

COUNCIL POLICY



A-18-2024 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY

Policy #: A-18-2024

Section: Administration

Rescind Policy #: A-18

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To guide the Town of Smoky Lake on working in partnership with Municipal Stakeholders by stating when and how to incorporate appropriate Public Participation opportunities.
- 1.2 To keep Municipal Stakeholders informed and give them the opportunity to provide their input regarding an upcoming Town decision which may affect them.
- 1.3 To promote sustainable decision-making by the Town by thoughtfully considering Municipal Stakeholders interests.

2. DEFINITIONS

In this Policy:

- 2.1 "CAO" shall mean the Chief Administrative Officer of the Town of Smoky Lake;
- 2.2 "Municipal Stakeholders" shall mean the residents of the Town, as well as other individuals, organizations, or persons that may have an interest in, or are affected by, a decision made by the Town;
- 2.3 "Public Participation" shall mean the various non-statutory opportunities involving the exchange of information between the Municipal Stakeholders and the Town, often in relation to policies, programs, projects, approvals, use of resources, and services;
- 2.4 "Public Participation Plan(s)" shall mean a plan which outlines the Public Participation Tool to be used to obtain public input on a particular matter.
- 2.5 "Public Participation Tools" shall mean the applications, approaches, techniques, or processes (see Appendix A) used by the Town to achieve meaningful Public Participation including, but not limited to:
 - a) in-person participation which may include interviews, meetings, roundtables, 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 or citizen board.
- 2.6 "Staff" shall mean the administrative Staff employed by the Town.

2.7 “Town” shall mean the Municipal Corporation of the Town of Smoky Lake.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 The Town encourages public input and recognizes how Public Participation can inform and enrich Town decision-making processes to improve upon efforts to serve the community.

3.2 The Town values the implementation of meaningful Public Participation Tools that:

- a) Contribute to informed and sustainable decisions and policies that serve community interest; and
- b) Assist with the establishment of effective programs to deliver services to the community.

3.3 The Town shall provide appropriate Public Participation opportunities in its decision-making processes based on the nature of the decision to be made.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

4.1 *Open and Effective Communication* - working with Municipal Stakeholders cooperatively and transparently to share information and provide opportunities for open and constructive dialogue.

4.2 *Timeliness* - considering the appropriate timeframe required for the Public Participation process to facilitate an informed decision.

4.3 *Inclusivity and Accessibility* - ensuring public notice and participation is based on building trust and relationships that consider the diversity of needs, abilities and viewpoints of Municipal Stakeholders.

4.4 *Building Community Participation* - planning for a range of Public Participation Tools to maximize community contributions.

4.5 *Shared Responsibility and Commitment* - Public Participation leads to better decisions and is a shared responsibility of Council, Staff, and Municipal Stakeholders.

4.6 *Evaluation and Continual Improvement* - Public Participation is a dynamic and ever-evolving process that needs continual evaluation and adjustment to continuously improve and address the changing needs of the Town and Municipal Stakeholders.

5. COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITIES

In regards to this policy, Council shall:

5.1 Identify issues and decisions that may need or could benefit from Public Participation.

5.2 Consider public input obtained through Public Participation;

5.3 Promote Public Participation activities and provide, when appropriate, Council member representation;

5.4 Review this Policy to ensure it complies with all relevant legislation, municipal policies and the spirit and intent of Town beliefs on Public Participation;

5.5 Ensure appropriate resources are available to allow for the ongoing implementation of consistent, comprehensive, and representative Public Participation programs and services;

5.6 Ultimately bear the burden of making significant and often difficult choices.

6. ADMINISTRATION RESPONSIBILITIES

In regards to this Policy, the CAO and Staff shall:

- 6.1 Identify issues and decisions that may need or could benefit from Public Participation, including the appropriate level of involvement to implement various Public Participation Tools (see Appendix A);
- 6.2 Develop Public Participation Plans for Council approval, taking into consideration the timing, resources, and engagement of the proposed Public Participation Tool;
- 6.3 Execute the approved Public Participation Plan in a timely fashion;
- 6.4 Report the results and inputs of Municipal Stakeholders from the implemented Public Participation to Council, including recommendations of how to proceed using the obtained information.
- 6.5 Evaluate the effectiveness of the Public Participation Plan and the applied Public Participation Tools for continuous progress and improvement.

