

TOWN OF RAINBOW LAKE

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY

POLICY NO. 2018-P01

I. 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 requirements for public hearing and notification in the Municipal Government Act.

II. DEFINITIONS

In this policy,

- a) “Act” means the Municipal Government Act, RSA 2000, as amended.
- b) “Council” means the duly elected municipal Council of the Town of Rainbow Lake.
- c) “Municipal Stakeholders” means residents of the Town of Rainbow Lake, as well as individuals, organizations or persons that have an interest in, or are affected by, a decision of the Town.
- d) “Public Participation or Public Engagement” includes a variety of both statutory and non-statutory opportunities where municipal stakeholders receive information and/or provide input to the municipal decision-making process.
- e) “Public Participation Forms” means public engagement activities that occur in different forms and levels.
- f) “Public Participation Plan” means a plan which identifies which public participation tools are to be used to obtain public input in a particular circumstance.
- g) “Public Participation Tools” means the tools that may be used, alone or in combination, to create opportunities for public participation in the municipal decision-making process.
- h) “Town” means the corporation of the Town of Rainbow Lake

III. POLICY STATEMENT

Council recognizes that public participation is a critical component of municipal administration and governance, and that creating and investing in opportunities for authentic public engagement is beneficial for:

- 1. Ensuring good, responsible, transparent and accountable governance;
- 2. Improving the quality and outcome of the municipal decision-making process;
- 3. Deepening trust, fostering understanding, and strengthening the bond between Town residents and their elected representatives; and
- 4. Promoting well-informed and active citizenry;

IV. GENERAL POLICY PRINCIPLES

The Town of Rainbow Lake’s approach to public participation, including engaging opportunities, plans, tools and activities, will be based on the following guiding principles:

1. Commitment – public engagement is an ongoing process that requires intentional commitment of time, effort and resources to achieve meaningful outcome.
2. Shared responsibility – public participation is a shared responsibility between Council, Administration and the community.
3. Timely, transparent and accountable – vital information, including opportunities for public engagement, are communicated early enough to allow for thoughtful and increased participation by all stakeholders to the extent possible, and that engagement activities are conducted in a spirit of openness, with timely provision of feedback to participants on how public input was considered by decision-makers.
4. Inclusive and responsive – public engagement process and outcomes are inclusive and responsive, taking into account the diversity of stakeholders within the Town having different viewpoints, needs, interests and capacity to participate in the decision-making process.
5. Evaluation and continual improvement – public engagement is a dynamic process that needs continuous evaluation and refinements, based on changing composition of stakeholders, technological shifts, public feedback, and new government legislation.

V. POLICY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Council – Council shall:
 - 1.1. Provide leadership and overall strategic direction in respect of public engagement plans and activities in the Town of Rainbow Lake;
 - 1.2. Promote public engagement initiatives throughout the Town on an ongoing basis including, where necessary, providing Council representation as a means of demonstrating its commitment to public participation;
 - 1.3. Provide opportunities for public engagement, both legislated and non-legislated, to municipal stakeholders;
 - 1.4. Commit effort, time and resources, including embarking on capacity-building and training programs for councillors and appropriate staff, to ensure quality and meaningful stakeholder participation in the municipal decision-making process;
 - 1.5. Where necessary, direct Administration to prepare a participation plan in respect of a specific issue or item, and present the same to Council for review and approval;
 - 1.6. Establish consistent practices, procedures and timelines for statutory and non-statutory requirements for public participation, in accordance with the MGA and or the Town’s Procedural Bylaw;
 - 1.7. Carefully and thoughtfully consider input obtained through public participation as part of the municipal decision-making process;
 - 1.8. Explain the rationale for decisions, including, where necessary, how public input was gathered and factored into decision-making;
 - 1.9. Ensure that public expectations for and from public engagement opportunities are balanced with the awareness of resource, staffing, fiscal or other constraints;
 - 1.10. Review this policy from time to time, to ensure compliance with the relevant government legislation, municipal policies and bylaws, and adherence to the spirit and intent of public participation.

2. Administration – Administration shall:

- 2.1. Work with Council to identify appropriate opportunities for public engagement in both statutory and non-statutory contexts;
- 2.2. Identify and advise Council with respect to:
 - a) the spectrum of public engagement opportunities available, including which forms of engagement may be suitable for a given issue or item, unless specifically dictated by the MGA or a bylaw of the Town;
 - b) the range of tools available for public participation, including which tools may be appropriate for different types of engagement, unless specifically dictated by the MGA or a bylaw of the Town;
 - c) the different types of stakeholders within the Town, and which forms of participation and tools may be appropriate for engaging them.
- 2.3. Provide timely and accessible information to municipal stakeholders regarding:
 - a) opportunities for public participation and how they can participate in those opportunities;
 - b) the summary result of public participation activities;
 - c) how the input from public engagement was used in Council decisions or administrative recommendations to Council.
- 2.4. Prepare and implement an approved public participation plan or strategy for a particular issue or item at the direction of Council;
- 2.5. Organize public engagement activities in accordance with this policy, or the MGA, or an approved public participation plan, or as directed by Council;
- 2.6. Report the findings of public participation activities to Council for consideration;
- 2.7. Provide feedback to Council on the effectiveness of a public participation plan, activities and tools used in a particular circumstance, and, where appropriate, make recommendations for improving same;
- 2.8. Develop the necessary procedures to implement this policy across the Town Office;
- 2.9. Assess this policy from time to time and, where appropriate, make recommendations to Council for improvement.

