

	Public Participation Policy
	Council Approved
	Administration (AD) #1209
	Approved September 11, 2018
	Next Review Date September 11, 2022

1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 This Policy has been developed to define the circumstances for, and use of Public Participation, to assist Council and other municipal decision-makers in making informed, evidence-based decisions.

2.0 PURPOSE & APPLICATION

- 2.1 In accordance with Section 216.1 of the Act, this Policy has been developed to recognize the value of Public Participation and create opportunities for Municipal Stakeholders to be involved in a decision-making process.
- 2.2 This Public Participation Policy is in addition to and does not modify or replace the statutory public hearing requirements in the Act.

3.0 SCOPE

- 3.1 Public Participation will be sought prior to decisions related to municipal policies, services, budgets, programs, projects, and other initiatives in which public perspective is deemed necessary for consideration in the decision-making process by Council or Administration.
- 3.2 This Policy applies to the Public Participation activities conducted by Administration, Consultants, and Council-appointed Boards and Committees.

4.0 GENERAL POLICY PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 Council recognizes that good governance includes engaging Municipal Stakeholders in Public Participation by:
- 4.1.1 Supporting and encouraging Municipal Stakeholders, government and community institutions, and others to work together to advance the common good by creating opportunities for public participation in the decision-making process.

- 4.1.2 Adequate and inclusive planning, ensuring that the design, organization, and convening of the process serve both a clearly-defined purpose and the needs of the Municipal Stakeholders;
- 4.1.3 Providing Municipal Stakeholders with the appropriate information and tools to engage in meaningful participation; and
- 4.1.4 Helping all involved listen to each other, explore new ideas unconstrained by predetermined outcomes, learn and apply information in ways that generate new options, and rigorously evaluate Public Participation activities for effectiveness.

5.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 Council must:

- 5.1.1 Approve the use of Public Participation in accordance with this Policy or as directed by Council;
- 5.1.2 Consider input obtained through Public Participation;
- 5.1.3 Review this Policy to ensure the Policy complies with all relevant legislation, municipal policies, and the spirit and intent of Public Participation; and
- 5.1.4 Promote and support Public Participation without bias or lobbying the public.

5.2 Administration must:

- 5.2.1 Develop Public Participation Plans in accordance with this Policy;
- 5.2.2 Implement Public Participation Plans;
- 5.2.3 Report the findings of the Public Participation to Council;
- 5.2.4 Consider timing, resources, and engagement when developing and modifying Public Participation Plans;
- 5.2.5 Evaluate the effectiveness of the Public Participation Plan and the Public Participation Tools used in a particular circumstance; and
- 5.2.6 Develop the necessary procedures to implement this Policy.
- 5.2.7 Promote and support Public Participation without bias or lobbying the public.

6.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION CIRCUMSTANCES

6.1 This Policy applies when Public Participation supports decision making for the purposes of:

- 6.1.1 Establishing new programs or services;
- 6.1.2 Reviewing existing programs or services;
- 6.1.3 Identifying Council priorities;
- 6.1.4 Gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to budget;

- 6.1.5 Gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to the Municipality's strategic plans or business plans;
- 6.1.6 Gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to the Municipality's capital plan and/or financial plan; or
- 6.1.7 Fulfilling legislation or direction/decision mandated by Council.

7.0 APPROACHES

- 7.1 The Town of Hinton Municipal Public Engagement Spectrum includes the following procedures:
 - 7.1.1 *Consult* – Municipal Stakeholders are engaged by the Municipality to share feedback and perspectives that will be considered along with all relevant information for proposed policy, program, budget, project, or service creation and/or changes.
 - 7.1.2 *Involve* – Municipal Stakeholders are involved by the Municipality to adapt and adjust approaches to policies, budgets, programs, projects, or services.
 - 7.1.3 *Collaborate* – Municipal Stakeholders collaborate with the Municipality to develop and build solutions regarding policies, budgets, programs, projects, or services. This can include community-initiated engagement.
 - 7.1.4 *Empower* – Municipal Stakeholders are empowered to contribute to decisions directly or on behalf of the Municipality regarding policies, budgets, programs, projects, or services.

