Public Participation

Policy No.: C-10	**Council Resolution No.:** 307/2018
Department: Administration	**Authority:** Council
Effective Date: June 25, 2018	**Revision Date:**
Review Date: June 25, 2022	**Repealed Date:**
Supersedes: N/A	
Related Procedure No.: N/A	
Related Procedure Name: N/A	

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish the foundation for the Town's principles, responsibilities, expectations, and procedures for conducting public participation.

The policy has been developed in accordance with Section 216.1 of the *Municipal Government Act* and does not modify or replace the statutory public hearing requirements.

General Policy Principles

The Public and stakeholders of the Town of Taber:
1) Have the right to be informed, consulted, and participate in decisions that affect them.
2) Are encouraged to meaningfully engage so their voices strengthen decisions and their involvement helps build a stronger community.
3) Are encouraged to increase their understanding and knowledge about local issues as well as their role in the Town of Taber's decision-making process so they can participate meaningfully.

The Town of Taber:
1) Will provide public participation opportunities that are open and transparent.
2) Will give serious consideration to the public's input gathered in public participation processes.
3) Is committed to working together with the public to continuously improve its public participation processes.
4) Supports Town staff to build their skills and knowledge to engage with the public in a meaningful way.

5) Believes that involving the public and stakeholders in public participation leads to better, more informed decisions.

1) Definitions

1) **"CAO"** 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 Taber.

4) **"Public"** means anyone (including groups and individuals) who may have an interest in a specific topic or issue under discussion. The public may, or may not, be directly impacted by a decision on the issue.

5) **"Public Participation"** means a formal, defined, interactive process between the Town, the public and stakeholders, designed to increase mutual understanding, gather information, exchange ideas, and/or solve problems with the goal of making better, more informed decisions.

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

7) **"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.

8) **"Stakeholder"** means an individual or group who has a specific interest or is impacted by a topic or issue. Stakeholders may include residents, non-residents, groups, organizations, individuals, representatives and/or Town staff, depending on the issue.

Policy Responsibilities

1) Council Responsibilities

Council shall:

    a. review and approve Public Participation Plans developed by the CAO or delegate in accordance with this Policy or as directed by Council;

    b. consider input obtained through Public Participation; and

    c. 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

CAO or designate shall:

    a. In accordance with this Policy or as directed by Council, develop Public Participation Plans, for Council approval;

    b. Implement approved Public Participation Plans;

    c. Report the findings of the Public Participation to Council;

Policy Expectations

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.

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

3) This Policy shall be available for public inspection and may be posted to the Municipality's website.

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

Public Participation Plans

1) Public Participation Plans are the tools to ensure appropriate and effective public participation in the Town of Taber and shall be developed and implemented in the following circumstances:

    a. when identifying Council priorities through strategic planning;

    b. when gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to the Municipality's master plans or strategic plans;

    c. when gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to budget including Municipality's capital plan, operating plan and/or other financial plans;

d. when spending of operating or capital reserves for a project not approved within an operating or capital budget or previous year budget over $250,000.00; or

e. as otherwise deemed necessary for projects where it is believed that:
    i.   many people are impacted by decision;
    ii. public input will increase the quality of the decision;
    iii. there are competing and/or conflicting values;
    iv. there are many ways to solve a problem.

2) Public Participation Plans should not be developed in the following circumstances:

a. Emergency or extraordinary situations;

b. Low impact decisions;

c. Where input cannot change or influence the decision making process; or

d. When there are insufficient resources.

3) The AUMA/AAMDC Citizen Engagement Toolkit shall be used as a guideline for the preparation of all Public Participation Plans.

4) Public Participation Plans should include the following, however, administration has the authority to amend the base document to meet the specific requirements of the project:

a. Overview

    i.   Background, context, and history;

    ii. Alignment with other plans, documents, and/or strategies

b. Focus

    i.   Issue Statement;

    ii. Participation Goals;

    iii. Expected Outcomes

c. Roles and Responsibilities

    i.   List of public and stakeholders and their anticipated interests/issues

    ii. Project team and key staff involved

d. Participation Details

    i.   Phase of Project and Timeline;

    ii. Level of Engagement from IAP2 Spectrum (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower);

      iii. Engagement Objectives;

      iv. Communication Objectives incl. key messaging;

      v. Public Participation Tools;

      vi. Logistical requirements

      vii. Resources and costs.

