

Subject:	Public Consultation and Communication Policy	Policy No.:	A-04-17	
Department:	Administration			
Approval Date:		Review Date:		
Associated Policies:	Accountability and Transparency Policy Development Notices to the Public Policy			

Public Consultation and Communication Policy

Purpose

The Modernized *Municipal Government Act*, RSA 2016, mandates that each municipality adopt a “Public Participation Policy”. The Town of Drayton Valley (hereinafter referred to as the “Town”), having reviewed good practices and reflecting on past experiences, is of the belief that public participation cannot be regulated, but that the Town, through its Administration and Council can help to establish an environment that facilitates “Public Consultation and Communication” practices to be implemented.

In creating this Policy, the Town recognizes the fundamental rights of the public to influence the decisions that affect them and to participate in the development of their community. Except for issues dictated by law or regulation, it is appropriate for the Town to assess opportunities for public consultation and communication. In addition, this Policy allows for the usage of a public consultation process which best meets the needs of the parties involved.

General Policy

1. This Policy targets Town Council and its various Committees and Boards and also includes all municipal departments, facilities, and authorities..
2. The general objective of this Policy is to foster the opportunity for community members to participate actively in the development and management of municipal affairs, being mindful of the best interests of the community as a whole.

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3. The objective is to be attained through the implementation of specific practices relative to the three pillars of participatory democracy, namely:
 - a. information;
 - b. consultation; and
 - c. partnership.

Definitions

4. Within this Policy the following definitions shall apply:
 - a. *consultation* means a two-way communication process between community members and Town representatives;
 - b. *information* means a one-way communication process in which the Town produces material and delivers it to the public at large;
 - c. *partnership* means collaboration between the public and the Town. This form of cooperation is based upon the active engagement of community members in the development of policies, programs and projects; and
 - d. *public information products* include Frequently Asked Questions Sheets, Public Notices, Legal Notices, or other such notifications which are prepared by the Town in order to provide information or to seek input from the community at large.

Responsibilities

5. **Communication Through Sharing of Information (Stage 1)**

- 5.1 Distribution of information is the minimum requirement for public engagement. For their participation to be useful, community members must understand what the issues are, as well as the responsibilities and activities of Council and Administration.
- 5.2 Guiding Principle
Distribution of information in itself allows the public to consume and, perhaps, comment on specific details of the policy, project or program.

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Any process employed may be used as a feedback opportunity rather than to directly influence substance and general direction.

5.3 Good Practices

Produce and distribute information which is complete, objective, pertinent, easily understood and accessible on the policy, project or program in question. Information should also aim to make the actions and mandates of the Town better understandable for the community at large.

6. **Communication Through Consultation (Stage 2)**

6.1 Consultation (comprised of Stages 1 and 2) provides information to community members and allows those community members to ask questions and express expectations, concerns, comments or opinions, with a view to assisting the Town to reach the best decision. This approach centres on a predefined topic and seeks to test or prioritize options that have already been contemplated, at least in preliminary form.

6.2 Most often, consultation takes place in the beginning or mid-stages of the deliberation process to test assumptions and directions, and is carried out according to a predetermined schedule and operates within a clear and recognized set of rules that:

- a. it is an open-ended process in which the specific outcomes are unknown at the beginning; and
- b. it is facilitated by an individual appointed by the Town, whose role it is to encourage serious, substantive, deliberative, in-depth participation by community members and decision-makers that is respectful and equitable, and to ensure discussion is focused, and sufficient time is given to the most important issues.

6.3 Guiding Principles

- a. Consultation, under set rules and ethical requirements, makes use of the procedures that are best suited to the policy, project or program and the issues under consideration, while enabling diversity in the opinions expressed.
- b. May inform the community with a summary of the results of a public consultation, along with the resulting decisions and their reasoning.

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6.4 Good Practices

The following Good Practices represent methods that may include but are not limited to application for communication and/or consultation efforts:

- a. Consultations on important subjects (for which a statute or regulation has not already established the notification practice) require that a clearly worded public notice be publicized in advance, so that the public may be informed and granted a reasonable period of time in which to peruse the relevant documentation.
- b. Make the relevant documentation available either in print or electronic form or both, no later than the day the notice appears.
- c. Hold public consultations which present the policy, project or program, then welcome questions and encourage the expression of opinions.
- d. A sufficient interval between the presentation of the policy, project or program is recommended in order to enable community members to prepare responses, particularly when these must be in the form of written submissions.
- e. Produce and publicize documentation that summarizes the opinions and concerns expressed, and provides analysis along with any applicable conclusions, advice or recommendations and any subsequent decisions, and the reasons for them.

7. **Communication Through Partnership (Stage 3)**

- 7.1 Partnership (comprised of Stages 1, 2 and 3) is when an issue or initiative is shared with the public as an assembled group in order to gather ideas and actively negotiate solutions, and then rendering a recommendation that reflects the group's influence.

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7.2 Guiding Principle

Build concrete and lasting partnerships with the members of civil society, the purposes of which are to exchange information, identify the community needs, design the projects, programs or policies, and evaluate the results.

7.3 Good Practices

The following Good Practices represent methods that may include but are not limited to application for communication and/or consultation efforts:

- a. To the greatest extent possible and in a manner acceptable to all involved, seek out public consultation in finding and implementing solutions.
 - b. As needed, establish a follow-up committee that includes members of the public.
 - c. Involve community members, groups, organizations and institutions in the process of developing projects, programs or policies.
8. The Legislative Services Coordinator shall be consulted when designing public information documents, surveys and questionnaires to ensure FOIP compliance, records management structures and any contract considerations.
 9. The Communications and Marketing Coordinator shall review the public information documents, surveys and questionnaires for clear language and consistent corporate messaging, as well as help to identify any inconsistencies or overlap with existing initiatives.

Procedure

10. In recognition that electronic communication is commonly the preferred method for transmitting and receiving information, all public information products that are produced or overseen by the Town may be required to be placed on the Town's website.
11. This Policy shall be reviewed every three (3) years, subject to a public evaluation process.

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12. This Policy recognizes that the Town’s Planning and Development Department, with the approval of Council, has set parameters for the provision of public notice, which shall prevail in the event of any conflicting portions of this Policy.

Mayor

Approval Date