



Policy #1030

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Policy Title: Public Participation

Policy No.: 1030

Approval: County Council

Effective Date: June 13, 2018

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Supersedes Policy No.: New

Policy Statement: Mountain View County Council recognizes the role and decision-making authority that citizens have entrusted them to fulfill on their behalf for the betterment of Mountain View County as a whole. However, although Council can exercise this responsibility much of the time, there are instances where Council will determine that the inclusion of additional public participation will strengthen the decision-making process. In these situations, the County is committed to utilizing appropriate citizen and stakeholder engagement activities that provide County Council and administration with the most complete information and data possible to inform decision making on policies, programs, services and projects.

Purpose: This Public Participation Policy #1030 has been developed to establish the criteria, manner and methods for conducting public participation activities by Mountain View County for County residents and stakeholders. The policy also seeks to enhance relationships with County residents and stakeholders to supplement decision making.

Public Participation Policy #1030 is developed to meet the new requirements outlined in the Public Participation Policy Regulation as required by the Municipal Government Act (sec. 216)

Principles: Mountain View County will choose to use public participation that is:

1. Proactive – Initiating public engagement will begin at the earliest stage possible and allow enough time for appropriate information dissemination and exchange. A commitment to plain language and to clear and concise information will be undertaken by those conducting engagements to promote understanding.
2. Equitable and Fair – Engagements ensure that equal and fair opportunities will be provided to members of the public to participate and provide input.
3. Community Minded – An effort will be made to engage those who will be affected directly and indirectly by decision making, including diverse community members to augment and improve the quality of feedback.
4. Focused – Clear understanding of how the engagement will take place and the level of involvement expected from all parties.
5. Relevant – Engagements will be developed and communicated effectively to encourage public participation and will be focused on the issue or topic under consideration.
6. Innovative – Engagements will employ tools, strategies and tactics suitable to the topic or issue under discussion and will evolve as engagements are evaluated.
7. Transparency – All information and data that can be shared and provided to the public will be available, and all engagements will be done in an open manner without prejudice.

Additionally, how input from participation activities is utilized in decision making will be clearly communicated.

Mountain View County Council shall have the responsibility and final decision-making authority when determining when, and to what extent, public participation should be utilized.

Policy Implications: This policy is in addition to and does not modify or replace statutory public hearing or legislated requirements in the *Municipal Government Act*.

This policy is in addition to other Mountain View County legislation that mandates and/or governs Public Participation including Bylaw 56/05 "Establishing Procedure and Conduct of Public Hearings".

This policy will work in accordance with other Mountain View County Policies where appropriate.

This policy must be reviewed at least once every four (4) years.



Procedure Title: Public Participation

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1. Definitions

- 1.1 "Communications" means Mountain View County's Communications Business Unit.
- 1.2 "Public Participation Campaign" means the formal activities and initiatives planned to accomplish the County's goal of receiving feedback and/or direction from County residents and stakeholders to assist in furthering the decision-making process. This does not include activities that are routine operating practices or required through provincial legislation.

2. Preamble

- 2.1 Mountain View County is committed to engaging the public in accordance with County Council's vision, mission statement, and strategic goals.
- 2.2 Mountain View County's public participation operates on a spectrum that is based off of principles contained within the Rural Municipalities of Alberta Citizen Engagement Toolkit and the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) model, with corresponding promises and a variety of possible techniques to achieve the public participation outcome (Appendix A).
- 2.3 Mountain View County has a vested interest in the collection of public knowledge and use of that knowledge for the betterment of the County as a whole. This is a desire to do more than collect information but to understand the values that are common to all County residents and stakeholders.

3. Public Engagement Standards

- 3.1 Mountain View County will, where appropriate, use public knowledge to support the work done on behalf of citizens. The County will use this information to help drive decision making and strategic planning initiatives.
- 3.2 Mountain View County will, communicate to the public how public input and knowledge have supported and/or furthered the decision-making process
- 3.3 Mountain View County will be clear in its public participation initiatives the expectations for the public and stakeholders that are participating.
- 3.4 Mountain View County will establish general guidelines when undertaking Public Participation Campaigns including:

- 3.4.1 Use of Plain Language;
- 3.4.2 Use of Acronym Lists;
- 3.4.3 Use of links and increased accessibility to reference documents;
- 3.4.4 Ensuring that any in-person Public Participation Campaigns are accessible and comfortable for participants;
- 3.4.5 Ensuring that appropriate administrative resources and funding is allocated to Public Participation Campaigns.

4. Public Engagement Management

- 4.1 The Public Participation Policy applies to all departments and services of Mountain View County.
- 4.2 All items forwarded by departments for Council consideration should receive adequate review and determination by department Directors as to whether a Public Participation Campaign will be recommended.
 - 4.2.1 Specifically, Public Participation Campaigns may be initiated during the following:
 - 4.2.1.1 Identifying Council Priorities;
 - 4.2.1.2 Formulating recommendations to Council regarding the Budget;
 - 4.2.1.3 Reviewing existing programs, services and associated service levels;
 - 4.2.1.4 Any other situation determined necessary by Council or the Chief Administrative Officer.
- 4.3 If a Public Participation Campaign is recommended, the department should note the level of participation recommended in consultation with the guidelines as outlined in Appendix A. Council may choose to amend the Public Participation Campaign or level of Public Participation required.
- 4.4 Public Participation Campaigns will be created and managed by the department requesting the engagement in consultation with Communications.
- 4.5 All Public Participation Campaigns shall be posted for citizen information and review on the County website.
- 4.6 All Public Participation Campaigns shall be recorded and tracked by Communications to ensure that opportunities are being held in accordance with this Policy and utilized appropriately by residents and stakeholders.
- 4.7 Communications will help facilitate the participation opportunity based on the Public Participation goal, and will execute, where possible and required, a comprehensive public participation strategy to maximize citizen input and/or understanding.
- 4.8 Public Participation Campaigns will follow the Public Engagement Spectrum (Appendix A) with an understanding that not all initiatives will require extensive or involved campaigns. Public Participation Campaigns will be tailored to suit the need of the project and may either be recommended by Administration or directed by Council.
- 4.9 Organizers of Public Participation Campaigns may utilize the AUMA/RMA Citizen Engagement Toolkit for increased guidance in developing, implementing and evaluating Public Participation Campaigns.

5. Citizen Conduct

- 5.1 All Public Participation Campaigns will utilize conduct guidelines and terms-of-use statements to provide clear expectation of citizen conduct while interacting with the municipality through participation activities. These guidelines include the right of the municipality to not address participation that:
 - Includes foul language, vulgarities or sexually explicit content;

- Is offensive to an individual or an organization, rude in tone, discriminatory or abusive;
- Solicits, advertises, and/or promotes particular services, products, or political parties, advocacy groups or organizations;
- Infringes on human rights or privacy;
- Is considered inflammatory;
- Is off topic; and/or
- Is otherwise deemed to not be in accordance with the directives of the Public Participation Campaign.

6. Evaluation & Reporting

- 6.1 All Public Participation Campaign's will have an evaluation component undertaken immediately upon conclusion of the Public Participation Campaign to chart the process and outcome of the Public Participation Campaign. The evaluations should include, but may not be limited to:
- Adherence to the principles of the Public Participation Policy
 - Completion within time frame and budget
 - Communication of results / input and consideration in decision making
 - Level of stakeholder satisfaction with process
 - Participation of stakeholders