

Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Council Report**Item 2**

Subject: Branding and Corporate Identity Initiative (A00)**Staff Report No. CS-015-19****Department: Corporate Services****Date: August 27, 2019**

Recommendation:**1) That Council receive Report No. CS-015-19 for information.****1. Purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to notify Council of the initiation of the Town's Branding & Corporate Identity Initiative and outline the procedure through which it will be completed.

2. Background:

As part of the 2019 Capital Budget, Council approved \$50,000 to go towards a new branding initiative. Council decided that the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville needed to refresh its corporate identity in order to stay relevant in today's competitive world of attracting new businesses, residents and tourists.

The last time the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville was 're-branded' was in the early 1990s when the introduction of a new Town logo was made. After some minor tweaks in 2007, the logo is still in use today.

The Town's first branding style guide was produced in 2005 entitled "Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville's Logo Usage Parameters and Style Guide." This document was produced only a few years after the Town's first website went live in 2000.

Despite no formal style guide being produced since, nor the existing one being updated to match the times, the Town does have a series of policies that dictate various branding rules. Most importantly, AP #72 *Corporate Identity Guidelines*, outlines the use of the

Town's primary and secondary logos and the Town's crest. "Mini-Style Guides," acting as 'cheat sheets' for staff, were produced in 2013 but did not contain new branding guidelines.

The Town does not have an all-encompassing Brand Manual or Style Guide that details all facets of the Corporate brand.

3. Analysis and Options:

To undertake this initiative, a Branding and Corporate Identity Steering Committee has been created with representatives from Communications, Economic Development, Human Resources, Customer Service, the Mayor's Office and the Office of the CAO as members. The purpose of the committee is to project manage the initiative from start to finish, including the hiring of a consultant to undertake Phases #2 and #3 as outlined below.

The Initiative will involve the following phases:

Phase 1: What exactly are we branding?

Phase One of the Branding Initiative is to determine exactly what we are branding. We are branding the Town, however is this the proper time to change the name of the town?

A three-month community engagement initiative will be launched to garner public perception about the name of the municipality. This engagement process will gather ideas about what the public thinks about the name "Whitchurch-Stouffville" and if any changes should be made at this time. Changes could include dropping the name "Whitchurch" from the name. This engagement will consist of workshops, stakeholder interviews and surveys. Council will need to approve any final decision.

From strictly an advertising, marketing and branding perspective, municipalities with shorter names are easier to brand and present less confusion to the public. Whitchurch-Stouffville, whose name was derived from the amalgamation of the Village of Stouffville and the Township of Whitchurch in 1971, presents several branding challenges. These include:

- frequent misspellings and mispronunciations of not only the word 'Whitchurch,' but of the word 'Stouffville.' 'Whitchurch' is frequently referred to as 'Whitechurch' in both spelling and pronunciation by the general public and media outlets. 'Stouffville,' although named after its first European settler Abraham Stouffer, of which the 'ff's are commonly pronounced, is often pronounced without the sound of the 'ff's. And thus, the spelling of the word has, at times, appeared as 'Stouville.' In summary, the current name of the municipality provides at least two opportunities for mispronunciation and misspelling. From a branding

perspective, the fewer the opportunities for mispronunciation and misspelling, the better;

- design issues having to deal with a location name with 22 characters, including a hyphen. When designing promotional material, it can become problematic dealing with long names. A recent example of this conundrum was the painting of the York Region water tower on Tenth Line last year which was postponed because of the length of the Town's name and the fact a branding project may be forthcoming;
- having a hyphen in the name also presents challenges. Even though the Town's official name contains a hyphen, some of the Town's insignia and secondary logos, do not contain the hyphen, thus creating even more confusion. From a design standpoint, it can also be confusing on where that hyphen should be when separating the words in hyphenated text.

It should be noted that there may be many other, non-branding related, reasons why dropping 'Whitchurch' from the name of the municipality would be more advantageous.

Phase 1b: Hiring of a consultant

Phase 2: Research and Assessment

Phase Two of the initiative involves the community engagement process towards creating a new brand. It will commence once Phase One has been completed and Council has decided about the Town's name. It is very important to note that Phases Two and Three involve the participation of the consultant, and ideas presented below may change accordingly. This phase may consist of:

- One-on-one and group interviews with key community stakeholders to explore Whitchurch-Stouffville's current brand and reputation;
- An online survey, to be completed by Whitchurch-Stouffville residents and businesses to gain a better understanding of their thoughts and opinions of Whitchurch-Stouffville;
- A series of brand workshops to better understand Whitchurch-Stouffville's current reputation, in terms of both its positive attributes and what we must improve in the future in order to continue to be successful; and;
- Any other community engagement initiatives the Town or the consultant may deem worthy.

This phase will also consist of a complete asset inventory of everything that needs to be replaced or updated within the Corporation.

Phase 3: Development

With the assistance of the consulting firm's design team, and based on the findings of Phase Two, a new branding identity program will be created. The Brand Identity will consist of logos, typography standards, colours palettes, graphics, and other visual insignias, among other things. Approval by Council will be needed upon successful completion of this phase, and before Style Guides and other guidelines are developed set in place.

Phase 4: Implementation

The launch of the refreshed Town brand identity will represent the beginning of a new phase in the project and indeed for the Town overall. Implementation will be a phased-in process with high priority items at the top and based on budgetary influences.

Phase 5: Strategy Management

Effective brands require constant, proactive management to be successful. In addition, to build strong brand awareness a brand strategy must have the long-term support of all key stakeholders. This phase will be ongoing.

The initiative is anticipated to begin in mid-September and be completed in mid- to late-2020.

4. Financial Implications:

None at this time. Council has already approved the branding initiative budget. Upon completion of the first three phases, additional funds may be required for implementation.

5. Attachments:

1. None

Related Reports:

None.

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