of Crahame	6,355	Mayor + Deputy Mayor + 3 Councillors Total 5	At-large vote
Township of Hamilton	10,942	Mayor + Deputy Mayor + 3 Councillors Total 5	At-large vote
Municipality of Port Hope	16,753	Mayor + 6 Councillors Total 7	Mayor by At-large vote; Councillors in 2 wards (4+2)
Municipality of Trent Hills	12,900	Mayor + 6 Councillors Total 7	Mayor by At-large vote; Councillors in 3 wards (3+2+1)



1.6 Ward System or an At-Large System?

There is no standard model of representation in Ontario municipalities. The *Municipal Act, 2001*, at s. 222 (1) authorizes a municipality “to divide or redivide the municipality into wards or to dissolve the existing wards” through a by-law, and at s. 217 (1) (4) provides that “other than the head of council, members shall be elected by general vote or wards or by any combination of general vote and wards.” Beyond those points, though, there are no conditions or constraints imposed by the Province to help formulate a local decision to adopt one electoral system or another.

Strictly speaking, the choice between an at-large election for all Councillors and retaining a ward system is not affected by the method of selection for the Deputy Mayor nor by the composition of Council. It is still an important choice with significant implications for the Municipality and will be a necessary step in the eventual selection of a future system of representation for Trent Hills.

Every Ontario municipality has the authority (*Municipal Act, 2001*, s. 217) to consider dissolving a ward system in favour of a system in which Councillors are elected in an at-large (general vote) system. While there are clearly differences in the impact of each system, there are no “standard” sets of conditions that favour one method rather than the other. Some municipalities approximately the same size as Trent Hills use wards and others do not.

To many people, an at-large system is the most appropriate election method in municipalities where the population is small. On that count, a Municipality like Trent Hills with a population of approximately 13,000 could be considered “small” but, as noted already, there is no definition or conventional benchmark to apply. A more important determining factor in Ontario has been amalgamation; that is, when a new municipality (like Trent Hills) has been created out of several municipalities, representation is often built around the pre-existing units that serve as wards for the new municipality.

From the point of view of representation, the two systems offer alternative attributes, as illustrated in Figure 4.



Figure 4: Comparing At-Large and Ward-based Electoral Arrangements

Implications of an At-Large System of Representation

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electors have greater choice and flexibility in elections (each voter has the opportunity to consider every candidate in the Council election). • Electors are able to select the candidates they think will do the best job, rather than having to make a choice among candidates who happen to run in their ward. • Residents will have a larger number of Councillors to approach with their concerns. • The system promotes the concept of a municipal-wide focus, with Councillors being elected by, and concerned for, the municipality as a whole, rather than placing a priority on more local interests. • The likelihood of acclamations is reduced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidates must campaign across the entire municipality; this may make the cost of a campaign prohibitive (especially for newcomers). • There would be no designated voices for particular communities or localities within the municipality. At-large elections can lead to significant communities of interest and points of view being unrepresented (or under-represented). • Candidates who appeal to areas where voter turnout is highest tend to be elected disproportionately. • The format can lead to confusion of responsibilities and duplication of effort on the part of Councillors (everybody on a Council represents everybody in the municipality).

Implications of a Ward System of Representation

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors are more likely to be truly local representatives, easily accessible to residents and aware of local issues. • Distinctive communities of interest are more likely to be represented. • It is less likely that one particular point of view or sectional interest will dominate the Council. • Wards may provide more cost-efficient government, primarily by eliminating duplication of administrative work communicating the same information to and from two or more Councillors. • Wards simplify the election process for electors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors may be elected on minor or parochial issues and lack a perspective of what is to the benefit of the whole municipality. • Ward boundaries may divide communities of interest (which may be difficult to define anyway). • Voters may have a restricted choice of candidates in elections for individual wards. • There is a greater likelihood of acclamations. • There may be problems if a Councillor is not performing effectively or is clashing with some electors, as electors for that ward



Advantages	Disadvantages
	<p>have no alternative (knowledgeable) Councillor to approach.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ward boundaries may be susceptible to change caused by demographic shifts.• Population changes can lead to unequal workloads for Councillors until ward boundaries are reviewed.• If a Councillor resigns or dies, it may be necessary to hold a by-election to select a replacement.• May discourage new candidates if an incumbent is generally popular or if an incumbent who is popular with a dominant community of interest is running.

The Ministerial Restructuring Order issued in March 2000 established that the new Municipality would elect six Councillors in wards that replicated the boundaries of the three pre-amalgamation components of the Municipality. Given the existence of three separate urban population centres (Campbellford, Warkworth and Hastings) and the Municipality's large and diverse area, establishing a ward system in this form was viewed as a way to ease the transition from three municipalities into one.

