

Policy

Title: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION		Number: 0165
Reference: Administrative Committee - June 6, 2018	Adopted by City Council: July 3, 2018	
	City Clerk	Chief Administrative Officer
Supersedes: N/A		
Prepared by: Corporate Communications, Chief Administrative Office		

STATEMENT

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS PROVIDES DECISION MAKERS WITH INFORMATION THAT ASSISTS THEM IN MAKING DECISIONS THAT ARE WELL INFORMED AND WELL UNDERSTOOD. THE CITY OF MEDICINE HAT RECOGNIZES THE VALUE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND IS COMMITTED TO CREATING APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PUBLIC TO BE INVOLVED.

PRINCIPLES

City Council is elected to make decisions that set the direction for the municipality. Recognizing the value of public participation in the decision making process, where appropriate, the City will work to create appropriate public participation opportunities that are:

1. **Genuine and authentic:** The City will engage the public at the appropriate stages of the decision making process and give meaningful consideration to public input and feedback along with all other data and information available to inform decision making.
2. **Relevant:** The City will create public participation opportunities in areas where value tensions and trade-offs exist, when the impact of the decision is significant, and when public participation can lead to improved decision making.
3. **Inclusive and accessible:** The City will work to make public participation opportunities available to those directly and indirectly affected by the decision to be made, taking into account the diverse needs, abilities and viewpoints of the public. A variety of tools and tactics tailored to meet public needs will be used. The information needed to participate and provide informed views and perspectives will be readily available, accurate, fact-based and presented in plain language.
4. **Efficient and effective:** The City will follow a consistent approach to public participation and work to best manage the needs of the organization and the public while allowing for creative delivery of public participation. Activities will be proportional to the scope of the decision to be made.

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5. **Transparent:** The City will clearly communicate public participation opportunities, including identifying the decision to be made, the process to be undertaken and the roles and responsibilities of those involved. The City will share the outcome of decision making process.
6. **Shared responsibility:** The City is responsible for creating public participation opportunities and providing information that will allow for informed participation. Individuals are responsible for becoming informed and participating in the opportunities created. Everyone involved is expected to participate in a respectful and constructive manner.

ROLE OF COUNCIL

1. To receive, review and adopt this policy and any recommended amendments thereto.

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1. DEFINITIONS

- 1.01 City: the municipal corporation of the City of Medicine Hat.
- 1.02 Decision-Making Process: the process by which a decision is made, including identifying the problem/opportunity to be addressed and the decision to be made, gathering information and evaluating alternatives.
- 1.03 International Association for Public Participation (IAP2): an international association of members who seek to promote and improve the practice of public participation in relation to individuals, governments, institutions, and other entities that affect the public interest in nations throughout the world.
- 1.04 Public: any individual or group of individuals, organization or political entity with an interest in the outcome of a decision. They may be, or perceive that they may be, directly or indirectly affected by the outcome of the decision and include individuals who work for or with the decision-making organization.
- 1.05 Public Participation: any process that involves the public in problem solving or decision-making and uses public input to make sustainable decisions. This term is often used interchangeably with public engagement. For the purpose of this Policy, public participation is focused on decision making and does not include ongoing community/stakeholder relations, communication, customer service or governance of advisory boards and committees.
- 1.06 Public Participation Framework: a document describing how the City approaches and carries out public participation, including references to this Policy.
- 1.07 Public Participation Opportunity: opportunities for the public to receive information and/or provide input/feedback to the City including, but not limited to in-person, digital and written participation.
- 1.08 Public Participation Plan: the plan that identifies the public participation objectives, decision-making process to be followed, mechanisms/techniques to be employed, resources available and evaluation measures.
- 1.09 Stakeholder: any person who may be directly or indirectly impacted by the outcome of a decision.
- 1.10 Statutory requirement: anything that is required by federal, provincial or local statute, including but not limited to the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA), federal or provincial law or regulation, City bylaw or policy.

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2. RESPONSIBILITIES

2.01 City Council

- (a) Consider information obtained through public participation in the decision making process.
- (b) Promote and support public participation.
- (c) Review this Policy every four years to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, municipal policies and the spirit and intent of public participation.

2.02 Administrative Committee

- (a) Review the findings of public participation opportunities to City Council for decisions to be made by City Council.
- (b) Consider information obtained through public participation in making recommendations to City Council.
- (c) Approve the necessary procedures to implement this Policy.

2.03 CAO/Commissioner

- (a) Ensure resources are in place to support the Policy and its application.
- (b) Direct development of appropriate public participation opportunities.
- (c) Consider information obtained through public participation in making decisions.

2.04 General Managers

- (a) Create, implement and report on public participation opportunities and public participation plans that adhere to Policy principles and the public participation framework.
- (b) Consider information obtained through public participation in making decisions.
- (c) Maintain stakeholder lists for use in department specific initiatives.

2.05 Corporate Communications

- (a) Provide advice and support to departments in the creation of public participation opportunities that are based on Policy principles.
- (b) Create and maintain a public participation framework for the City.
- (c) Maintain a stakeholder list for use in broad corporate initiatives.
- (d) Monitor and evaluate the Policy and/or Procedures at least once every four years.

3. Procedures

3.01 Public Participation Opportunities

- (a) The City will develop and implement a Public Participation Plan in the following circumstances:
 - (1) As statutory requirements exist.
 - (2) As administration determines the creation of a Public Participation Opportunity will add value to the decision making process due to the nature, significance, scope and impact of the decision to be made.
 - (3) As otherwise directed by City Council.

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3.02 Public Participation Approach

- (a) The City's public participation framework will guide the development of public participation plans. The framework will incorporate the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation and the IAP2 Five Steps for Public Participation Planning.

(1) IAP2 Spectrum of Public Engagement

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public 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 public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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(2) IAP2 Five Steps for Public Participation Planning

STEP	ACTION	TASKS
1	Gain Internal Commitment	Activity 1: Identify the decision-maker(s) Activity 2: Profile sponsoring organization's approach to public participation Activity 3: Clarify the scope of the decision Activity 4: Identify preliminary stakeholders and issues Activity 5: Assess sponsor's expectations of the IAP2 Spectrum level
2	Learn from the Public	Activity 1: Understand how people perceive the decision Activity 2: Develop a comprehensive list of stakeholders Activity 3: Correlate stakeholders and issues Activity 4: Review/refine the scope of the decision
3	Select the Level of Participation	Activity 1: Assess internal and external expectations Activity 2: Select level on the IAP2 Spectrum Activity 3: Assess "readiness" of sponsoring organization
4	Define the Decision Process and Identify Public Participation Objectives	Activity 1: Understand the existing decision process Activity 2: Set public participation objectives for each step in the process Activity 3: Compare decision process with public participation and communication objectives Activity 4: Check to confirm objectives meet needs
5	Design the Public Participation Plan	Activity 1: Determine plan format Activity 2: Integrate baseline data into plan format Activity 3: Identify the public participation techniques Activity 4: Identify support elements for implementation, including communications planning Activity 5: Plan for evaluation

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3.03 Legislative and Policy Implications

- All public participation will be undertaken in accordance with the MGA, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and any other applicable legislation.
- This Policy shall be available for public inspection and may be posted to the City's website.
- This Policy will be reviewed at least once every four years.