COWICHAN TRIBES CHIEF AND COUNCIL MEETINGS

COMMUNITY MEETING ATTENDANCE POLICY

June 2024

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1. Definitions

"Administrative Staff" or "Staff" means the Chief and Councils Administrator and administrative clerks as well as Cowichan Tribes IT supports;

"Chief Administrative Officer" or "CAO" means the most senior employee in the Cowichan Tribes Administration, whether the position is titled "chief administrative officer," "band manager," or otherwise, and includes an acting Chief Administrative Officer;

"Citizen" means a person whose name appears on the Cowichan Tribes citizen list pursuant to the *Cowichan Tribes Shtunni's Tu Hwulmuhw – Citizenship Code* as amended or replaced from time to time;

"Citizenship" means all the Citizens of Cowichan Collectively;

"**Cowichan Tribes Council**" or "**Council**" means the body composed of those persons selected to serve as Chief and Councillors for the Cowichan Tribes under the Cowichan Tribes Custom Election Law;

"**Council Meeting Procedures and Rules**" means the meeting procedures and rules applicable to and governing the meetings of the Cowichan Tribes Council;

"In-Camera" in private, in particular taking place in council chambers, with the public excluded;

"Regular Agenda" is a list of items to be covered during the meeting;

"Virtual" means a Council meeting that is streaming live for citizens to attend as observers or participants.

2. Introduction

2.1 The following policy outlines the different types of meetings that the Chief and Council hold throughout their term and how the community may attend.

2.2 It is the duty of Council to conduct business in a clear and transparent way.

2.3 All Council meetings will follow the *Cowichan Tribes Chief and Council Meeting Procedures Policy*.

3. Purpose of this Policy

3.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure fair access is provided to all Cowichan Tribes Citizens to attend meetings hosted by the Chief and Council.

3.2 The intention is to increase community awareness of the debates and decisions of the Council while promoting and encouraging more openness and transparency.

4. Chief and Council Duly Convened Meetings

4.1 Cowichan Tribes Chief and Council hold two duly convened Council meetings a month. The meeting days are the second and fourth Tuesday of the month; however, meeting times may change due to other Cowichan Tribes business or the winter cultural season.

4.2 Duly convened Council meetings are meetings where departments and the CAO bring items to the council table that require Council input and decision to move the work forward. All items are recorded in the minutes, as are the decisions made by Council at the end of each agenda item.

4.3 Council duly convened meetings are open for the community to attend in person as well as virtually as observers only. Dates and times of the Council meetings are posted on the Cowichan Tribes website.

5. Chief and Council In-Camera

5.1 Chief and Council In-Camera is a section of the duly convened Council meeting that is private and closed to the community.

5.2 These meetings are not recorded except for any motions that are made at the end of the In-camera discussion.

5.3 Items that are in-camera are items such as:

5.3.1 Legal, government-to-government negotiations, and potential business deals. Council, at times, deals with very sensitive items that are confidential until a decision is made. These sensitive items usually do require legal advice.

5.3.2 For potential business deals, the information is confidential and requires legal advice.

5.3.3 In some government-to-government negotiations, both leadership tables agree to sign a non-disclosure agreement until the negotiations are finalized and the outcome of those negotiations is made public.

5.4 Once a decision is made in-camera, the decision is recorded in the minutes. The department responsible for the in-camera item will share what can be public information.

6. Chief and Council Special Meeting

6.1 From time to time, the Chief and Council may need to call a special Council meeting. Special meetings are usually required to deal with an urgent matter that requires the Council's intervention or decision on a time-sensitive item. Other special meetings may also include community safety concerns.

6.2 Special meetings will have all decisions recorded in the minutes.

6.3 Depending on the item, a special meeting may be held in-camera and may not be open to citizen observation.

6.4 If it is not a closed meeting and notice to the citizens can be made, the meeting will be open for Citizens to observe.

7. Annual Audit Meeting

7.1 Chief and Council is required to host an Annual Audit meeting with Cowichan citizens to present the annual audit statements.

7.2 The meeting is open to all citizens, who can attend in person or virtually.

7.3 At this meeting, citizens are encouraged to ask questions and provide comments.

7.4 The Annual Audit meeting takes place in the Fall of each year.

8. Chief and Council Community Information Meeting

8.1 Chief and Council, on occasion, will be required to host a community information meeting to present work one of the departments is moving forward. These meetings are intended to share information and allow questions or concerns from the community on the item presented.

8.2 To align with the requirements under our laws and jurisdiction agreements, Council must inform community of any laws or by-laws before implementation. At this meeting, the Council will have Staff present the law or by-law and allow time for the community to ask questions.

8.3 The information meetings will be hosted in person with a virtual option for any Citizen.

8.4 At these meetings the Citizens are encouraged to ask questions and engage in discussion.

9. Citizen's Responsibility

9.1 Citizens are responsible for reading and understanding this policy, particularly section 9, prior to attending any Council meetings.

9.2 Citizens are responsible for registering to attend any Council meeting that is advertised on the Cowichan Tribes communication channels.

9.2.1 For all regularly scheduled, duly convened council meetings, citizens must register 3 working days prior to the meeting. For greater certainty, if the meeting is scheduled on Tuesday, the Citizen must register to attend virtually by the end of day on the Wednesday before the meeting. Late registration does not guarantee a link to attend will be sent in time for the meeting.

