



Town of Bowden
Box 338, 2101 20th Ave
Bowden, Alberta, T0M 0K0

Town of Bowden – Province of Alberta

Policy Document (1900 - 02)

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY

1 STATUTORY REQUIREMENT

a

The Town of Bowden has a statutory obligation to establish a policy regarding Public Participation

b

A council may amend its Public Participation Policy at any time.

c

The Minister may make regulations;

- in respect of the contents of public participation policies
- setting a date by which every municipality must have its first policy in place
(*Alberta Regulation 193/2017 applies*)

d

No Resolution or Bylaw passed by the Town of Bowden may be challenged on the ground that it was made without complying with a public participation policy established by a resolution of the council

This Public Participation Policy is in addition to and does not modify or replace the statutory public hearing requirements in the Municipal Government Act.

(Statutory Requirement as per sections 216.1 inclusive to 216.5 of the Municipal Government Act applies – revised October 26, 2017 and current as of January 1st 2018.

2 PURPOSE

This Public Participation Policy has been developed to recognize the value of public engagement and to create opportunities for people to be involved in the decision-making process.

The Town of Bowden recognizes that good governance includes engaging Municipal Stakeholders in public participation by;

a

Creating opportunities for Municipal Stakeholders who are affected by a decision to influence the decision

b

Promoting sustainable decisions by recognizing various Municipal Stakeholder interests

c

Providing Municipal Stakeholders with the appropriate information and tools to engage in meaningful participation

The Town of Bowden will provide appropriate public participation opportunities in its decision-making processes based on the nature of the decision to be made.

This policy provides Municipal Stakeholders with an indication of when and how public participation opportunities are expected to be provided by the Town of Bowden.

3 DEFINITIONS

In this Policy the following definitions apply;

CAO

Is the Chief Administrative Officer of the Town of Bowden (or designate) as duly appointed by Council.

Municipality

Means the Town of Bowden.

Municipal Stakeholders

Means the residents of the Municipality as well as other organizations, institutions or persons that may have an interest in, or may be affected by, or have the ability to affect a decision made by the Municipality.

Council

Means the Municipal Council of the Town of Bowden elected pursuant to the provisions of the Municipal Government Act, acting at a duly assembled meeting thereof.

MGA

Means the Municipal Government Act (Revised Statutes of Alberta 2000).

Public Participation

Means the efforts the Town makes to interact with members of the community and the public when making decisions on behalf of the community related to policies, programs, projects, approvals, use of resources and services.

Statutory Requirement

Means a requirement written into law passed by Provincial or Federal Government (eg; the MGA)

Non-Statutory Requirement

Means a rule based on customs, precedents, or policy

Public Participation Tools

Means the tools that may be used, alone or in combination, to create public participation opportunities including;

- **in-person participation** which may include door knocking, interviews, meetings, open forums, and workshops
 - **digital participation** which may include online workbooks, chat groups, webinars, message boards and online surveys / polls
 - **written participation** which may include written submissions, email, mail in surveys, polls and questionnaires
 - **representative participation** which may include being appointed to an advisory committee, ad hoc committee or citizen board
-

4 SCOPE

The application of this Policy must be balanced with the understanding that Council is elected to make decisions that set the direction of the community as a whole.

Council must ultimately bear the burden of making a choice based on all information made available to them.

Furthermore, 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 considered in determining the **level** or **type** of public participation to be used;

- Council priorities, availability and allocation of resources
 - Time sensitivity in terms of when a decision must be made
 - The need or desire for public support or their ability to effectively influence any decisions or outcome, particularly where confidentiality is required
 - Background, history, conflicts of interest, previous levels of consultation etc
 - Scope of the impact in terms of geographic area or the number of residents affected
-

5 APPLICATION

Public participation is intended to support and inform the decision-making process relating to;

- designing or implementing a new policy, program, project or service
- evaluating, amending or ending an existing policy, program, project or service
- establishing annual operating and capital budgets (where consultation is required)
- fulfilling the requirement of statutory legislation
- responding to a community initiative or request

The following categories **do not** require public participation.

- Where Council or Administration are operating within their authority
- Policy (review, development or implementation)
- Bylaw (review, development or implementation)
- Bylaw enforcement & penalties
- Public Works, Parks & Arena maintenance & operations
- Administration (policies, procedures, staffing, remuneration)
- Public Safety & Emergency Planning

The following categories **will** involve public participation (if required by statute) or **may** involve public participation (if deemed appropriate, significant or relevant)

- Municipal development planning & land use bylaws
- Community sustainability planning
- Provision of new, or revision of, existing community programs & social services (eg; FCSS, Fire, Water)
- Annual budget & finances, tax bylaws (where input or recommendations are sought by Council)
- Public Works, Parks & Arena; new construction, or planning or services
- Conceptual or detailed plans for Town owned lands and facilities
- Acquisition or disposal of Town assets, land or facilities
- Policy & bylaw review / amendment

6 TYPE & LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

The process of engagement (type and level) is illustrated below;