Twenty years later, this Review is an opportune time to assess the basic question of whether wards should remain in place in Trent Hills or whether an at-large system would be appropriate. In passing, it should be noted that other municipalities in Northumberland County operate without wards (for example, in Brighton and Cobourg the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and five Councillors and in Crahame, Hamilton and Alnwick/Haldimand the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and three Councillors are all elected at-large).

This is the third "level" of the Review and the first to address the ward system itself. If Council opts to dissolve wards in Trent Hills in favour of an at-large system, the Council Composition Review is concluded and no Ward Boundary Review (W.B.R.) is necessary. If Council chooses to retain a ward system, further decisions remain to be addressed whatever Council determines about the way the Deputy Mayor is to be selected.



1.7 Number of Wards (District Magnitude)

The present ward system in Trent Hills is not symmetrical: there are both a single-member ward and two multi-member wards within the same system.

Moreover, one of the wards has what may be called a “district magnitude” of one, another a “district magnitude” of two and the third a “district magnitude” of three. Historically, the configuration appears to have been prompted by two considerations: the Municipal Restructuring Order established that there would be three wards in the newly amalgamated Municipality that adhere to the boundaries of the pre-amalgamated municipalities but, since the population of those component parts varied, two of the wards would be given additional representation on Council (two or three seats rather than one). This arrangement had the additional implication that the former Municipality of Campbellford/Seymour – itself the result of an earlier amalgamation in 1998 – would not be divided by a ward boundary.

The most familiar representation model today in Canada (at all levels) is the single-member electoral district in a system of symmetrical representation (that is, all electoral districts elect an equal number of representatives). A single-member district provides for direct accountability and ensures residents will have one identified representative – which may not happen in multi-member wards if all Councillors reside in one neighbourhood within the electoral district. Furthermore, a symmetrical system gives each ward and all electors in the municipality equal “voting power” when it comes to the overall make-up of Council and, by extension, in Council decision-making.

A multi-member ward may be appealing to residents who would have a choice of more than one Councillor to contact on matters of importance and more than one voice to speak on their behalf in conducting the business of the municipality. Having more than one Councillor, however, does not mean that they each have one-half or one-third of the ward (or one-half or one-third of the residents) to represent. Each Councillor is responsible to the entire ward at election time and during her or his term of office. In other words, compared to a single-member system, the challenges of campaigning and the workload may be more-or-less doubled or tripled for every candidate and elected Councillor in a multi-member ward.

In addition, when single- and multi-member wards are combined in one system, a basic question of equity arises: is it fair to give individual residents who happen to live in a



certain part of the municipality two or even three votes for Council and those who live in another part only one?

Another way of approaching this question is to start with the determination of the number of wards. At minimum, there could be three wards but to achieve some measure of population parity they would not resemble the present three wards. At minimum, configurations of five wards (if Council decides that the Deputy Mayor is to be elected at-large and the composition of Council remains unchanged) or six wards (if the method of selecting the Deputy Mayor does not change) are possible. Depending on how many wards are adopted, the allocation of Council seats among them would follow.

This “fourth level” of the Review involves two interrelated questions that start from the assumption that Trent Hills will continue to use wards to elect its Councillors: how many wards will be used and how will the Councillor seats be distributed among them? Implicit is the question of whether the representation system in Trent Hills will continue to have wards of different magnitudes (with wards electing a different number of members) or whether all wards will elect an equal number of Councillors. If wards of different magnitudes are included, how many will elect one and how many will elect more Councillors, and is this type of distribution fair for all residents?

The answers to these questions will perhaps be easier to address when alternative scenarios are developed and evaluated. To help in making the choice, some agreement on what an effective ward and ward system should look like is necessary and formal guiding principles are indispensable.

1.8 Establishing Ward Boundaries: Principles

Both of the electoral system scenarios that begin with the decision about how the Deputy Mayor is to be selected (“level 1” in Figure 1) and that then affirm the value of retaining a ward system in Trent Hills (“level 3” in Figure 1), will ultimately require a W.B.R., the second phase of this Review (“level 4” in Figure 1).

A W.B.R. in Trent Hills would be directed towards developing and assessing possible alternatives to “redivide” the Municipality – the terminology used in *Municipal Act, 2001*, s. 222 (1) – in terms of agreed-upon guiding principles so as to provide equitable and effective representation to all residents.



As noted, s. 222 (1) permits a municipal council to pass a by-law setting out electoral arrangements, but the review of electoral boundaries is not subject to a stipulated schedule, to a standardized process or to established criteria. Furthermore, despite a statement in the *Municipal Act, 2001* that the Minister “may prescribe criteria,” none actually exists.

Therefore, it is up to each municipal council to determine when a review should occur, to set the terms of reference for its review, including the process to be followed, and to establish criteria or guiding principles to evaluate the municipality’s electoral system.