7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION APPLICATION

- 7.1 The CAO may develop and implement a Public Participation Plan in the following circumstances:
 - a) when designing, reviewing, changing, or removing a new policy, program, or service;
 - b) when establishing annual and multi-year operating and capital budgets;
 - c) when fulfilling a legislated or regulated requirement; or
 - d) when responding to a community-initiated request.
- 7.2 At the discretion of the Town, items not specifically listed above may be subject to the requirement for Public Participation.

8. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLANS

- 8.1 When so directed by this Policy or Council, the CAO and/or their Staff shall develop a Public Participation Plan for approval by Council which shall consider the following:
 - a) the nature of the matter for which Public Participation is being sought;
 - b) the impact of the matter on Municipal Stakeholders;
 - c) the demographics of potential Municipal Stakeholders in respect of which Public Participation Tools to utilize, level of engagement and time for input;
 - d) the timing of the decision and time required to gather input;
 - e) what information is required, if any, to participate; and
 - f) available resources and reasonable costs.
- 8.2 Public Participation Plans will, at a minimum, include the following:
 - a) a communication plan to inform Municipal Stakeholders about the Public Participation Plan and opportunities to provide input;
 - b) identification of which Public Participation Tools will be utilized;
 - c) timelines for participation;
 - d) information about how input will be used;
 - e) the location of information required, if any, to inform the specific Public Participation.

9. POLICY EXPECTATIONS

9.1 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.

9.2 All Public Participation will be undertaken in accordance with all existing municipal policies.

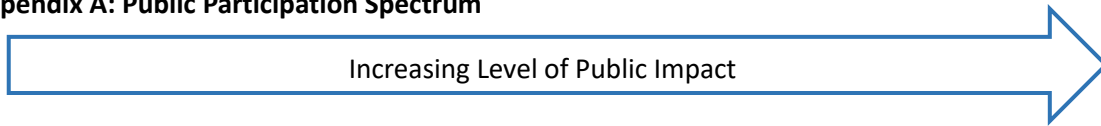
9.3 Deciding upon how to approach a possible Public Participation effort shall be informed by the Public Participation Spectrum (see Appendix A), which provides guidance on the different levels of Public Participation.

9.4 This Policy will be reviewed at least once every four (4) years.

9.5 Nothing in this Policy shall be interpreted as preventing the Town from using other forms of Public Participation or communication.

9.6 This Policy shall be available for public inspection and may be posted to the Town website.

Appendix A: Public Participation Spectrum



Type of Participation				
Level 1: Inform	Level 2: Consult	Level 3: Involve	Level 4: Collaborate	Level 5: Empower
Participation Goal				
To provide Municipal Stakeholders and the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the issue, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain Municipal Stakeholders feedback on analysis, alternatives and or/ decisions.	To work directly with Municipal Stakeholders and the public throughout the process to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the Municipal Stakeholders in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the Municipal Stakeholders.
Promise to Stakeholders				
We will keep you informed by providing background information and context at all levels of engagement to assist your understanding of discussions and initiatives.	We will keep you informed, listen and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how your input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how your input influenced the decision.	We will work together, seek your advice and innovation in formulating solutions and we will incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Participation Tools				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact sheets • Information booths • Open houses • Newsletters • Websites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council meeting delegations • Feedback forms • Focus groups • Public comment • Public hearings • Public meetings • Surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberate polling • Workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen advisory committees • Consensus building • Participatory decision-making • Steering committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen juries • Elections • Delegated decisions • Plebiscites

	DATE	RESOLUTION NUMBER
Approved	July 17, 2018	3428/18
Approved	July 22, 2024	378-2024

Original Signed
Amy Cherniwchan
Mayor

Original Signed
Dawn Phillips
Chief Administrative Officer