



YOUTH COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Issue

Options regarding the appointment of youth members on the Library Board and United Way/Okotoks Partnership Committee are provided for Council's consideration.

Motion Proposed by Administration

That a report regarding Youth Committee Member appointments to the Okotoks Public Library Board and United Way/Okotoks Partnership Committee be brought back to the August 19, 2024 Council Meeting, with feedback from the affected committees and drafted amendments to Governance Committees of Council Bylaw 04-24 if required.

Report, Analysis and Financial Implications

At Council's June 24, 2024 meeting, the following motion was made:

That Administration be directed to prepare a report outlining the feasibility of changing the membership of the Okotoks Public Library Board, and United Way/Okotoks Partnership Committee to require 1 (or 2) of their members be youth, prior to the August 19, 2024 Regular Council Meeting.

Okotoks Public Library Board

The *Libraries Act* states, "A municipal library board shall consist of not fewer than 5 and not more than 10 members appointed by the council of the municipality." There are currently nine (9) members on the Okotoks Public Library Board. The Town's Governance Committees of Council Bylaw 04-24 outlines appointment of members as follows:

- One (1) Council Representative
- One (1) Foothills County Council Representative
- Seven (7) Citizen Members (of which no more than two (2) shall be from Foothills County).

Bylaw 04-24 defines a "Citizen Member" as "a person appointed by Council over the age of 18 years" and a "Youth Member" is defined as "a person appointed by Council between the ages of 14 and 18 years who attends a local school or at the discretion of Council, as needed, unless otherwise specified in this Bylaw"

There is nothing preventing a municipality from appointing youth members to municipal library boards. Administration found after a review of other communities (Cochrane, Spruce Grove, St. Albert, Chestermere, Red Deer, and Calgary) that these municipalities do not have youth appointed to their Library boards. One community, the County of Lac La Biche, has a 'Member At Large (Youth)' aged 16-24, and a 'Youth Ambassador' aged 14-16. Both positions participate in board meetings and activities, however, the 'Member At Large (Youth)' has voting privileges and the 'Youth Ambassador' does not. Their role within the board is to reach youth to encourage their involvement in library programs and services.

United Way/Okotoks Partnership Committee (UW/OP)

The Town of Okotoks has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the United Way of Calgary and Area which states that the Town will “ensure a minimum of eight people, including the Town Council’s liaison appointment, serve on the United Way / Town Steering Committee”; and does not state a maximum number of members. However, the Town’s Governance Committees of Council Bylaw 04-24 states the following regarding membership on the UW/OP:

One (1) Council Representative

Eight (8) Citizen Members (of which no more than two (2) may be from the area surrounding Okotoks in Foothills County).

The United Way of Calgary has MOU’s with four other communities in Alberta (Chestermere, High River, Strathmore, and Cochrane). These communities do not have specific United Way committees; rather all decision-making processes go through their Family and Community Support Services Committees of which none have youth representation.

Council must be confident that a youth board member can fulfill the legal and ethical responsibilities of these positions; it should be understood that parents of minor board members could be held individually liable if the common law responsibilities are not upheld by the youth member. For example, a board member may have input into decisions regarding staffing and financial decisions. The disadvantage of a youth member may be their lack of expertise on these matters. However, a youth member could represent a large portion of individuals using the Okotoks Public Library and offer a fresh perspective and engaging youth to take part in the community. Having a youth member on the Library Board and the UW/OP Committee would also offer this individual an opportunity to understand legislation and its inner workings and the possibility to engage and develop the minds of Okotoks’ youth through volunteering in the community.

Prior to making changes to the membership makeup of these committees, Administration recommends gathering the opinion of current members of these boards and Foothills County for their input prior to earnestly proceeding. The next Library Board meeting is scheduled for July 25, 2024; the UW/OP Committee’s next meeting is July 9, 2024. Further, Administration will share this report with Foothills County representatives for their comments and/or concerns. Right now is the time for considerations, discussions with current members of the Library Board and UW/OP Committee, and Foothills County to ensure the required recruitment prior to the organizational meeting in October.

Amendments to the Governance Committees of Council Bylaw 04-24 would have to be undertaken to include youth members. The following current members’ terms expire this year: two (2) members on the Library Board, and three (3) members on the UW/OP Committee.

Administration recommends the number of citizen members be maintained on both the Library Board and UW/OP Committee, with the clause that 1 or 2 of the members could be youth. This would allow room for Council consideration should a lack of interest from youth present itself, as was recently the case in recruiting youth for the Family and Community Support Services Committee.

Alternatively, the *Libraries Act* states that all library board meetings must be open to any member of the public. The Government of Alberta suggests in “Persons Under 18: Serving on Alberta Public Library Boards” - the board could invite one or more young people to attend board meetings to allow for the youth perspective on a regular basis as opposed to appointing a minor as a board trustee.

Or, Council could consider allowing youth members to have non-voting privileges. Youth would present the fresh ideas the board’s benefit from, and the individual would benefit from the experience of being a member, without the implication of the possibility of large decision-making processes pertaining to funding or employment falling on the shoulders of a minor. Should Council choose this option, the updated definition in Bylaw 04-24 of a “Youth Member” is suggested to be: a person appointed by Council between the ages of 14 and 18 years who attends a local school or at the discretion of Council, as needed, unless otherwise specified in this Bylaw, whom has the same rights and responsibilities as a Citizen Member less the right to vote.

Strategic Plan Goals

<input type="checkbox"/>	Responsibly Managed Growth
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strong Local Economy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Organizational Excellence

<input type="checkbox"/>	Demonstrated Environmental Leadership
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Enhanced Culture & Community Health

Equity/Diversity/Inclusivity Impacts and Strategy

n/a

Environmental Impacts

n/a

Governing Policies/Bylaws/Legislation or Agreements

Government of Alberta. *Libraries Act*.

Bylaw 04-24 Governance Committees of Council

Memorandum of Understanding and Contribution Agreement Between the Town of Okotoks and United Way of Calgary and Area.

Community Engagement Strategy

n/a

Alternatives for Consideration

CAO Comments

Council direction is required.

Attachment(s)

1. Government of Alberta. "Persons Under 18: Serving on Alberta Public Library Boards"

Prepared by:
Legislative Affairs
June 28, 2024