

*Request for Decision United Townships of Head, Clara & Maria Council*

Type of Decision									
Meeting Date	Friday, May 8, 2015				Report Date	Wednesday, April-22-15			
Decision Required	X	Yes		No	Priority	X	High		Low
Direction	X	Information Only			Type of Meeting	X	Open		Closed

## Office Efficiency and Staffing - Report #08/05/15/1206

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**Subject:**

Suggestions to implement to run the office more efficiently.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That Council consider the following resolution approving increased staffing for 2015.

Resolution

**WHEREAS** over the past few years administrative staff have implemented and tried many different tools and techniques to improve efficiencies without significant improvements due to increased workloads or workload “creep”;

**AND WHEREAS** continuing in this manner will result in employee burn out, inefficiencies and error;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Council of the United Townships of Head, Clara & Maria does hereby agree to hire a second 21 hour a week part time position to complete receptionist and secretarial duties at the Municipal Office commencing as soon as possible.

**BACKGROUND/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

**Change Requested**

Addition of a receptionist staffing position - part time until Gayle retires. Upon Gayle’s retirement this position will be combined to create a full 35 hour per week position.

**What does the Future Look Like?**

Office compliment of three full time staff – Clerk/CAO, Treasurer and Receptionist/Office Assistant. Hopefully this will result in staff being able to leave work at work, fewer interruptions for Clerk and Treasurer, a more manageable work load and lack of or infrequent banked Time for Time.

Management of the new employee as well as public expectations will occur with notices in email, Newsletters and web page. The receptionist will handle routine calls for information from members of the public.

Depending on the aptitude of the new hire, this person might also train to eventually replace either of the Clerk or Treasurer.

### Purpose for Change – How do We Know There’s a Problem

1. Staff burnout
2. Stress related illness
3. Tasks not being completed/deferred
  - a. Grant applications which are important for our municipality are being missed due to time required to collect background data, submit acceptable applications and complete reporting.
  - b. Work is being taken home to complete as there is not enough time in the 35 hour work weeks.

### Risks of Not Making Change

1. Sick time and Long term disability
2. Staff turnover
3. Difficulty recruiting for qualified replacements
4. Costs of rehiring and retraining

### Evidence

1. An average of 7-10 phone calls per day – many requiring a disruption to the person who answers the phone plus the person the call is for.

2. # emails per day

Staff	Emails sent in April	Emails deleted in April	Emails requiring some type of attention still in inbox
Melinda	189	200+	190
Noella	143	342	25

3. # office visits per day – varies depending on day and time of year – average 10.
4. Hours per week spent doing receptionist duties at significantly higher pay rate for Noella (14+) and Melinda (7+)
5. Time spent refocusing

From - [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/05/opinion/sunday/a-focus-on-distraction.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/05/opinion/sunday/a-focus-on-distraction.html?_r=0)

...”Gloria Mark of the University of California, Irvine, [found](#) that a typical office worker gets only 11 minutes between each interruption, while it takes an average of 25 minutes to

return to the original task after an interruption. But there has been scant research on the quality of work done during these periods of rapid toggling.”

Some interruptions are within our control – such as email and phone. We have attempted to shut off email during working hours – checking at our initiative, not because a notice has popped up. We attempted to not answer the phone except to check voice mail at various times during the day but people expect the phone to be answered and call back continuously until we do.

Many interruptions are part of the job and are extremely important. We are here to serve the public and Council. The problem is with completing other unrelated tasks as well.

6. Average monthly time for time carried forward – over the past year and April 2015

	T/T accumulated to end of April	Average T/T carried over per month 2014
Melinda	35 hours	33 hours
Noella	59.75 hours	69 hours
Gayle	Has accumulated over 32 hours of lunches worked, breaks not taken.	
Neither Noella nor Melinda takes breaks or lunch. There is too much to be done.		

7. Vacation carried over from previous year

Melinda	3 days
Noella	0

### Short Term Solutions Attempted

Staff have implemented short term solutions but they are not enough to alleviate the work load pressure on administrative staff.

We have increased Gayle’s hours to two days per week. We have closed the office Thursdays. We are attempting to simply close our doors, but someone has to be available. We considered having people make appointments with Clerk and/or Treasurer if they require something but quite often, we are the only source of the information being requested so we need to be available.

We attempted to not answer the phone but quite often, calls need to be dealt with immediately. There is no way to know which is which. We are not immediately responding to emails, but instead checking at intervals. These tools are simply not enough.

Now that the office is closed Thursday, we are finding that Thursdays are often used to schedule webinars, days off or training. Working from home is pretty much the only way we can get some uninterrupted time in with our current set up. Bringing work home at night is now a normal occurrence.

Valley EFAP were called to present a session on Stress Management. Techniques have been discussed at employee meetings along with time management and organization tips.

