

**TOWN OF BON ACCORD
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY STATEMENT**

SECTION: Council, Administration

POLICY RESOLUTION NO.: 18-171

SUBJECT: Public Participation Policy

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY: Administration

REVIEWED & APPROVED BY COUNCIL: July 3, 2018 Resolution No. 18-171

PURPOSE AND INTENT: In accordance with Section 216.1 of the *Municipal Government Act*, this Public Participation Policy has been developed to recognize the value of public participation and create opportunities for meaningful public participation in decisions that directly impact the public.

POLICY STATEMENT: Council and Administration recognize that quality public participation is a critical component of good governance and as such, adequate resources will be allocated and the appropriate level of public participation undertaken. The Town is committed to public participation activities that are founded on the following principles:

Shared Responsibilities and Commitment: Public participation leads to better decisions and is a shared responsibility of Council, Administration and the community.

Transparent and Accountable: The Town communicates clearly and openly about public participation opportunities, its processes and provides factual and evidence-based information. It shares the outcomes of public participation, including how the information was used in the decision-making process and makes decisions in the best interest of the community.

Inclusive and Accessible: The Town endeavors to provide opportunities for public participation that take into account the diversity of needs, abilities and viewpoints of the members of the community.

Appropriate and Responsive: Public participation activities need to be appropriate to the stated goals, and reflective of the varied

preferences and needs of community members for receiving and sharing information.

Evaluation and Continual Improvement: Public participation is a dynamic and evolving process that needs continual evaluation and adjustment to continuously improve and address the changing needs of the community.

DEFINITIONS:

1. "Town Manager" means the chief administrative officer of the Municipality or their delegate.
2. "Municipal Stakeholders" means the residents of the Municipality, as well as other individuals, organizations, or persons that may have an interest in, or are affected by, a decision made by the Municipality.
3. "Municipality" means the Town of Bon Accord.
4. "Public Participation" includes a variety of non-statutory opportunities where Municipal Stakeholders receive information and/or provide input to the Municipality.
5. "Public Participation Plan" means a plan which identifies which Public Participation Tools to be used to obtain public input in a particular circumstance.
6. "Public Participation Tools" means the tools that may be used, alone or in combination, to create Public Participation opportunities including, but not limited to:
 - a. In-person participation which may include at-the-counter interactions, door-knocking, interviews, meetings, round-tables, town halls, open houses and workshops;
 - b. Digital participation which may include online workbooks, chat groups, webinars, message boards/discussion forums, and online polls or surveys;
 - c. Written participation which may include written submissions, email, and mail-in surveys, polls and workbooks; and
 - d. Representative participation which may include being appointed to an advisory committee, ad hoc committee, or citizen board.

COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITIES:

Council shall:

1. Review and approve Public Participation Plans developed by the Town Manager in accordance with this Policy or as directed by Council;
2. Consider input obtained through Public Participation; and
3. Review this Policy to ensure the Policy complies with all relevant legislation, municipal policies, and the spirit and intent of Public Participation.

4. Ensure appropriate resources are available to solicit Public Participation in accordance with this Policy;
5. Promote and support Public Participation;
6. Request and review information from the Town Manager on the scope, timing, appropriate methods and resources required for Public Participation prior to directing the development of a Public Participation Plan.

ADMINISTRATION RESPONSIBILITIES:

The CAO shall:

1. In accordance with this Policy or as directed by Council, develop Public Participation Plans, for Council approval;
2. Implement approved Public Participation Plans; and
3. Report the findings of the Public Participation to Council;
4. Consider timing, resources and engagement when developing and modifying Public Participation Plans;
5. Evaluate the effectiveness of the Public Participation Plan and the Public Participation Tools used in a particular circumstance;
6. Communicate to Council and the public, when appropriate, the effectiveness of a Public Participation Plan and the Public Participation Tools used;
7. Develop the necessary procedures to implement this policy;
8. Assess this Policy and make recommendations to Council about the Public Participation and resourcing.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES

The CAO shall develop and implement a Public Participation Plan in the following circumstances:

1. When new programs or services are being established;
2. When existing programs and services are being renewed;
3. When identifying Council priorities;
4. When gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to budget;
5. When gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to the Municipality's strategic plans or business plans;
6. When gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to the Municipality's capital plan and/or financial plan;
7. As otherwise directed by Council.

POLICY EXPECTATIONS

1. Legislative and Policy Implications

- a. All Public Participation will be undertaken in accordance with the *Municipal Government Act*, the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and any other applicable legislation.
- b. All Public Participation will be undertaken in accordance with all existing municipal policies.

- c. This Policy shall be available for public inspection and shall be posted to the Municipality's website.
- d. This Policy will be reviewed at least once every four years.

2. Public Participation Standards

- a. Public Participation will be conducted in a sustainable and inclusive manner having regard to different levels of accessibility.
- b. Public Participation activities will be conducted in a professional and respectful manner.
- c. Public Participation plans will consider early, ongoing and diverse opportunities to provide input.
- d. Municipal Stakeholders who participate in any manner of Public Participation are required to be respectful and constructive in their participation. Municipal Stakeholders who are disrespectful, inappropriate or offensive, as determined by Administration, may be excluded from Public Participation opportunities.

3. Public Participation Plans

- a. When so directed by this Policy or Council, the CAO shall develop a Public Participation Plan for approval by Council which shall consider the following:
 - i. The nature of the matter for which Public Participation is being sought;
 - ii. The impact of the matter on Municipal Stakeholders;
 - iii. The demographics of potential Municipal Stakeholders in respect of which Public Participation Tools to utilize, level of engagement and time for input;
 - iv. The timing of the decision and time required to gather input
 - v. What information is required, if any, to participate; and
 - vi. Available resources and reasonable cost.
- b. Public Participation Plans will, at minimum, include the following:
 - i. A communication plan to inform the public about the Public Participation Plan and opportunities to provide input;
 - ii. Identification of which Public Participation Tools will be utilized;
 - iii. Timelines for participation;
 - iv. Information about how input will be used;
 - v. The location of information required, if any, to inform the specific Public Participation.

4. Reporting and Evaluation

- a. Information obtained in Public Participation will be reviewed by the CAO and a report shall be provided to Council.
- b. The report shall include, at minimum, the following:
 - i. An overview of the Public Participation Plan and how it was developed;
 - ii. An assessment of the effectiveness of the plan based on the level of engagement and the quality of input;
 - iii. A summary of the input obtained; and

- iv. May include recommendations for future Public Participation Plans.
- c. Reports shall be provided to Council for review.