

**Cape Breton Regional Municipality**

**Workshop:**  
**Public Input and Process**  
**of Council Decisions**

**AGENDA**

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2020**

**10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.**

Council Chambers  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, City Hall  
320 Esplanade, Sydney, NS



# Cape Breton Regional Municipality

## Workshop: Public Input and Process of Council Decisions

Tuesday, February 18, 2020  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

### **AGENDA ITEMS**

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#### 1. **BUSINESS ARISING – Council Meeting – December 10, 2020:**

##### 1.1 **Discussion – Public Input and Process of Council Decisions:** (See page 4)

- a) **Council-Related Policies:** Mayor Cecil P. Clarke
  - i. Public Participation Programs Policy (See page 6)
  - ii. By-Law Development Policy (See page 8)
  - iii. Delegation Policy (See page 14)
  - iv. Council Agenda Policy (See page 16)
  - v. Committees RC4 Policy (See page 20)
  - vi. Rules of Order Policy (See page 29)
  
- b) **Planning Related Public Consultation and Engagement:** Michael Ruus, Director of Planning and Development (See page 37)
  
- c) **Councillor Steve Gillespie** (See page 42)
  
- d) **Councillor Amanda McDougall** (See page 43)
  - i. Halifax Community Engagement Strategy (See page 44)
  - ii. Halton Hills Community Engagement Strategy (See page 79)
  - iii. Strengths-based Community Engagement (See page 98)

#### **Adjournment**

**Discussion – Public Input and Process of Council Decisions**

It was **agreed** to have a full day workshop to delineate between Council-related legislative processes and consultation and look at how we incorporate the budget process for public consultation.

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**INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM**

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**TO:** CLERKS OFFICE, CBRM MAYOR AND COUNCIL

**FROM:** COUNCILLOR AMANDA MCDOUGALL AND COUNCILLOR STEVE GILLESPIE

**SUBJECT:** DISCUSSION - PUBLIC INPUT AND PROCESS OF COUNCIL DECISIONS

**DATE:** TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10<sup>TH</sup>, 2019

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As of late, CBRM Council been under a considerable amount of public scrutiny due to the outcome of several Council decisions. It began with the discussion around rules and procedures regarding parades in the CBRM, is ongoing with the potential flood mitigation efforts that will impact the Baille Ard Trail and most recently the public announcement to locate the new Station 1 – Fire Station on the corner of George and Pitt Streets.

We are hopeful that today we can have a productive conversation on process that includes, but is not limited to;

- When Council is required to engage in a Public Participation Process?
- How we can be more proactive with public consultation prior to decision making rather than being reactionary when concern is raised?
- How we can ensure General Committee and Regional Council confusion does not continue?
- When is it appropriate for a decision to come out of an in-camera meeting?
- How do we communicate with each other and the public more efficiently and in a meaningful manner?

This exercise is meant to help us find better ways to ensure process is being respected and we are doing our best to engage the public in decisions that impact them directly. We have included a letter from the Artistic & Executive Director, Highland Arts Theatre asking for something very similar; the opportunity to engage in a respectful conversation with community members and decision makers alike.

**Outcome Sought:**

- 1.) A healthy conversation in council on how to better implement best-practices for efficient and meaningful Council decision making
- 2.) Public outreach and engagement procedure review



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## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAMS POLICY**

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### **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

1. This policy derives its authority from Section 204 of the *Municipal Government Act* of the Province of Nova Scotia

### **PURPOSE**

2. The purpose is to provide ample opportunity for the public to actively participate in decisions concerning the adoption or amendment of a CBRM planning document as defined by the *Municipal Government Act* i.e. the adoption of a *Municipal Planning Strategy* or *Subdivision Bylaw* or any amendment to either of these planning documents.

### **EXCEPTION**

3. This Policy does not apply to land use by-law amendments which do not also require an amendment to the *Municipal Planning Strategy*.