e. Evaluation Plan

      i. How will information be used;

      ii. How an assessment of the effectiveness of the public participation plan will be evaluated;

      iii. How information will be reviewed and reported to Council

f. Review and Report to Council

      i. When and how

Additional References
- *Municipal Government Act*
- AUMA/AAMDC Citizen Engagement Toolkit
- Public Participation Plan Template (Appendix A)

_____
MAYOR

_____
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

_____
July 11, 2018
DATE

_____
July 11/2018
DATE
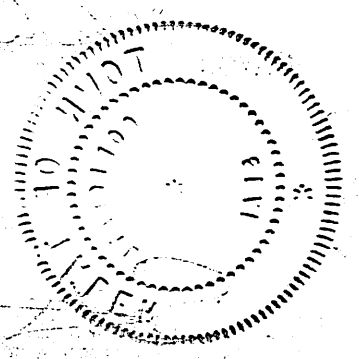
Public Participation Plan for

____ Project

[Date]

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3.1 Phase of Project and Timeline

3.2 Identifying Stakeholders

Position	Yes / No	Interest	Values

Table 3.2.1 Project Stakeholders (assessment)

3.3 Internal Expectations

Assessment Questions	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
What is the legally required level of public participation?					
To what extent do internal staff members believe the public could help improve the outcome of the project?					
At what level do internal staff members perceive public interest in this project?					
What is the potential for the public to influence the decision – making process?					
What level of media interest do you anticipate?					
What is the likelihood that decision-makers will fully consider public input?					
What resources are likely to be able to support public participation?					
What is the anticipated level of political controversy?					
Scoring Total for each check in the column?					
Multiply the total of checks in each column by the weighting in each column	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5
Enter the result for each column					
Add the column scores together and enter in the next column					
Divide the total score by the number of questions (8)					
Enter the Result in this column. This is the average score.					

Table 3.3.1 Internal Expectations Chart (assessment)

Scale:

1 – 2 indicates very low to low; spectrum recommendation: at least inform
2 – 3 indicates low to moderate; spectrum recommendation: at least consult
3 – 4 indicates moderate to high; spectrum recommendation: probably involve
4 – 5 indicates high to very high; spectrum recommendation: minimum involve, consider opportunities for collaborate or empower

3.4   External Expectations

Assessment Questions	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
What is the probable level of difficulty in addressing the problem / opportunity? (what is the complexity?)					
What is the potential for public outrage related to the project?					
How important are the potential impacts to the public?					
How much do stakeholders care about the problem/ opportunity to be addressed and the decision to be made?					
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3.5   Summarize Assessment

Expectations of the Key Participants	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
What level of public participation was discussed prior to the project getting "green lit"?					
What level is appropriate based on **external** expectations?					
What level is appropriate based on **internal** expectations?					
What level would you recommend as a public participation specialist?					

Table 3.5.1 Summarize Assessment (Assessment)

3.6   Public Participation Techniques

3.7   Communication Objectives and Key Messaging to be Used

4.0   Establish Decision Criteria

4.1   *Phase of Project and Timeline*

4.2   *Identify Stakeholders*

Position	Yes / No	Interest	Values

Table 4.2.1 Project Stakeholders (Establish Decision Criteria)

4.3   *Internal Expectations*

Assessment Questions	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
What is the legally required level of public participation?					
To what extent do internal staff members believe the public could help improve the outcome of the project?					
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4.4   *External Expectations*

Assessment Questions	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
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Table 4.5.1 Summarize Assessment (Establish Decision Criteria)

4.6   Public Participation Techniques

4.7   Communication Objectives and Key Messages to be Used

5.0   Develop Alternatives

5.1   Phase of Project and Timeline

5.2   Identify Stakeholders

Position	Yes / No	Interest	Values

Table 5.2.1 Project Stakeholders (Develop Alternatives)

5.3   Internal Expectations

Assessment Questions	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
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Expectations of the Key Participants	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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Table 5.5.1 Summarize Assessment (Develop Alternatives)

5.6 Public Participation Techniques

5.7 Communication Objectives and Key Messaging to be Used

6.0   Evaluate Alternatives

6.1   *Phase of Project and Timeline*

6.2   *Identify Stakeholders*

Position	Yes / No	Interest	Values

Table 6.2.1 Project Stakeholders (E Alternatives)

6.3   *Internal Expectations*

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6.7   Communication Objectives and Key Messaging to be used

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