V. POLICY APPLICATION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

This policy applies to all of the Town’s decisions, policies, programs and services that have an impact on the public, and shall specifically be considered when:

- 1. Identifying Council priorities;
- 2. Designing or implementing a new policy, program, project or service;
- 3. Evaluating, changing or ending an existing policy, program, project or service;
- 4. Gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to annual budget;
- 5. Preparing, implementing or amending statutory plans such as the Municipal Development Plan (MDP), Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP), Area Structure Plan (ASP), Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) or the Land Use Bylaw;
- 6. Preparing, implementing or amending non-statutory plans (e.g. strategic plan; capital plan, etc);
- 7. Fulfilling a legislative requirement for public notification and participation; or
- 8. As otherwise directed by Council.

VI. POLICY APPLICATION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Council shall work with Administration to adopt appropriate forms and tools for public engagement suitable under different circumstances, taking into account:
 - 1.1 the nature of the issue, item or decision being dealt with;
 - 1.2 the type of stakeholder group(s) being targeted;
 - 1.3 staffing capacity and commitment;
 - 1.4 type of technology available;
 - 1.5 fiscal resources;
 - 1.6 logistical constraints; and
 - 1.7 any applicable legislative requirements, including timelines.
2. Council may, subject to VII (1), undertake or direct Staff to undertake one or a combination of different forms and levels of public participation on a specific subject, which may include but not limited to the following forms:
 - 2.1 informative participation – where stakeholders are provided with information to inform and educate them about Council decisions or issues that, due to their routine or urgent nature or because of some legislative dictate, offers limited scope for public input.
 - 2.2 Consultative participation – where inputs of stakeholders are collected to improve the quality and outcome of Council or administrative decisions.
 - 2.3 Direct/in-person participation – which involves in-person, face-to-face interaction between municipal stakeholders and Council representatives and/or staff.
 - 2.4 Indirect/representative participation – whereby municipal stakeholders convey their views, inputs or concerns to Council or staff through a representative.
 - 2.5 Digital participation – whereby interaction between Council/Staff members and stakeholders occurs via a technological medium, such as telephone, online surveys or a social media platform.
 - 2.6 Formal participation – where public participation occurs in formal, organized settings, such as Council sessions.
 - 2.7 Informal participation – where public participation occurs in informal contexts, such as community social events.
3. Council may, subject to VII (1), apply or direct Staff to apply one or a combination of public engagement tools to engage municipal stakeholders in the governance and decision-making process, which may include but not limited to the following:
 - 3.1 Informative tools, such as:
 - a) newspaper ads
 - b) mail outs
 - c) newsletters
 - d) council meeting minutes
 - e) notices posted on public bulletin boards provided for that purpose
 - f) media/press briefings and releases
 - f) Radio

- g) ads on “Community Channel”
 - h) publication on the Town website
 - i) publication on any of the Town’s social media sites (e.g. Facebook)
- 3.2 Consultation tools, such as:
 - a) paper-based surveys and polls
 - b) written submissions to Council or Administration in paper format
 - c) email requests and submissions
 - d) online surveys and polls
 - e) web-based submissions
 - f) social media interactions
- 3.3 Direct participation tools, such as:
 - a) in-person meetings with a Council member or staff
 - b) over-the-counter interaction with staff
 - c) attendance at Council meetings
 - d) council delegations to Council
 - e) public meetings
 - f) public hearings
 - g) public open houses
 - h) attendance at community social events (e.g. Winter Carnival)
 - i) focus groups
 - j) interviews
 - k) information booths
- 3.4 Indirect participation tools, such as individuals appointed to represent the public on:
 - a) committees or
 - b) boards

VII. POLICY EXPECTATIONS

- 1. Legislative and Policy Implications
 - 1.1 All public participation plans and activities shall be conducted in accordance with:
 - a) the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act;
 - b) the Municipal Government Act for statutory participation;
 - c) all existing municipal policies; and
 - d) any other applicable legislation.
 - 1.2 This policy shall be:
 - a) available for public inspection at the Town Office and posted to the Town of Rainbow Lake’s website;

- b) reviewed and, where appropriate, updated at least once every four years.

2. Public Participation Standards

2.1 The Town shall:

- a) Consistently provide information, including publishing all municipal policies, minutes of Council meetings and any other information that may be of public interest, to inform municipal stakeholders;
- b) Clearly communicate the purpose, goals, process and timeliness of any public participation activity;
- c) Ensure that all public participation activities are conducted in a professional and respectful manner;
- d) Expect that municipal stakeholders who participate in any manner of public participation are respectful and constructive;
- e) Ensure that municipal stakeholders who are found to be inappropriate, disrespectful or offensive, as determined by Administration, are sanctioned, including possible exclusion from public participation opportunities.

ADOPTED THIS 16th DAY OF July, 2018.

Carichelle Jarvis
Mayor

T. Torg Johnson
Chief Administrative Officer