
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report CLE-02-2021 Flag Protocol Policy Amendment

For Consideration by Council in Committee on October 5, 2021



OBJECTIVE:

To amend Flag Protocol Policy 2004-05 and establish an additional flagpole, in order to provide community flag raisings at the Haldimand County Administration Building.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report CLE-02-2021 Flag Protocol Policy Amendment be received;
2. AND THAT the updated Flag Protocol Policy 2004-05, included as Attachment 1 to Report CLE-02-2021, be approved;
3. AND THAT a Community Flagpole and associated landscaping work at the Haldimand County Administration Building be approved as outlined in Report CLE-02-2021.

Prepared by: Evelyn Eichenbaum, Manager, Clerks Division / Municipal Clerk

Approved: Craig Manley, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

An amended Flag Protocol Policy is being recommended for approval in conjunction with the establishment of an additional flagpole to be utilized for community flag raisings. The draft policy is included as an attachment to this report, illustrating identified amendments. Some additional housekeeping amendments to the policy are also identified.

BACKGROUND:

Haldimand County first adopted the Flag Protocol Policy in 2004 to formalize etiquette pertaining to the County flag, half-masting of flags, and to provide for County flags being made available to the public for purchase. The policy was specific about flags from other organizations not being displayed at County facilities. Although there have been some amendments to the policy since that time, the issue of flags from other organizations being flown has not been raised as a matter to be reviewed until earlier this year.

At the June 7, 2021 Council meeting, a discussion regarding the raising of the Pride Flag resulted in the following direction being adopted:

THAT staff be directed to report back on potential amendments to the Flag Protocol Policy and other recognition practices to reflect acknowledgement of community groups in the future.

This report addresses the establishment of a Community Flagpole at the Haldimand County Administration Building (HCAB) and incorporates a process in the related policy for community groups to request having a flag flown on that flagpole.

ANALYSIS:

Flags are important symbols of honour and pride and should be displayed in a consistent and appropriate manner to ensure the respect that they deserve. While Haldimand County has a policy in place to ensure that federal, provincial and municipal flags are flown in a dignified and respectful manner, Council has recently directed staff to report on amending the Flag Protocol Policy to acknowledge community groups as well.

Community Flagpole

Staff have reviewed other municipalities' policies to gauge the general approach for raising community flags. While many municipalities have policies in place, they vary in scope based on the size of the municipality and based on the number of flagpoles in place.

In June of this year, Council passed a motion to fly the Pride flag, so the County flag at HCAB was lowered and the Pride flag was flown on that flagpole. There are certain unique circumstances where two flags can be flown on one flagpole, however, it is not normally recommended, and can take away from the relevance of each flag being flown. Based on that premise, staff looked at incorporating a separate Community Flagpole that can be located adjacent to the three existing flagpoles at HCAB so that the federal, provincial and municipal flags can remain flying as they are in accordance with accepted flag protocols, and that a fourth flagpole can be utilized for community group requests as outlined in the draft policy. The concept sketch illustrating the location of the fourth flagpole is included as Attachment #2 to this report.

The draft policy included as Attachment #1 to this report outlines a process for community groups to use to request having a flag flown on the Community Flagpole. The intent is to have an application form made available on the County's website for these requests, and they would be reviewed to ensure that they fit the criteria outlined in the policy. Arrangements would be made for the group to supply the flag prior to the scheduled raising, and also for picking it up afterwards. With each group providing a brief description of the nature of the flag raising, the County's website will include an indication of any flag currently being flown on the Community Flagpole.

As a brief overview of the recommended policy amendments re: Community Flagpole:

- charitable and non-profit groups will be required to submit a request for a flag raising at least four weeks prior to the date, along with a brief description of the nature of the flag raising
- requests will be confirmed on a first come, first served basis
- requests will be reviewed to ensure that they have a presence in Haldimand County and that they do not fall within any of the exceptions outlined in the policy i.e. political or religious nature; promotion of hatred, violence, racism or discrimination; commercial nature, etc.
- flags will be supplied by the community group and must be of the appropriate size
- flags will be flown for one week, with the possibility of a longer timeframe where other requests have not been submitted

Other Policy Amendments

While reviewing Policy 2004-05 to incorporate the flying of community flags, several other housekeeping amendments were noted and are being recommended for incorporation in the revised policy.

While the policy originally identified the half-masting of flags to occur only at the County's Administration Building, an amendment in 2017 expanded that to include all County facilities to ensure that half-masting was honoured at all satellite facilities. The logistics of half-masting at all sites is quite complex with approximately 35 flagpoles at 22 sites, and some of those flagpoles are unable to be half-masted. Also, with the recent centralization of the Administration Building, it is recommended that half-masting be limited to the flagpoles at HCAB and any additional relevant site as identified in the draft policy.

The timeframe for half-masting was previously tied to the period between the day of death and the day of the funeral. Previously, that was typically a period of several days, perhaps a week at the most. In recent years, traditions related to the recognition of death through a funeral or a memorial service have evolved and the timing of such events are often extended to accommodate specific circumstances. Since COVID-19, this situation has been magnified with many funerals/memorial services significantly delayed due to pandemic restrictions. The draft policy recommends a half-masting of three business days from the day of death.

The term “County facility” has been clarified to refer to facilities operated by the County. Some Community Halls are owned by the County and operated by community groups, and in some cases the community groups have installed a flagpole to display their own flag.

The wording related to the supply of flags to non-profit community organizations has been amended to provide clarity.

Other Recognition Practices

Some municipalities utilize proclamations as a way to recognize groups and events. In 2001, Haldimand County passed a motion that proclamations be denied due to the potential of litigation, and that requests from local organizations having a chapter in Haldimand County to recognize federally designated weeks and days be acknowledged in the form of a certificate of recognition. The County does receive requests for proclamations and while some of the requests may come from local groups, many come from outside the County.

If the County was to consider establishing a process for proclamations, parameters would need to be set and the proclamations would most likely be recognized by being read out at a Council meeting, and a certificate being presented to the requesting group. Proclamations can be seen as being more than expressing support for a local group, and can be viewed as taking a particular stance. While Council is always able to express its position on any matter through resolution, staff do not recommend proceeding with proclamations at this time.

FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

The installation of a Community Flagpole and the associated landscaping at HCAB, falls within the scope of single sourcing as outlined in Section 4.03 (h) of Procurement Policy 2013-02 as it involves “work to be performed by a Contractor according to provisions for a warranty or guarantee held in respect of the property or the original work”, as confirmed by the Manager, Legal & Support Services. The work will be performed by the same landscaping contractor who has completed all work at the HCAB project and for which the warranty period is still valid. The additional work which will connect and impact existing landscaping will be completed for a cost of \$26,375 which will be accommodated in the existing budget for the Central Administration Project.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:

The establishment of a Community Flagpole and the process for community groups to request that their flag be flown at HCAB demonstrates Haldimand County’s support and recognition of local community groups and initiatives.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: No

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: No

Policy: Yes

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Amended Flag Protocol Policy 2004-05
2. Concept Sketch – Fourth Flagpole