



TOWN OF THREE HILLS

POLICY #370 – A3

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY

Adopted by Council on: August 14, 2023
Resolution No.: 166-2023

1. PURPOSE

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

2. AUTHORITY

- 2.1. The authority for this Policy is by resolution of the Council of the Town of Three Hills.
- 2.2. The CAO is accountable and responsible for the development, evaluation and implementation of this Policy.
- 2.3. The CAO reserves the right to exercise appropriate managerial judgement to take such actions as may be necessary to achieve the intent of this Policy.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1. Whenever the singular masculine gender is used in this Policy, the same shall include the feminine and neutral gender whenever context requires.
- 3.2. In this Policy, unless the context otherwise requires:
 - 3.2.1. “Municipal Stakeholders” shall mean the residents of the Town, as well as other individuals, organizations or persons that may have an interest in, or are affected by, a decision made by the Town.
 - 3.2.2. “Public Participation” shall include a variety of non-statutory opportunities where Municipal Stakeholders receive information and/or provide input to the Town.
 - 3.2.3. “Public Participation Plan” shall mean a plan which identifies which Public Participation tools are to be used to obtain public input in a particular circumstance.

4. GENERAL POLICY PRINCIPLES

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

- 4.1.1. Creating opportunities for Municipal Stakeholders who are affected by a decision to influence the decision.
- 4.1.2. Promoting sustainable decisions by recognizing various Municipal Stakeholder interests.
- 4.1.3. Providing Municipal Stakeholders with the appropriate information and tools to engage in meaningful participation.
- 4.1.4. Recognizing that although Councillors are elected to consider and promote the welfare and interest of the Town 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.
- 4.1.5. To allow for timely and efficient governance, Public Participation must be proportional to the scope of the decision to be made. The following factors will therefore be used:
 - i. Council priorities, availability, and allocation of resources;
 - ii. Time-sensitivity in terms of when a decision must be made;
 - iii. The need or desire for public support or their ability to effectively influence any decisions or outcome, particularly where confidentiality is required;
 - iv. Background, history, conflicts of interest, previous levels of consultation etc.;
 - v. Scope of the impact in terms of geographic area or the number of residents affected.

5. POLICY RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1. Council Responsibilities

5.1.1. Council shall:

- i. Review and approve Public Participation Plans developed by the CAO in accordance with this Policy or as directed by Council;

- ii. Consider input obtained through Public Participation;
- iii. Review this Policy to ensure the Policy complies with all relevant legislation, municipal policies and the spirit and intent of Public Participation;
- iv. Ensure appropriate resources are available to solicit Public Participation in accordance with this Policy;
- v. Promote and support Public Participation;
- vi. Request and review information from the CAO on the scope, timing, appropriate methods, and resources required for Public Participation prior to directing the development of a Public Participation Plan.

5.2. Administration Responsibilities

5.2.1. The CAO shall:

- i. In accordance with this Policy or as directed by Council, develop Public Participation Plans, for Council approval;
- ii. Implement approved Public Participation Plans;
- iii. Report the findings of the Public Participation to Council;
- iv. Consider timing, resources and engagement when developing and modifying Public Participation Plans;
- v. Evaluate the effectiveness of the Public Participation Plan and the Public Participation Tools used in a particular circumstance;
- vi. Communicate to Council and the public, when appropriate, the effectiveness of a Public Participation Plan and the Public Participation tools used;
- vii. Develop the necessary procedures to implement this Policy;
- viii. Assess this Policy and make recommendations to Council about the Public Participation and resourcing.

6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES

- 6.1. The opportunities for Public Participation must be balanced with the understanding that Council is elected to make decisions that set the direction for the Town. While considering all the information available to them, including the input of the public, Council must make significant and often difficult choices. To allow for timely and efficient governance, Public Participation must be proportional to the scope of the decision to be made.

6.2. Public Participation is not required when:

- 6.2.1. The decision is dictated by legislation;
- 6.2.2. Council and Administration are working within their authority;
- 6.2.3. The decision is routine and part of operations;
- 6.2.4. The decision is confidential;
- 6.2.5. There is an urgent need to respond.

6.3. Public Participation is required when:

- 6.3.1. Dictated by legislation such as but not limited to:
 - i. Land Use Bylaw;
 - ii. Statutory Plans.

6.4. Public Participation may be used:

- 6.4.1. On a periodic basis to receive feedback on the adequacy of existing services;
- 6.4.2. When new programs or services which Council believes could have material or substantive impact on the budget, are being considered by Council;
- 6.4.3. As otherwise directed by Council.

7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TOOLS

7.1. Public Participation tools are the tools that may be used, alone or in combination, to create Public Participation opportunities including, but not limited to:

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

8. POLICY EXPECTATIONS

8.1. Legislative and Policy Implications

- 8.1.1. 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.

- 8.1.2. All Public Participation will be undertaken in accordance with all existing Town policies.
- 8.1.3. This Policy shall be available for public inspection and may be posted on the Town's website.
- 8.1.4. This Policy will be reviewed at least once every three years.

8.2. Public Participation Standards

- 8.2.1. Public Participation activities will be conducted in a professional and respectful manner.
- 8.2.2. Public Participation will be conducted in a sustainable and inclusive manner having regard to different levels of accessibility.
- 8.2.3. Public Participation Plans will consider early, ongoing, and diverse opportunities to provide input.
- 8.2.4. 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 Council and Administration, may be excluded from Public Participation opportunities.
- 8.2.5. The results of Public Participation will be made available to Council and Municipal Stakeholders in a timely manner in accordance with Town policies.

9. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLANS

- 9.1. 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:
 - 9.1.1. The nature of the matter for which Public Participation is being sought;
 - 9.1.2. The impact of the matter on Municipal Stakeholders;
 - 9.1.3. The demographics of potential Municipal Stakeholders in respect of which Public Participation tools to utilize, level of engagement and time for input;
 - 9.1.4. The timing of the decision and time required to gather input;
 - 9.1.5. What information is required, if any, to participate;
 - 9.1.6. Available resources and reasonable costs.

9.2. Public Participation Plans will, at minimum, include the following:

- 9.2.1. A communication plan and information to inform the public about the Public Participation plan and opportunities to provide input;
- 9.2.2. Identification of which Public Participation tools will be utilized;
- 9.2.3. Timelines for participation;
- 9.2.4. Information about how input will be used to benefit the community as a whole.

10. **REPORTING AND EVALUATION**

10.1. Information obtained in Public Participation will be reviewed by the CAO and a report shall be provided to Council.

10.2. The report shall include, at minimum, the following:

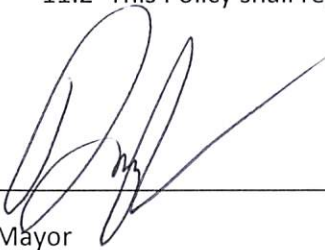
- 10.2.1. An overview of the Public Participation Plan and how it was developed;
- 10.2.2. An assessment of the effectiveness of the plan based on the level of engagement and the quality of input;
- 10.2.3. A summary of the input obtained;
- 10.2.4. May include recommendations for future Public Participation Plans.

10.3. Reports shall be provided to Council for review.

11. **PRIOR POLICY**

11.1 This Policy shall supersede and replace all prior policies, oral or written, regarding Public Participation.

11.2 This Policy shall repeal Policy 370-A2 – Public Participation Policy.



Mayor



Chief Administrative Officer

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