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| POLICY NAME: | PUBLIC PARTICIPATION |
| Effective Date: | April 9, 2025 |
| Policies Rescinded: | 1018 |
| Document Owner: | Corporate Services |
| Required Review Date: | March 31, 2029 |
| References: | <i>Municipal Government Act s. 216.1(1)</i> |

PURPOSE

To provide Woodlands Council and Administration with a framework to assist in determining the scope and approach of public engagement necessary for any project or issue to gain the necessary feedback, insight and involvement from intended participants. This policy has been developed in accordance with Section 216.1(1) of the Municipal Government Act.

POLICY STATEMENT

Woodlands County supports public engagement to identify, understand and develop strategies that reflect the needs and concerns of residents and stakeholders. The County values public engagement for the information that it provides decision-makers to make well-informed decisions about municipal policies, programs, services, and initiatives.

DEFINITIONS

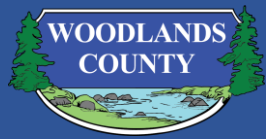
“**CAO**” means the chief administrative officer of the County or their delegate.

“**Municipal Stakeholders**” means the residents of the County, as well as other individuals, organizations or persons that may have an interest in, or are affected by, a decision made by the County.

“**County**” means Woodlands County.

“**Public Participation**” includes a variety of non-statutory opportunities where Municipal Stakeholders receive information and/or provide input to the County.

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



“Public Participation Tools” means the tools that may be used, alone or in combination, to create Public Participation opportunities including, but not limited to:

- in-person participation which may include at-the-counter interactions, door- knocking, census, targeted event engagement, interviews, meetings, round-tables, town halls, open houses and workshops;
- digital participation which may include online workbooks, chat groups, webinars, message boards/discussion forums, and online polls or surveys;
- written participation which may include written submissions, email, and mail- in surveys, polls and workbooks; and
- representative participation which may include being appointed to an advisory committee, ad hoc committee or citizen board.

ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Council shall:

- identify any opportunities for Public Participation as early as possible in the decision making process;
- considers public input obtained through Public Participation activities as part of their decision-making process;
- promotes Public Participation activities and
- provide, where appropriate, Council representation; and ensures resources are available for appropriate Public Participation Plans.

Chief Administrative Officer shall

- in accordance with this Policy or as directed by Council, develop Public Participation Plans, for Council approval;
- implement approved Public Participation Plans; and report the findings of the Public Participation to Council or respective Committees established under the Council Committee Bylaw.
- consider timing, resources and engagement when developing and modifying Public Participation Plans;
- evaluate the effectiveness of the Public Participation Plan and the Public Participation Tools used in a particular circumstance;

GUIDELINES

Enhancing Public Engagement

Council recognizes that good governance includes engaging Municipal Stakeholders in Public Participation at various times by:

- Creating opportunities for Municipal Stakeholders who are affected by a decision to influence the decision;
- Promoting sustainable decisions by recognizing various Municipal Stakeholder interests;
- Providing Municipal Stakeholders with the appropriate information and tools to engage in meaningful participation; and
- Recognizing that although Councillors are elected to consider and promote the welfare and interest of the County 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.



- Informing residents of Council decisions and administrative actions that may impact them and their businesses and or their property.

Public Participation Opportunities

CAO shall develop and implement a Public Participation Plan in the following circumstances:

- when new programs or services are being established;
- when identifying Council priorities;
- when gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to the County's strategic plans or business plans;
- as otherwise directed by Council.

CAO may develop and implement a Public Participation Plan in the following circumstances:

- when existing programs and services are being reviewed;
- when gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to budget;
- when gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to the County's capital plan and/or financial plan;

Dissemination of Decisions

Informing the Public of decisions made by Council and Administration increases transparency of municipal government and ensures ratepayers are made aware of mechanism impacting them and their livelihoods. To disseminate this information where deemed necessary the Municipality will use methods including but not limited to the following methods of communication:

- Weekly Newspaper Ad - Woodlands County will run a weekly ad; as required in the local newspapers with council information, upcoming events, tender information and planning and development updates.
- Council Highlights and Media Release – Administration will distribute information on council decisions, upcoming events and county initiatives to the media on an as-needed basis.
- Website - Woodlands County will maintain a website with up-to-date information on all public information, highlighting programs, services, important policies and Council decisions, meeting dates etc.
- Fact Sheets – on an as-needed basis, Woodlands County will mail out fact sheets directly to affected residents on specific topics
- Brochures – on a variety of topics, including planning regulations, community peace officers' initiatives and campgrounds, distributed on an ongoing basis at strategic locations.

Legislative and Policy Implications

Public Participation activities are undertaken in accordance with the Public Engagement Plan, the Municipal Government Act, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, County policies and bylaws, and any other applicable legislation.

Nothing in this policy affects any right or obligation that the County or any person has under any other provision of the Municipal Government Act, per section 216.1(4) of the Act.

No resolution or bylaw of Council may be challenged on the grounds it was made without complying with this policy, per section 216.1(5) of the Municipal Government Act.



Where appropriate and feasible, the County encourages its Boards and Committees to create meaningful opportunities for Public Participation.

This Policy will be posted publicly on the County website.

This Policy will be reviewed at least once ever four years.

ORIGINAL SIGNED

CAO Signature

END OF DOCUMENT