8.0 POLICY EXPECTATIONS

- 8.1 Legislative and Policy Implications:
 - 8.1.1 All Public Participation will be undertaken in accordance with the Act, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and any other applicable legislation;
 - 8.1.2 All Public Participation will be undertaken in accordance with all existing municipal policies;
 - 8.1.3 This Policy shall be available for public inspection and may be posted to the Municipality's website; and
 - 8.1.4 This Policy must be reviewed at least once every four years.
- 8.2 Public Participation Standards:
 - 8.2.1 Public Participation will be conducted in a sustainable and inclusive manner having regard to different levels of accessibility;
 - 8.2.2 Public Participation activities will be conducted in a professional and respectful manner;

- 8.2.3 Public Participation Plans will consider early, ongoing, and diverse opportunities to provide input;
- 8.2.4 Municipal Stakeholders who participate in any manner of Public Participation are required to be respectful and constructive in their participation. Participants who are disrespectful, inappropriate, or offensive, as determined by Administration, may be excluded from Public Participation opportunities; and
- 8.2.5 The results of Public Participation will be made available to Council and Municipal Stakeholders in a timely manner in accordance with municipal policies.

9.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLANS

- 9.1 When deemed necessary by Council or Administration, Administration will develop a Public Participation Plan which shall consider the following:
 - 9.1.1 The nature of the matter for which Public Participation is being sought;
 - 9.1.2 The impact of the matter on Municipal Stakeholders;
 - 9.1.3 The demographics of potential Municipal Stakeholders in respect of which Public Participation Tools to utilize, level of engagement, and time for input;
 - 9.1.4 The timing of the decision and time required to gather input;
 - 9.1.5 What information is required, if any, to participate; and
 - 9.1.6 Available resources and reasonable costs.
- 9.2 Public Participation Plans will, at minimum, include the following:
 - 9.2.1 A communication plan to inform the public about the Public Participation Plan and opportunities to provide input;
 - 9.2.2 Identification of which Public Participation Tools will be utilized;
 - 9.2.3 Timelines for participation;
 - 9.2.4 Information about how input will be used; and
 - 9.2.5 The location of information required, if any, to inform the specific Public Participation.

10.0 REPORTING & EVALUATION

- 10.1 Information obtained in Public Participation will be reviewed by the Chief Administrative Officer (or his/her delegate) and a report shall be provided to Council.
- 10.2 The report shall include, at minimum, the following:
 - 10.2.1 An overview of the Public Participation Plan and how it was developed;
 - 10.2.2 An assessment of the effectiveness of the Plan based on the level of engagement and the quality of input;
 - 10.2.3 A summary of the input obtained; and
 - 10.2.4 May include recommendations for future Public Participation Plans.

10.3 Reports shall be provided to Council for review.

11.0 DEFINITIONS

11.1 **Act:** the Municipal Government Act, R.S.A. 2000, c. M-26, and associated regulations, as amended.

11.2 **Municipal Stakeholders:** the residents of the Municipality, as well as other individuals, organizations, or persons that may have an interest in, or be affected by, a decision made by the Municipality.

11.3 **Municipality:** the municipal corporation of the Town of Hinton.

11.4 **Public Participation:** includes a variety of non-statutory opportunities where Municipal Stakeholders receive information to provide input that is deemed necessary for consideration in the decision-making process by Council or Administration.

11.5 **Public Participation Plan:** a plan that identifies which Public Participation Tools are to be used to obtain public input in a particular circumstance.

11.6 **Public Participation Tools:** the tools that may be used, alone or in combination, to create Public Participation opportunities including, but not limited to:

11.6.1 In-person participation which may include at-the-counter interactions, door-knocking, interviews, meetings, round-tables, town halls, open houses, and workshops;

11.6.2 Digital participation which may include online workbooks, chat groups, webinars, message boards/discussion forums, and online polls or surveys;

11.6.3 Written participation which may include written submissions, email, mail-in surveys, polls, and workbooks; and

11.6.4 Representative participation which may include being appointed to an advisory committee, ad hoc committee, or citizen board.

11.7 **Town of Hinton Municipal Public Engagement Spectrum:** the spectrum of engagement the Municipality will seek from Municipal Stakeholders, including consultation, involvement, collaboration, and empowerment.

