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Shelburne updates its proclamation and flag-raising policy

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Shelburne council has approved a new policy aimed at modernizing how the town handles proclamations, flag raisings and half-masting requests.

The Proclamation and Flag Raising Policy was adopted during the March 9 council meeting, replacing the town's 2017 Flag Protocol Bylaw.

The update is intended to create a clearer, more flexible process for recognizing community events, cultural celebrations and awareness campaigns.

Town staff noted the municipality regularly receives requests from community groups seeking proclamations or flag raisings. The new policy brings these procedures under a single framework to better streamline receiving and responding to requests.

Organizations requesting a proclamation must now apply at least four weeks in advance and demonstrate a connection to community awareness, charitable causes or cultural recognition.

Political, commercial and religious promotions are excluded.

Proclamations will continue to be issued by the mayor and shared through the town's website, council agendas and social media.

The policy also formalizes how flag-raising requests are handled at the courtesy flagpole at Jack Downing Park. Applications will be reviewed by the Clerk's Office and must show a connection to Shelburne while aligning with the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Town staff say the updated framework is designed to ensure fair and equitable access while at the same time preventing inappropriate or conflicting requests.

During the discussions, the council raised questions about recognizing events such as Black History Month and honouring military service members or veterans, with staff responding that the new policy follows federal and provincial guidance on half-masting while allowing for some local discretion as well.

The policy also clarifies procedures for installing and removing flags and outlines when half-masting may occur, including for former council members.

The debate among council was brief, and the policy was approved, replacing the previous bylaw.