Direct Decision	Consultative Decision	Collaborative Decision
Characteristics		
Routine / part of operations	Public notification required by law	Municipalities acting in partnership
Working within authority	Decision is known to concern other parties	Sharing of the decision-making process
Urgent need	Decision will affect the lifestyle of residents	
Public participate not deemed necessary	Decision is associated with risk	
Confidential	Council requests public input prior to decision being made	
	Resident request or direct intervention	
Process		
Newsletter / fact sheets	Survey	Task Force
Website / direct mail	Open house	Steering Committee
Notice board	Public hearing & meetings	Workshops
Social media	Delegation to Council	Polling & ballots
Council minutes of meeting	Focus groups	Advisory boards

7 APPROACHES & TECHNIQUES

The Town will use a variety of approaches and techniques, either individually or in combination with each other, as part of the public participation process, including;

- meetings with Councillors outside of regular Council meetings
- resident surveys, questionnaires, polls
- resident satisfaction surveys
- displays at community events
- open houses, community workshops, public meetings, public presentations
- public hearings, presentations at Council meetings
- letters, newsletters, advertising social media
- task forces, steering committees, advisory groups, focus groups

The following table illustrates the relationship between the public and organizations undertaking public participation.

At the far left of the table public participation is limited to mostly one-way communication where the public is informed of a pending decision. As public participation becomes more involved, with more two-way communication and a greater ability to influence a decision progress is made across the table to the right.

iap2 public participation spectrum

developed by the international association for public participation

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns 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 provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	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.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
EXAMPLE TOOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact sheets • Websites • Open houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public comment • Focus groups • Surveys • Public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Deliberate polling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen Advisory committees • Consensus-building • Participatory decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen juries • Ballots • Delegated decisions

IAP2 Canada is an association of professionals in the field of public participation (P2), who seek to promote and improve the practice in relation to individuals, governments, institutions and other entities that affect the public interest in Canada

The illustration above is not specific to Municipalities or the Town of Bowden. In reality most public participation by a Municipality will be at the INFORM, CONSULT & INVOLVE level.

8 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLANS

Council or Administration may decide to implement a formal Public Participation Plan if a high level of Municipal Stakeholder consultative input is required.

In such cases the creation of a Public Participation Plan will precede the commencement of any public participation activities.

If required, the plan should consider the following content;

- a brief description of the nature of the matter for which consultation is sought
- the engagement methods
- any pertinent background information that needs to be provided
- what issues / matters / impact needs to be considered
- scope or extent of public participation required
- timeframes & budgets
- how the information will be used
- type of evaluation / feedback / concluding summary required

At the end of the consultative process, the outcome or decision made will be communicated to the Municipal Stakeholder by an appropriate means. This will include an overview of the input received, how the information was used, and an indication of the next stage in the consultative process.

A Public Participation Plan template is provided as Appendix A

9 STANDARDS

Public Participation will;

- be conducted in a sustainable and inclusive manner having regard to different levels of accessibility
- be conducted in a professional manner
- consider early, ongoing and diverse opportunities to provide input
- provide feedback to the public in a timely manner

Municipal Stakeholders who participate in any manner of public participation are required to be respectful and constructive in their participation.

10 LIMITS ON POLICY

Nothing in this Policy supersedes any provision made in any Federal or Provincial legislation requiring the Town to undertake public participation events.

The Town may use additional levels of public participation beyond the minimum levels prescribed in legislation.

All public participation will be undertaken in a manner consistent with the requirements of the Municipal Government Act and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

11 REVIEW & PROCEDURE

This Policy must as a minimum be reviewed every four (4) years.

This Policy will be made readily available to all Municipal Stakeholders

The CAO and Town Council may establish, as appropriate, the procedures, forms, materials and tools needed to implement this Policy.


12 POLICY AMENDMENT


Any amendments to this Policy can only be made during the hearing of a Regular Council meeting and through subsequent passing of a motion and resolution.

13 POLICY PRECEDENCE

This Policy has no precedence. It is a new requirement under the Municipal Government Act of Alberta, RSA 2000 Chapter M-26 (as revised: January 1, 2018).

This Policy will come into effect by passing of a resolution by majority consent of the Town of Bowden Council and signature (initial) thereof;

	Date	Resolution Number	Initial
Approved	23 rd July 2018	7a	
Amended (1)			
Amended (2)			
Amended (3)			
Amended (4)			


 Jacquie Molyneux, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

APPENDIX A

Public Participation Plan (Template)

Description

- nature of the matter for which municipal stakeholder input is required

Engagement purpose

- what is the decision to be made
- what questions are being asked
- what input is being required from municipal stakeholders

Background

- background information and circumstances that give rise to municipal stakeholder engagement
- provision of information regarding previous issues or past decisions made relevant to the current matter
- sensitivity of the current matter

Municipal Stakeholders

- identification of who is involved in the decision-making process
- the role of each stakeholder, depending of what is required, and the impact
- the level of impact on each stakeholder (high, medium, low)

Scope of public participation

- clarification as to the scale & level of engagement required at the various levels of the consultation process (ie; inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower)

Timeframe / Budget

- describe the overall timeframe and milestones and deliverables
- cost estimates (if appropriate)

Evaluation

- how the feedback / information was used
- review of the process
- quality of the information received
- recommendations for future plans