A set of Guiding Principles “to be considered” by the Consultant Team in a W.B.R. in Trent Hills were included in Staff Report CLK-2019-17 and adopted by Council in May 2019. They are:

- representation by population;
- protection of communities of interest;
- recognition of natural or man-made barriers or dividers as boundaries;
- recognition of density (ward with a few people over a large geographic area equals ward with large population in a small geographic area);
- recognition of areas of growth/decline; and
- ward boundaries that accommodate growth/shifts in population for at least 3 municipal elections (3 terms at 4 years per term = 12 years).

These Guiding Principles embody criteria adopted in recent W.B.R.s across Ontario and reflect those cited in relevant Ontario Municipal Board (now the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT)) decisions with respect to appeals of ward boundary by-laws. Almost without exception in these reviews, the specific guiding principles are aimed at achieving “effective representation,” an overriding principle articulated by Madam Justice Beverley McLachlin (as she was) for the Supreme Court of Canada in a judgement known as *Reference re Provincial Electoral Boundaries (Sask.)*, 1991 (sometimes referred to as the *Carter* decision).

In that decision, the Court upheld a formula to redistribute seats in the Saskatchewan legislature on the grounds that they contributed to “effective representation” by balancing voter parity with non-population factors such as community history, community of interest, rate of growth, special geographic features and the like. Put another way, the *Carter* decision affirms that relative equality of voting power ought to



be the dominant principle, but it is only one of several criteria that should guide electoral boundary drawing.

In the case of Trent Hills, “effective representation” will serve as a kind of summary evaluation of individual wards (and the ward system itself) built around the six more-specific criteria. For example, are the individual wards proposed for Trent Hills plausible and coherent units of representation? Do they provide equitable access to Councillors for all residents of the Municipality? Are the proposed wards of a size, scale and shape that a representative can serve her or his constituents successfully? In sum, do the wards constitute a system that can be judged to deliver effective representation even if some of the specific criteria are only partially successful?

No ward system design can uniformly meet all the Guiding Principles since some criteria may work at cross-purposes to one another. As well, the priority attached to certain principles makes some designs more desirable in the eyes of different observers. The public consultation planned in Trent Hills is intended to better understand the priorities attached to the six Guiding Principles by the residents of Trent Hills.

1.9 Establishing Ward Boundaries: Keep the Status Quo or not?

The present ward configuration is familiar to residents and can be a choice open to Council to endorse. After twenty years, however, the ward system should at least be subject to review, just as every other facet of the Municipality’s operations are regularly reviewed. The key questions are:

- Does the present system need to change?
- Are there identifiable “problems” that need to be addressed?

The first step in a W.B.R. is to assess the present wards in terms of the Guiding Principles to see whether the arrangement provides “effective representation” to the inhabitants of the Municipality. If the evidence suggests that it does, the W.B.R. can confirm that no change is necessary, and Council could defend a decision to retain the status quo. If it does not meet the Guiding Principles, it is the goal of the W.B.R. Consultant Team to formulate alternatives so that the community and Council can make an informed choice among them.



2. Next Steps

The first phase of the Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review is designed to inform the community and members of Council about what aspects of its electoral system are open to change and to understand some of the implications of changes to particular parts of it: how to select the Deputy Mayor, the number of Councillors and the system (ward or at-large) to elect Councillors.

One crucial step in the Review is to seek insights into the community's views on the key questions related to Council composition through a consultation process. This includes a public information session run by the Consultant Team in Hastings on January 27 and through a survey that will be open to all residents during February 2020. Information about the Review and the survey will be available for viewing on the municipal website trenthills.ca/Ward_Boundary_Review throughout the Review.

Feedback collected from the community will be valuable to the Consultants and to Council to gauge whether there is an appetite across the Municipality for changes to the composition of Council as addressed in this report. The Consultant Team will report those findings to Council as soon as possible along with a request for confirmation by Council on which – if any – of the changes to the composition of Council are to be acted on.

If public consultation indicates a clear preference for electing Trent Hills Councillors at-large (that is, by dissolving the wards), and if Council concurs, the Review is completed. If public consultation indicates a clear preference for electing Trent Hills Councillors in wards, and if Council concurs, the Consultant Team will proceed with the second Phase of the study, beginning with an evaluation of the capacity of the present wards to provide “effective representation” in terms of the Guiding Principles that were agreed upon in the terms of reference for the Review. The first phase of the public consultation process also includes an opportunity for residents to indicate the priority that should be attached to the various Guiding Principles in the event that wards will continue to be used to elect Councillors in Trent Hills.



Should the Consultant Team conclude that the present wards fall short of providing “effective representation” to the inhabitants of Trent Hills, possible alternatives to “redivide” the Municipality will be developed and subjected to evaluation through the same Guiding Principles. These alternatives will be brought back to residents for consideration in a second round of public consultation in May 2020.