

October 1, 2025

Mayor and Council, Village of Harrison Hot Springs

Regarding some observations of Council and Residents interaction

For some time now, I have come to wonder whether or not Council wants to allow the residents to observe and participate in the business of the Village. I am speaking for myself and do not intend to represent anyone else's position on the matters I am raising.

I do not have to remind you of my nearly six years of acting as a sort of watchdog for Council operation. I always try to state what one might call constructive criticism, but my intention always is to do it with a manner of respect. In turn, I have generally felt that I received responses with similar respect.

Since the last election, however, some changes and procedures have led me to wonder if Council really wants citizen input and observation. Yes, there is a question period, and the Mayor has been generous in the time and scope of comments from the people's microphone, but that is not the point of my concerns.

First, there was a change of meeting time to 5:30. By itself, that reduces considerably the ability of many to attend, or even log into your meetings. Note that it also means having to pay for parking for those who need it (seasonal). Next, it is more than evident that some matters are seemingly decided by members in advance. One need only note the number of decisions that are made with no or little discussion. Some of us might like to know the arguments considered when a vote is cast. Are we supposed to go by the preamble by staff prior to the vote (especially since most people will not have the package at hand when the matter is on the floor)? While there are other concerns, especially with those of us who participate online, the capper is the push to move all meetings to the Council Chambers. Not only does that drastically limit the number of observers but Zoom meetings from that location are very frustrating. Memorial Hall works best for technical reasons (although it would be nice if a member participating online did not have equal, constant presence alongside of the already limited view (e.g. cannot see staff). I'm sure that the member involved would agree. At least in-person observation makes it possible to feel you can see what is happening, even if it doesn't get discussed.

In summary, it would be appropriate for Council to be thankful for the interest shown by citizens, and facilitating their involvement is not seen to be problematic. Giving serious thought to changing the starting time back to a reasonable hour would be a good start.

Respectfully submitted,
Allan Garneau