9.3 If attending a Council meeting in person, Citizens are expected to observe during the entirety of the meeting silently.

9.3.1 If a Citizen is disruptive, they will receive one warning.

9.3.2 If the Citizen continues to be disruptive, they will be asked to leave the meeting.

9.3.3 If the Citizen attends the next Council meeting and is found to be disruptive again, they will not be permitted to attend future meetings for 6 consecutive meetings or three months, whichever is longer.

9.4 Citizens are not permitted to use their camera or microphone while attending a Council meeting.

9.4.1 If a Citizen is in violation of this rule, they will receive a warning.

9.4.2 If the Citizen continues to violate this rule, they will be asked to leave the meeting.

9.4.3 If the Citizen attends the next Council meeting and violates this rule again, they will not be permitted to attend future meetings for 6 consecutive meetings or three months, whichever is longer.

9.5 Citizens are not to share the private link they have been provided to attend any Council meeting virtually.

9.6 Should Cowichan Tribes CAO be alerted that the private meeting link has been shared, the following actions could take place:

9.6.1 A written warning outlining the offence under this policy;

9.6.2 Upon a second offense, the Citizen may be banned from attending Council meetings Virtually for 6 consecutive meetings or 3 months, whichever is longer.

9.6.3 Upon a third offense, the Citizen may be banned from attending a Council meeting virtually for 24 consecutive meetings or 1 year, whichever is longer.

9.7 During Council meetings or Special Council meetings, the chat function will be disabled virtually.

9.8 During the Annual Audit and Community Information Meetings, the chat function will be enabled to allow members attending virtually to submit questions.

9.9 Any citizen who uses abusive language or threatening language in any Council meeting, whether in-person or virtually, will be removed from the meeting immediately, and the consequences of that behavior will be decided by the Council.

10. Cowichan Tribes Administration's Responsibility

10.1 Cowichan Administration Department will make its best efforts to stream all Council meetings via a private meeting link on a live stream platform such as Zoom.

10.2 Live streaming will commence at the meeting time on the agenda and will end immediately at the close of the meeting. All live streams will only be available through a private link.

10.3 On occasion, difficulties may arise in relation to live streaming, which could prevent or interfere with the efforts to live stream the meetings. The Staff will work to resolve any technical difficulties and make the live stream available.

10.4 Council meetings will be announced through Cowichan Tribes' communication channels.

10.5 The Administrative Staff supporting Council will respond to all Citizens who request permission to attend virtually as per section

9.2.1 and provide the private meeting link prior to any Council meeting.

10.5.1 As noted in section 6.4, Council, on occasion, will call a Special Council meeting. In these instances, Staff will make every effort to provide a private meeting link to any Special Council meetings if time permits.

10.6 Staff will keep an attendees/guest registration list for those attending in person or online.

10.7 The Staff will ensure that all approved citizens will be permitted to enter the live-stream Council meeting.

10.8 For meetings that are interactive, the Staff will monitor the chat for questions and comments.

10.9 The Staff will be responsible for managing the meeting link and opening and closing the meeting virtually. This includes pausing the live feed during any in-camera items.

10.10 The Staff will communicate to any citizens attending in person who left the room during in-camera when in-camera is over and say that they may rejoin the meeting.

10.11 The Staff will inform the CAO of any violations of the rule that states the meeting link is not to be shared with non-citizens.

11. Virtual Attendance

11.1 Cowichan Tribes Staff will post a link to register for meetings hosted by Council.

11.2 Citizens are to provide their name, status number, home, mailing, and email addresses.

11.2.1 Citizens agree and approve this information to be shared with the Citizenship Department to update contact information.

11.3 Cowichan Tribes Citizen's Department will verify that each applicant is a registered citizen.

11.4 Registration to attend a regularly scheduled Duly Convened Council meeting will be good for 6 months between January and August and September to December.

11.4.1 Citizens can register to attend at any time during the calendar year.

11.4.2 The Administration Staff will update the Citizen attendance list during Council's break in August and December.

11.4.3 In January and September, Citizens are required to renew their request to attend virtually. If a citizen does not renew registration, they risk missing any upcoming regularly scheduled Duly Convened Council meetings.

11.5 Staff will keep a list of Citizens who have requested attendance at a Duly Convened Council meeting to send the private link on the meeting day.

11.6 Citizens are to register for Annual Audit Meetings each year. Registration to attend will be open from the time the notice of the meeting is posted until an hour after the meeting has begun.

11.7 Citizens are to register for any Council Community Information meetings. Registration to attend will be open from the time the notice of the meeting is posted until an hour after the meeting has begun.

11.8 If a Special Council meeting is held and is open for community observation, section 11.5 does not apply, and citizens are required to register to attend. If a Special Council meeting is open for citizen observation, Staff will make best efforts to provide a link as per section 10.5.1.

11.9 All Citizens can attend Council meetings in person or virtually.

11.10 Any non-citizen wishing to attend a Council meeting is required to request permission from the CAO. Requests to the CAO will be in the form of Cowichan Tribes Community CAIR.

11.11 When participating as an observer virtually, there will be times the screen is blank due to Council moving to in-camera. The screen will remain blank until the meting opens up again to a regular session.