## What is not Getting the Attention Deserved?

Please review attachments from Gayle and Noella following.

Personally, tasks outlined in my Job Description not receiving the attention they require include:

1. Have not trained in the Treasurer's position at all. This is no longer possible with the requirements of both jobs.
2. Municipal Alcohol Policy
3. Liquor License follow up
4. Reports to Cambium for history of sites – to complete annual reports.
5. Cemetery Reports not completed on time.
6. Have not followed up with MOE re: December reports.
7. Review of by-laws for enforcement purposes.
8. Time for research for Council reports is limited. Issues requiring extensive research are being deferred. – investments are one example
9. Health and Safety program/policies not being reviewed annually.
10. Admin policies not being reviewed annually.
11. Time does not allow for being pro-active – instead we are reacting.
12. Grant applications are not being given time necessary. Trillium program has changed in 2014. We have not have time to review it let alone apply.
13. Emergency Management has been left solely to Gayle.
14. Lottery Licensing Officer, Division Registrar and Head for MFIPPA are roles that get zero attention.
15. Coordinating with neighbouring municipalities on protocol for joint meetings and succession planning not being done.
16. No time for Executive Diploma in Municipal Management research project research (time at home spent doing office work).
17. Limited time for training, education, attendance at area association meetings. Although I attended the AMCTO workshop in Perth, I did not participate in the association meeting the next day as I had too much work to do. Worked the morning from the hotel room instead.
18. Donation program follow up.
19. Volunteer recognition program.
20. Recreation committee oversight which led to major challenges.

## Other Options

Should Council determine that hiring another staff position is not warranted, we will require further direction. What can/should we stop doing? We must ensure that the demands of the province, council and the public are met. Staff is reaching a breaking point.

## Financing Staffing Position

Different options for consideration.

1. Half days
  - a. Mornings only
  - b. Afternoons
2. Flexible

### 3. Two full days per week

Our major challenge is that all 3 current office employees have a full slate. We have very little that we can ask each other to cover due to our own time constraints or the time it takes to bring that person up to speed. We are then left with trying to work to get jobs completed and up to date prior to taking any time off; and then catching up when we return.

Although we are currently making do; we are feeling the stress of overwork. We have holidays due and weeks of time for time to take.

The consideration of paying out overtime will only partially resolve the problem. It is our suggestion that an additional employee to act as receptionist, secretary and provide some back up will help significantly. Gayle's job has evolved to back up for Noella as well as sole responsibility for Emergency Management and the bulk of Recreation. She still works on her own tasks of archival and record retention which take significant time.

To pay out the current time for time owed at current wages (not at a premium) would amount to approximately \$3,600. It is a never ending cycle. Currently the Clerk and Treasurer are owed a total of 32 days of vacation. Assuming that to work to catch up on missed time we work half that time again, would result in a cost of approximately \$4,500. That same wage could be used to pay a new employee starting wage and work many more hours.

This situation cannot be alleviated in total however; it might be mitigated by having another person to complete routine tasks leaving more time for us to focus on our specific jobs.

Currently, we as Clerk/Treasurer are counting bag tags, folding letters and stuffing envelopes; answering phones advising of disposal site hours, recycling dates and library hours; photocopying forms for Terry and Bill, filling out fire permits and handing out building permits; filing, opening mail, photocopying and vacuuming when we get around to it. Respectfully, anyone could do these tasks but they are taking time out of our days.

### **Options/Discussion:**

1. Payout of overtime for staff. Currently overtime must be taken as time for time. This simply results in a continuous cycle of taking time off, having work pile up, work overtime to catch up, accumulate time for time, take time off...with vacation due this situation will only get worse.
2. Hiring summer student for office admin work. Short term assistance, not a long term solution. We are awaiting notice from our grant application to see if we have been approved for funding.
3. Hire someone at the office admin rate for 3 days per week to perform receptionist and secretarial duties - answer phone, filing, mail, routine purchasing, stuffing envelopes, cleaning.
  - a. 7 hrs x 3 days per week = 21 hours per week x 52 weeks = 728 hours @ \$17.01 + payroll expenses. \$18,575 + payroll expense of \$2,786 for a total of \$21,361

**b. Total annual payroll - \$21,361**

**c. Total payroll for remainder of 2015 – 661 hours @ \$17.01 + payroll expenses. \$12,940.**

4. Benefits – part time employment for a resident; time for staff to focus on other tasks. Succession planning?

### **Financial Considerations/Budget Impact:**

Obviously increased staffing would increase employee costs. Annually that cost would be approximately \$21,361.

For 2015 funds exist in the current audited surplus to hire this position. With our record of annual surpluses funding this position will not pose a challenge.

This person will then be available to learn Gayle's duties as well and ultimately assume the responsibilities of Gayle's job upon her retirement.

