

Municipal District of Acadia No. 34

Policy Number: 2102
Title: Public Participation Policy
Subject Area: Municipal Governance
Council Resolution:

Approval Date: September 12th, 2017 **Revision Date(s):**

Policy Statement:

The MD of Acadia #34 recognizes that public participation is fundamental to a strong municipal government and commits to engaging its citizens and encouraging their participation through a variety of mediums and formats.

Policy Vision:

Residents of the MD of Acadia, of all ages, are meaningfully engaged in civic life where their voices strengthen decisions and their involvement helps build the community where they live, work, and play.

Policy Introduction:

The following policy outlines the manner in which the MD of Acadia interacts with its residents and ratepayers for the purposes of public participation in the governance process. It is important to note that interaction with citizens occurs on an ongoing basis through office visitations, email and postal communications, and a variety of day-to-day activities; all of which has some level of participation in municipal operations and governance. However, the purpose of this policy is to outline those extra efforts that the MD of Acadia shall make to engage its citizens and stakeholders to elicit input on governance decisions and to participate in the overall direction of the MD of Acadia. These efforts include social media campaigns, a bi-monthly newsletter, and our bi-annual roundtable discussions with citizens.

1. Principles:

a. Involving the public leads to better decisions

- i. Decisions that impact the future of the community are better when those who are affected have been involved.

b. Public engagement processes are equitable

- i. They allow all members of the public a reasonable opportunity to contribute, developing a balanced perspective.

c. The public understands its role in the process

- i. The public's role and level of involvement will be defined and clearly communicated.

d. The public is informed

- i. Information necessary to understand all relevant aspects of the issue is provided to the public throughout the process. The impact of any public engagement is reported and explained.
- ii. That meetings of council are advertised as required by the MGA and any changes to regular meetings or special meetings are advertised via the municipal webpage and social media pages with at least 24 hours' notice.

e. Communication with the public is effective

- i. It is clear, concise, objective, understandable and accessible by all.

f. Public communication is transparent and accountable

- i. The process is clear and open and provides a public record of the range of views and ideas expressed.

2. Consultation Requirements:

The following are the standard situations when a special consultative process would be initiated:

a. Legislative or Regulatory:

- i. The MD of Acadia shall follow all necessary consultation procedures when required by the Municipal Government Act (MGA) or any other piece of Provincial or Federal legislation.

b. Internal Directive:

- i. Required on the basis of internally authorized decisions, including MD policies.

c. Administration or Council Request:

- i. When council or administration request a public consultation to occur for any reason.

d. Public Request:

- i. If there is a significant demand from the public at any time for further consultation or input on a particular subject, the Council or administration will call for a public engagement session to occur.
- ii. The need for such engagement will be determined solely by the Council
- iii. The time, location and format of such engagement will be determined by the Council and/or administration.

e. Impact on Public

- i. The decision or outcome will have a significant impact on the public's social, economic, and/or environmental situation.

3. Engagement Approaches:

a. In-Person:

- i. These engagements shall be done at a time and location determined by the Council and/or the CAO.
- ii. In-person consultations will usually be done for most legislative circumstances as well as for the bi-annual public roundtable meetings that occur in Acadia Valley.
- iii. The public is also encouraged to attend monthly Council meetings, held on the second Tuesday of each month.

Commitment: To hold at least 2 round table discussions each year to hear citizen feedback on proposed ideas and to let citizens have a direct voice to Council and administration.

b. Print Media:

- i. The MD of Acadia conducts most of its communication with its residents via print, including:
 - Mailing of utility and tax bills
 - Notice of development decisions
 - Miscellaneous communications
- ii. The 'AV Update' is a bi-monthly newsletter that is mailed to all MD residents and contains various announcements, notices and information regarding the MD and area.

Commitment: To continue with the AV Update newsletter on a bi-monthly basis as a means of communicating with those citizens who do not use the internet or choose not to attend in-person gatherings.

c. Online:

- i. The MD of Acadia hosts a wide variety of content on its municipal website (www.mdacadia.ab.ca) and also uses it to communicate information to the general public. There is a feedback option built into the website that allows visitors to ask questions and submit comments.
- ii. The MD of Acadia hosts a Facebook page where general announcements are made and information conveyed. People also use this platform to send messages and questions to administration.

Commitment: To meaningfully engage with citizens via online platforms by keeping content up to date, responding to inquiries in a timely fashion, and continually posting relevant content.

4. Definitions

- a. **Citizen:** a person who currently resides in the MD of Acadia or any other stakeholder that has an interest in, or is affected by, a MD outcome or decision.

- b. **Public Participation:** the process that engages MD of Acadia citizens to provide input into local issues and decisions. I can involve them to clarify issues, identify solutions or alternatives, and partner in decision making.
- c. **Engagement:** the tools used to elicit feedback and to communicate with citizens for the purposes of the public participation process.

5. Roles and Responsibilities:

- a. The council shall review this policy every three years to ensure accuracy and accountability.
- b. The CAO shall be the primary organizer of public engagement efforts, including:
 - i. Scheduling public meetings and events
 - ii. Coordinating mailings
 - iii. Conducting online communication via Facebook and the MD Website
- c. Staff with the approval of the CAO may be responsible for other duties as assigned or responsible for the above CAO's duties should delegation be deemed necessary by the CAO or the Council.

Approved by Council: September 12th, 2017

Chief Administrative Officer