

	Council Policy		
	Classification Administration & Finance		Policy No. AF 6.21
	Policy Title Public Participation		
	Approved By: Council	Effective Date: July 18, 2018	Revisions:

Purpose

In accordance with Section 216.1 of the *Municipal Government Act*, this Public Participation Policy has been developed to recognize the value of public participation and create opportunities for meaningful participation in decisions that directly impact the public.

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

Council recognizes that a wide variety of perspectives are shared through public engagement. It is important to understand that public engagement does not replace formal decision-making by County Council. The engagement process is a tool, along with research, Council policies, legislation, expert advice and input from partner organizations that aid in the decision making process.

Statement

The County of Stettler No. 6 recognizes the value of public participation and will create opportunities for meaningful participation in decisions that directly impact the public.

Council recognizes that good governance includes engaging County Stakeholders in Public Participation by:

1. Promoting sustainable decisions by recognizing various County Stakeholder interests;
2. Provide County Stakeholders with the appropriate information and tools to engage in meaningful participation.

Definitions

“**CAO**” means the Chief Administrative Officer of the County or their designate.

“**County 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 the County of Stettler No. 6.

“Public Participation” includes a variety of non-statutory opportunities where County 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:

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

Responsibilities

1. Council Responsibilities

- a. Approve by resolution this policy and any amendments
- b. Consider input obtained through Public Participation
- c. Recognize the benefits of public engagement
- d. Serve as an advocate for public engagement
- e. Be guided by the policy when determining the level of public engagement required
- f. Ensure resources are adequate to facilitate staff’s role in conducting the appropriate process.

2. CAO Responsibilities

- a. Ensure policy and procedure reviews occur and verify the implementation of policies and procedures
- b. Recommend to Council necessary policy amendments
- c. Recognize the benefits of public engagement
- d. Serve as an advocate for public engagement

3. Communications Department Responsibilities

- a. In accordance with this Policy or as directed by Council, develop Public Participation Plans, for Council approval;
- b. Recognize the benefits of public engagement
- c. Serve as an advocate for public engagement
- d. Provide guidance to Council, ensuring sufficient public engagement has occurred

4. Employee Responsibilities

- a. Understand and adhere to this policy and procedure
- b. Recognize the benefits of public engagement
- c. Serve as advocates for public engagement

Procedure

5. Legislative and Policy Implications

- a. 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.
- b. This policy does not absolve responsibilities outlined in the *Municipal Government Act*, the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and any other applicable legislation.
- c. All Public Participation will be undertaken in accordance with all existing County policies.
- d. This Policy shall be available for public inspection and may be posted to the County's website.
- e. This Policy will be reviewed at least once every four (4) years.

6. Occasions for Public Participation include

- a. Budget consultation
- b. Legislative changes
- c. Large scale or unusual developments
- d. New programs and projects, or as directed by Council.

7. Public Participation Standards

- a. Public Participation will be conducted in a sustainable and inclusive manner having regard to different levels of accessibility.
- b. Public Participation activities will be conducted in a professional and respectful manner.
- c. Public Participation plans will consider early, ongoing and diverse opportunities to provide input.
- d. County Stakeholders who participate in any manner of Public Participation are required to be respectful and constructive in their participation. County Stakeholders who are disrespectful, inappropriate or offensive, as determined by Administration, may be excluded from Public Participation opportunities.
- e. The results of Public Participation will be made available to Council and Municipal Stakeholders in a timely manner in accordance with County policies.

Public Participation Plans

8. When so directed by this Policy or Council, Communications shall develop a Public Participation Plan for approval by Council which shall consider the following:
 - a. the nature of the matter for which Public Participation is being sought;
 - b. the impact of the matter on County Stakeholders;
 - c. the demographics of potential County Stakeholders in respect of which Public Participation Tools to utilize, level of engagement and time for input;
 - d. the timing of the decision and time required to gather input;
 - e. what information is required, if any, to participate; and
 - f. available resources and reasonable costs.

9. Public Participation Plans will, at minimum, include the following:
 - a. a communication plan to inform the public about opportunities to provide input;
 - b. identification of which Public Participation Tools will be utilized;
 - c. timelines for participation;
 - d. information about how input will be used;
 - e. the location of information required, if any, to inform the specific Public Participation.

Reporting and Evaluation

10. Information obtained in Public Participation will be reviewed by the CAO and a report shall be provided to Council.
11. The report shall include, at minimum, the following:
 - a. an overview of the Public Participation Plan and how it was developed;
 - b. an assessment of the effectiveness of the plan based on the level of engagement and the quality of input;
 - c. a summary of the input obtained; and
 - d. may include recommendations for future Public Participation Plans.

12. Reports shall be provided to Council for review.

Policy Authorization

Effective Date	Type of Review	Authorization	Resolution Number
July 18, 2018	Approval	Council	245.07.18.18