### **Transition Plan**

Should Council authorize a new employee staff will roll out a change transition plan for members of the public as well as staff. We will communicate why change is needed and explain the role this position will also take in ultimate challenges with succession planning in a small rural community. Communication is key.

Once again we would hire from within the municipality, if a qualified candidate is identified, training for the position. Hire for fit; train for skills.

We would recommend that we open the office Thursdays again once an initial probation period of 3 – 6 months has been completed. A new email address will be advertised for general inquiries to be used by the receptionist and divert routine questions.

### **Policy Impact:**

Hires a new employee.

### **Others Consulted:**

Noella LeBreton, Treasurer; Gayle Watters, Admin Assistant.

For more information - On-line articles and resources:

[https://www.yast.com/time\\_management/science-task-interruption-time-management/](https://www.yast.com/time_management/science-task-interruption-time-management/)

<http://www.fastcompany.com/944128/worker-interrupted-cost-task-switching>

<http://interruptions.net/literature/CubeSmart-productivity-wp1.pdf>

<http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/23146/too-many-interruptions-work.aspx>

Approved and Recommended by the Clerk

Melinda Reith,

Municipal Clerk

*M Reith*

## Time Management constraints – Gayle Watters

In my particular position some would think I have lots of time to complete what needs doing. However that is proving to be a myth of late. I have been falling behind with every intention of catching up the next day I am in. That is key for me as the next day could conceivably be 7 working days later. Not an issue as long as everyone I connect with understand my “work” arrangements.

I have felt the concern one does when falling behind in the workloads or project deadlines but when I find myself doing minutes and/or other task related specifically to my job at home in the evening or over a weekend, then that is a definite indicator of a problem. I used to take my lunch hours as studies have proven these breaks away from the job energize one for the rest of the day but lately, although I still eat my lunch, I eat while working. Breaks I just don't bother with those. Not too many hours for a 2 day a week job but they will add up (2015 = 32 hours). I do not put in any extra request for pay or time for time as what would be the point in my position. This situation has been the case for several months now.

Currently I feel I am behind in the following projects; (Any one of these projects I could take home depending on the need to complete)

1. Emergency Management (see examples)  
No follow up as of yet re email from Mayor Gibson re new volunteer cards. (July 2014)  
2014 Compliance docs not yet forwarded to complete the year.  
2015 trainings and meetings not arranged.
2. PSAB  
New items not yet setup with files, manuals not copied and the pile is growing
3. Archival Records  
Have not returned to this project to clean out and to complete last several boxes for months
4. Cross training – although coming along as process changes I have to re train.
5. Garage Clean up – not even on the horizon
6. Sweater, CO detector and Smoke alarm Inventory

Emails - Depending on the project I could come in to 2 new emails or 25 new emails. Currently I have flagged 18 emails in my inbox for follow-up. I have approximately 57 items, mostly unopened in my deleted emails for April 2015.

Phone Calls – on average 7 calls a day come in requiring various degrees of time to handle.

In-Office visits – although not charted you could have up to 10 visits in a day also requiring various degrees of time to handle. Then re focusing yourself on the job at hand can add to the time issues.

May 5, 2015

## As part of my job description as a Treasurer/Deputy Clerk – Noella LeBreton

### Items being pushed ahead to a later date

- Updating the Asset Management Plan - I was finally able to provide the auditor with the 2014 additions on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015
- 2015 additions – I began working on this but it was set aside for the meantime
- FIR (Financial Information Return) - completed by our municipal Auditor but is on my list of duties
- The Annual Performance Measurement Report - still needs to be completed
- Draft grant applications in coordination with the Clerk - which I have yet to complete one application
- Research investment options
- Research credit card options
- Purchase a slide for OMP for the rec committee.
- Purchase a bench to be installed by the cenotaph re the rec committee
- Purchase a security camera for the office

The research takes time to ensure HCM is getting the most/best options available. But as my workload increases some of these duties have to be put on the back burner as the new and/or more pressing ones need more or immediate attention. With the added amount of work, the time in a work day/week sometimes does not allow me to work on these projects/reports. As a result, some of these duties are often being pushed ahead to a later date.

With the continuous interruptions on a busy day whether it's the telephone ringing or emails flashing at the bottom of my screen, it is very difficult to get back to the same concentration I had prior to dealing with that phone call or email. I realize this is part of my job and is extremely important not only as part of my work, but also to whomever is calling or sending that email.

With the increasing workload, I am working extra hours to fulfill my duties. For instance, I brought bag tags at home and would count some in the mornings before work and some days I stay later after the office closes to get some work done as there are no interruptions.

- April 2015 # of emails = 143 that I responded to, 322 deleted and 20 junk mail. This averages out to be 16 emails/day. And this is not counting the emails already dealt with in my saved folders or the emails I have yet to respond to (25).
- April 2015 – Banked time = 29.75 hrs