



Municipality of the District of Argyle

Item: Election - Voting Method

Date: November 16, 2023

Our Vision

Argyle is the community of choice to invest, live and play.

Our Identity

*Argyle **invests** time & talent in growth opportunities in fishing, tourism, and renewable energy sectors.*

*Argyle provides affordable taxation while providing safe and **livable** communities and strives to engage and inform our residents on decisions that affect them most.*

*Argyle provides high class, accessible recreational and cultural facilities for health and for **play**.*

PURPOSE

Staff are requesting to council, what method of voting would they prefer for the next municipal election.

Background:

As you are aware, municipal elections are scheduled for October 19, 2024, and in anticipation of this event, the staff is seeking guidance from the Council regarding the preferred method of voting for the upcoming election.

Back in 2013, the municipality enacted Bylaw #32, titled "Respecting Voting for Municipal Elections," which grants the Council the authority to opt for an alternative voting method. "Alternative voting" encompasses voting via telephone or the internet, using personal computing devices without supervision, and includes a combination of telephone and internet voting. However, the option of utilizing traditional paper ballots still remains.

During the last election, because of the pandemic, council decided to employ the alternative voting method and not have paper ballots. According to staff reports, the alternative voting method performed well in 2020 with over 68% of potential voters casting their vote. It's important to note that 2020 marked the first year of the pandemic, and given the public health restrictions on gatherings, relying solely on paper ballots at polling stations would not have been a prudent choice. Now, four years later, with lingering pandemic effects and some residents still hesitant to gather, especially some seniors, opting for the alternative voting method still appears to be a safer choice.

If the decision is made to proceed with the alternative method, the plan is to establish "Voting Assistance Centers" (formerly known as Polling Stations) in Pubnico, Tusket, Wedgeport, and in East Kemptville, similar to the setup in the last election. These centers would be staffed with trained personnel to assist residents in casting their votes electronically. Referred to as Voting Assistance Centers, these sites would focus on providing support for electronic voting rather than traditional paper ballots, ensuring that voters receive the necessary assistance in navigating the process.

Other considerations:

Internet: When encouraging residents to vote from home, the internet is a crucial factor to consider. It posed challenges for our residents a few years ago. However, thanks to initiatives from the provincial government and our municipal contributions, the internet issue may not be completely resolved for all residents, but the majority should now have reliable access.

Youth Voters: When it comes to engaging youth voters, leveraging the technology they are familiar with is essential.

Inclusive: According to the Municipal Election Act, Voting Assistance Centers (Polling Stations) are required to adhere to accessibility criteria and aid individuals in need. Implementing alternative methods for voters would enhance the municipality's inclusivity, particularly benefiting those with mobility challenges, illnesses, mental health issues, and providing support to individuals requiring assistance.

Options

Options #1: 100% Alternative Voting method.

Option #2: Council could choose to have a hybrid model meaning e-voting during advance polls and have paper ballot option on election day only.

Option #3: Council could choose to have a hybrid model with paper ballot & e-voting at all Voting Assistance Centers during advance polling days and election day.

Recommendation:

Staff is recommending Option #1 Based on the following facts:

- Our internet is more reliable than ever.
- Most people have cell phone now to vote.
- We know the alternative methods works as we have done it in the last elections.
- The alternative method of voting is safer.
- The alternative method of voting is more inclusive to our residence.
- Reduces the number of staff needed at polling stations.
- Reduce the amount of polling stations.

Staff would recommend that Alternative method of voting and no paper ballots to be used for the 2024 election.

Suggested motion:

Move that council approve the alternative method of voting (e-voting) with no paper ballots for the 2024 elections and give authority to the CAO and the Returning Officer to look at options for alternative methods of voting.