



DRUMHELLER

C O U N C I L P O L I C Y



Council Policy # C03-18

Public Participation Policy

I. POLICY PURPOSE:

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.

This Public Participation Policy is in addition to and does not modify or replace the statutory public hearing requirements in the *Municipal Government Act*.

II. BACKGROUND

Council recognizes that good governance includes engaging Municipal Stakeholders in Public Participation by:

- 1) Creating opportunities for Municipal Stakeholders who are affected by a decision to influence the decision;
- 2) Promoting sustainable decisions by recognizing various Municipal Stakeholder interests;
- 3) Providing Municipal Stakeholders with the appropriate information and tools to engage in meaningful participation; and
- 4) Recognizing that although Councillors are elected to consider and promote the welfare and interest of the Town of Drumheller as a whole and are generally required to vote on matters brought before Council, facilitating Public Participation for matters beyond those where public input is statutorily required can enrich the decision making process.

III. DEFINITIONS:

CAO means the Chief Administrative Officer of the Town of Drumheller or their delegate.

Municipal Stakeholders means the residents of the Town of Drumheller, as well as other individuals, organizations or persons that may have an interest in, or are affected by, a decision made by the Town of Drumheller.

Municipality means the Town of Drumheller.

Public Participation includes a variety of non-statutory opportunities where Municipal Stakeholders receive information and / or provide input to the Municipality.

Public Participation Plan means a plan which identifies which Public Participation Tools to be used to obtain public input in a particular circumstance.

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

- (a) Digital participation which may include online workbooks, chat groups, webinars, message boards / discussion forums, and online pools or surveys;
- (b) Written participation which may include submissions, email, and mail-in surveys, pools and workbooks; and
- (c) In-person participation which may include at-the-counter interactions, door-knocking, interviews, meetings, round-tables, town halls, open houses and workshops;
- (d) Representative participation which may include being appointed to an advisory committee, ad hoc committee or citizen board.

IV. APPLICATION

The application of this public participation policy must be balanced with the understanding that Council is elected to make decision that set the direction for the municipality. While taking into account all of the information available to them, including the input of the public, Council must ultimately bear the burden of making significant and often difficult choices. Furthermore, to allow for timely and efficient governance, public participation must be proportional to the scope of the decision made.

V. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1) Council Responsibilities

- (a) Council is responsible for:
 - (i) Being familiar with the Town of Drumheller Public Participation Plans and promoting its proper use, including clarity of roles between staff, Council and residents;
 - (ii) Reviewing and approving Public Participation Plans developed by the CAO in accordance with this policy or as directed by Council;
 - (iii) Ensuring that sufficient staff and financial resources are dedicated to solicit public participation in accordance with this policy;
 - (iv) Promoting awareness of and participation in public participation activities;
 - (v) Considering input obtained through public participation; and
 - (vi) Review this Policy to ensure the Policy complies with all relevant legislation, municipal policies and the spirit and intent of Public Participation.

2) Administration Responsibilities

(a) CAO is responsible for:

- (i) Ensuring that this policy is used by all staff when they develop and implement projects that require public participation and having public participation project plans reviewed by Council when necessary;
- (ii) Ensuring that there is an effective internal approval and coordination process for public participation initiatives by and through various departments, such that the Town of Drumheller capacity for such initiatives is not exceeded and so activities and events do not overlap or cause confusion;
- (iii) Ensuring that staff and financial resources are available to support the planning and execution of projects and processes that are approved under this policy;
- (iv) Implement approved public participation plans;
- (v) Report on the activities, the findings, and the quality of and effectiveness of public participation efforts to Council; and
- (vi) Evaluate the effectiveness of the Town of Drumheller in using this policy and keeping the roles of staff, Council and public clear and distinct.

(b) Communications Officer is responsible for:

- (i) Maintaining the Town of Drumheller communication channels with up-to-date information and opportunities for public participation, in conjunction with each department and their directors;
- (ii) Use the internal process to coordinate public participation activities to prevent overlap and confusion, in conjunction with department directors/staff;
- (iii) Maintaining the Public Participation Plan of participation activities/formats;
- (iv) Supporting departments undertaking public participation with social media, media, advertising and other promotion efforts; and
- (v) Helping departments develop and resource their public participation projects and activities.

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES

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

- (i) When new programs or services are being established;
- (ii) When existing programs and services are being reviewed;
- (iii) When identifying Council priorities;
- (iv) When gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to budget;
- (v) When gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to the Town of Drumheller's strategic plans or business plans;

- (vi) When gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to the Town of Drumheller's capital plan and / or financial plan; or
- (vii) As otherwise directed by Council.

VII. 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 may be posted to the Town of Drumheller'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.
- (e) The results of Public Participation will be made available to Council and Municipal Stakeholders in a timely manner in accordance with municipal policies.

VIII. 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) Available resources and reasonable costs.

(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.

IX. REPORTING AND EVALUATION

- (a) Information obtained in Public Participation will be reviewed by 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.

Date: July 10, 2018



Chief Administrative Officer



Mayor