

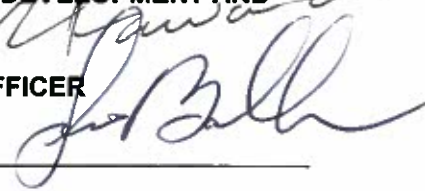

TO: GENERAL COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: COMMITTEE OF ADJUSTMENT HONORARIUM

PREPARED BY AND KEY CONTACT: A. KNAPP, ZONING ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER AND SECRETARY-TREASURER TO THE COMMITTEE OF ADJUSTMENT, EXT. 4520

SUBMITTED BY: G. ALLISON, DIRECTOR OF BUILDING SERVICES 

GENERAL MANAGER APPROVAL: R. FORWARD, MBA, M.Sc., P. ENG,
GENERAL MANAGER OF INFRASTRUCTURE, DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURE 

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER APPROVAL: JON M. BABULIC, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER 

RECOMMENDED MOTION

1. That an honorarium of \$15.00 per application heard including travel reimbursement, with a minimum honorarium of \$50.00 per meeting attended be established for members of the Committee of Adjustment.
2. That an additional honorarium of \$20.00 per meeting be provided to the Chairman of each meeting.
3. That the City's Fees By-law be amended to increase the Committee of Adjustment application fees for consents, easements and minor variances by \$50.00 to cover the proposed increase in honorarium.

PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

4. The Committee of Adjustment is a legislated approval authority comprised of five members of the public that are appointed by Council. It was first established in the City of Barrie by By-law 2504 on February 22nd, 1960. The committee has the authority to hear development applications and to make decisions that are binding on the Corporation for;
 - a) Minor variances from the provisions of a Zoning By-law; or enlargement, extension or alteration of a legal non-conforming use of land, buildings or structures; and
 - b) Consent or severance of a parcel of land for the following purposes:
 - i) Creating a new lot;
 - ii) Lot adjustments and extensions;
 - iii) Leases, right-of-ways and easements of more than 21 years duration; or
 - iv) Corrections to deeds or property descriptions.
5. It is estimated that Committee members spend about 1.5 hours per application to review the application and associated comments and reports and to visit the site in advance of the hearing. An additional 0.5 hours per application is spent at the hearing including the discussion leading to a decision. In total each member provides about 2 hours of their own time and travels about 10 km in their own car for each application. With about 80 applications heard a year, this totals about 160 hours and 800 kms of travel.

6. Currently each member receives an honorarium of \$7.00 per application. The last fee adjustment was in 1996. If a member attends all hearings and hears 80 applications in a year, they would receive \$560 in an honorarium for their time and travel expenses.
7. The current application fee is \$1,350.00 for minor variances and up to \$1,500.00 for consents. The current honorarium cost of \$35 per application (\$7.00 per member for 5 members) represents 2.6% and 2.3% of the application fee.
8. The minimal compensation has eroded past member's commitment to attending meetings, particularly if there is only one or two applications being heard. This has sometimes made it difficult to confirm a quorum of members will be attending. Without a quorum, the meeting would have to be rescheduled, an inconvenience for the applicant and interested neighbours.

ANALYSIS

9. In 2009, municipal staff along with community stakeholders conducted a Committee of Adjustment Process Mapping Initiative in an effort to seek continuous improvement and to obtain input on the efficient and effective delivery of this municipal planning service. The attendees expressed their concern that the current rate of compensation was inadequate for the service provided by the committee members. Concerns were also raised that should the compensation remain the same there may be a higher rate of turnover of members providing little continuity between terms which may impact decision making and increase staff time to educate and train new members.
10. Compensating members of the Committee of Adjustment for their commitment to hear and decide on minor planning applications is a recognized practice amongst municipalities across the province. There are no legislative requirements to compensate members. Options for compensation may include the following:
 - a) An honorarium that is fixed, such as an annual amount paid in monthly portions, regardless of the number or complexity of the applications; or
 - b) An honorarium that is dependent on the number and/or complexity of the applications being heard, or the number of hearings; and
 - c) Consideration whether travel reimbursement is a monthly allowance, by the kilometre travelled, or simply incorporated into the honorarium.
11. Staff contacted several Municipalities in an effort to compare Committee of Adjustment honorariums and travel compensation. The results can be found in Appendix "A" of this report. The survey results indicate that the City of Barrie's current Committee Member Honorarium is significantly less than our peer municipalities and the majority also receive separate travel compensation.
12. City staff recommends increasing the committee member's honorarium from \$7.00 per application to \$15.00 per application including travel reimbursement, with a minimum honorarium of \$50.00 per meeting. This will provide a variable honorarium based on the number of applications being heard, while also providing an incentive to attend meetings where only one or two applications are being considered. Staff believe the honorarium should be based on a 'per application' basis to be commensurate with the effort involved.
13. Staff are also recommending an additional honorarium of \$20.00 per meeting be provided to the chairperson of the meeting in recognition of the extra duties provided.

