

Village of Rockyford
Policy Manual

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| Approved by Council | Date: Sept. 13, 2017 | Policy No. PM 038 Reference: Res |
| Policy Type: Admin | Title: Public Participation Policy | |
| Review date: | September 2020 | |

Policy Statement

The Public Participation Policy is based on the following core values for Public Participation:

1. The public will be informed about issues that affect them.
2. The public should have a say in decisions that affect their lives.
3. The public participation process will:
 - Include the promise/commitment that the public’s contribution can influence the decision;
 - Communicate the interests and consider the needs of participants;
 - Seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected;
 - Using appropriate feedback mechanisms, communicate to participants how their input affected the decision; and
 - Provide participants with the information necessary to participate in a meaningful way.

The six key principles of Public Participation form the framework on which the Public Participation Policy is founded:

Inclusive and Authentic

- To the greatest extent possible, the Village will involve all stakeholders, or a representative number of stakeholders, who are potentially affected by an issue in a transparent and equitable way, and to the greatest extent possible be responsive to issues of equity and accommodation that may potentially impact involvement including language, gender, culture race, disability and geography.
- Unequal access to information or inaccurate assumptions about the knowledge base of participants can negatively impact a Public Participation exercise – ensuring the participation of the broadest possible range of individuals who have an interest in or who may be affected by the decision is crucial. To the greatest extent possible, providing an opportunity for citizens who may be affected, and ensuring that the process is designed so that participants are able to participate effectively is required.

Sharing and Supportive

- Involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process where their input can impact the decision.
- Effective and appropriate public participation processes build public trust, increases involvement of the public on issues that affect them, and can result in enhanced decisions by the Corporation.
- Involvement and support of decision makers in the participation process, and the potential impact of the public on the decision should be clear and transparent at the outset of the process.
- Provide participants with the information they need to be involved in an informed way.

Accountable and Committed

- Setting clear objectives and expectations for a public participation initiative and actively listening to the input of citizens.
- Participation programs should be open and accessible and recognize the value of opinions and expertise offered by the public.
- Through implementation of the Public Participation Policy, adequate resources should be available to carry out the public participation process and staff should be trained appropriately to conduct the consultation initiative.
- Feedback mechanisms to participants should be timely and clear so they can see the results of their input. As well, feedback should be provided to decision makers for them to make informed and effective decisions.

Meaningful and Responsive

- Ensuring consultation is meaningful and valid, with clear objectives and expectations on the ability of the public to impact the decision, and conducted in a timely way and in a manner appropriate to the issue and level of public involvement.
- Public participation programs should be designed when the issue or need is identified and be conducted throughout the process for projects with multiple consultations.
- Citizens and community organizations require adequate time to consider, consult others and respond to consultation within timeframes which strike a reasonable balance between the Village's needs or circumstances to achieve the end result, and the need for participants to be involved in a meaningful way. Public participation is most effective where the issues and timeframes permit the early inclusion of the public in the process.
- Tools and techniques for public participation that respond to the identified needs of affected stakeholders should be used. These should be flexible and include alternate formats and various techniques such as face-to-face meetings, mail, Facebook, electronic surveys, public open houses, public hearings and/or any other method that will engage the public in meaningful dialogue.
- Depending on the identified issue, public participation processes can be most effective when applied to the entire policy, program or project cycle from issue or

need identification through to final decision and in some cases, implementation. This includes policy, specific project, program and service issues.

Continuously Improving

- Continuously evaluating and measuring the success of the Public Participation Policy and participation initiatives conducted by the Village will be required.
- For a multitude of reasons, effective and successful consultations do not always lead to agreement or consensus. A more realistic measure of success is whether or not the consultation identified and included those affected by the decision, and to what extent they participated. All consultations lead to a better understanding of the positions and opinions of those involved, but consultations should not be used to lobby or advocate participants to accept or adopt a predetermined point of view.
- An evaluation framework for each public participation program should be built into the individual participation strategy.

Facilitating and Building Capacity for a Collaborative Community

- Building and maintaining strong, positive and cooperative relationships between the Village and the community is necessary to increase the potential for engagement and result in improved decision-making.
- Capacity should be built among staff and in the community to implement and utilize the Public Participation Policy and principles for citizen engagement.
- Tools, training and public participation advice/direction will be provided to staff for policy implementation.

Public Participation Spectrum

Public Participation programs and initiatives conducted by the Village of Rockyford shall follow the Public Participation Spectrum in the three components that apply to municipal governments – those being Inform, Consult and Involve.

Source: IAP2, International Association for Public Participation

| INFORM | CONSULT | INVOLVE |
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| GOAL: To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions. | GOAL: To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions. | GOAL: To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered. |
| PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC: We will keep you informed. | PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC: We will keep you informed, listen and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. | PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC: We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. |