14. Providing a separate travel reimbursement would entail travel claim forms being handled and reviewed by members and by staff. Because of the relatively low value of the travel claim each month, it would be more efficient to include travel compensation in the honorarium for each application.
15. The additional costs for honorariums will be dependent on the number of applications being heard if the minimum honorarium is adopted. Since most hearings will have three or more applications, with an average of seven applications per hearing, the additional cost is estimated to be about \$43.00 to \$55.00 per application. Staff are therefore recommending the application fee be increased by \$50.00 per application.

ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

16. There are no environmental matters related to the recommendation.

ALTERNATIVES

17. There are three alternatives available for consideration by General Committee:

Alternative #1

General Committee may choose to not alter the honorarium paid to members of the Committee of Adjustment.

This alternative is not recommended as doing so will undermine the dedication of the members to attend committee meetings, particularly when only one or two applications are scheduled to be heard. The cancellation of a meeting due to lack of a quorum delays the process of hearing applications, inconveniences both the applicant and interested neighbours, and jeopardizes the ability of the Committee to hear the applications within the legislated time frame of 30 days.

Alternative #2

General Committee may choose to alter the honorarium paid to members of the Committee of Adjustment to some other amount deemed appropriate.

Options include elimination of the honorarium, paying a fixed annual amount in monthly instalments, paying a fixed amount per application, paying a fixed amount per meeting, or any combination of these options.

Due to potential cost implications, staff would request alternative suggestions be sent back to staff for evaluation and feedback.

Alternative #3

General Committee may choose to separate a travel reimbursement for the members of the Committee of Adjustment.

Options would include a monthly travel allowance, a travel allowance per application, or the processing of travel claims based on the distance between City Hall and the subject site of the application. The last option would incur staff time to receive, review and process claim forms.

FINANCIAL

18. If the application fees to the Committee of Adjustment are amended as recommended, there will be no net impact on the operating budget for the recommended increases for committee member honorariums.

LINKAGE TO 2010-2014 COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

19. The recommendation(s) included in this Staff Report support the following goals identified in the 2010-2014 City Council Strategic Plan:
- ☒ Improve and Expand Community Involvement and City Interactions
20. The proposed recommendations will acknowledge and reinforce the public input/feedback from the Committee of Adjustment Process Improvement Initiatives. This will also benefit customer experience by decreasing the risk of not achieving quorum which delays a hearing and should improve the level of commitment from Committee members.

APPENDIX "A"

SURVEY OF PEER MUNICIPALITIES

Municipality	No. of Applications	No. of Meetings	Honorarium Per Meeting Per Member	Additional Travel Compensation	Cost per Per Application Per Member
Barrie Pop. 140,000	80	12	\$46.66 approx.	No	\$7.00
Brampton Pop. 504,900	298	16	\$175	Yes	\$9.39
Burlington Pop. 164,415	147	24	\$80 to \$100	Yes	\$13.06 to 16.32
Cambridge Pop. 129,434	74	10	\$75 to \$100	No	\$10.13 to \$13.51
Guelph Pop. 125,872	175	23	\$65 to \$80	No	\$8.54 to \$10.51
Hamilton Pop. 714,900	442	26	\$100	Yes	\$5.88
Mississauga Pop. 729,000	554	49	\$200	Yes	\$17.68
Newmarket Pop. 84,000	17	12	\$150 to \$175	No	\$105 to \$123.52
Ottawa Pop. 865,000	1097	22	\$265 to \$310	Yes	\$5.31 to \$6.21
Richmond Hill Pop. 163,000	245	16	\$150 to \$175	Yes	\$9.79 to \$11.42