### **STATEMENTS OF POLICY**

4. Due to the complexity and large scale of the landscape throughout the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, the possibility planning documents or their amendments could be initiated by CBRM staff or the general public, and the range of planning documents could be site specific or have an effect throughout a neighbourhood, a community or the entire Regional Municipality, it shall be a policy of Council to consider a wide range of acceptable formats for a public participation program dependant on the type of planning document under consideration for adoption.

### **APPLICATION AND PROCEDURE**

5. The appropriate format for each Public Participation Program will be drafted by staff of the Planning and Development Department based on the specifics of the proposed amendment. Where applicable, staff will work with the local councillor, or councillors, when a proposed planning document will not be in effect throughout the Regional Municipality.
6. Acceptable formats of public participation programs include, but are not limited to the following:
  - a) Public Meeting  
Notice of such public meeting shall be by one, or a combination of, the following:

- an advertisement in the local newspaper;
- notice mailed to surrounding land owners; or
- notice on the CBRM website or other social media.

Notice of the public meeting shall briefly describe the undertaking or proposed amendment, the time, date and place of the public meeting, as well as a source for obtaining background or additional information. The radius of mail notification will be determined by the Planning and Development Department based on the geography affected by the proposed planning document.

b) Open House

Notice of an open house shall be an advertisement in the local newspaper, notice mailed to surrounding land owners, or notice on the CBRM website and/or other social media. Notice of the open house shall briefly describe the undertaking or proposed amendment, the time, date and place of the open house, as well as a source for obtaining background or additional information. The radius of mail notification will be determined by the Planning and Development Department based on the geography affected by the proposed planning document.

c) Notification Requesting Input

Notice shall be mailed to land owners in the vicinity of the proposed development. The radius of this notification will be determined by the Planning and Development Department. The notice shall briefly describe the undertaking or proposed amendment, the deadline date for comments, how comments may be submitted, as well as a source for obtaining background or additional information.

d) Survey

Surveys should be considered when the jurisdiction of the proposed amendment is too large for public notification by mail.

7. The Planning and Development will present the result of the public participation program to the General Committee of Council and/or Council.

**PASSED AND ADOPTED:** by a majority of the whole Council at a duly called meeting of the Cape Breton Regional Municipal Council held on February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

\_\_\_\_\_  
MAYOR

\_\_\_\_\_  
CLERK

***THIS IS TO CERTIFY*** that the attached is a true and correct copy of the Policy of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality adopted by Regional Council during a meeting held on February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

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Deborah Campbell Ryan, CLERK

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## **By-Law Development Policy**

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### **POLICY**

#### **Respecting the Procedures For Developing By-Laws For Consideration By Regional Council**

BE IT RESOLVED AS A POLICY of the Council of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality as follows:

#### **Short Title**

1. This Policy may be cited as the *By-law Development Policy*.

#### **Purpose**

2. (1) The purpose of this Policy is to create a coordinated framework to expedite consistent by-law writing, consultation, approval process, referencing, storing and accessing and to ensure that all Departments are aware of the responsibilities they will have in respect of a By-law before it is introduced before Regional Council.

(2) Subject to Section 3 herein, the procedure in this Policy applies to all by-laws including by-laws developed to amend existing by-laws.

#### **Exception**

3. This Policy does not apply to planning documents adopted pursuant to Part VII (Planning and Development) and Part IX (Subdivision) of the *Municipal Government Act*.

#### **Initiation of By-law**

4. By-laws may be initiated in one of two ways:

- 1) A recommendation from Council/Committee which is sent to staff for a report and ultimately considered at a Regional Council meeting; or
- 2) Staff, by means of a staff report to Directors' Group.

**By-law Development Process**

5. Staff to prepare an Issue Paper using the by-law implementation template and forward to Directors' Group for review and recommendation, which is to be forwarded to Committee or back to staff for further investigation. If the Directors recommend proceeding to Committee and the Committee deems it appropriate to proceed, a recommendation shall be made to Regional Council to initiate the By-law supported by the backup information in the Issue Paper, which shall include who originated the request, the need for the by-law, who will enforce it, who will administer it, and the costs involved (cost/benefit analysis).

**Writing of By-laws**

6. (1) By-laws are written by staff of the originating/lead Departments.
- (2) The template for drafting by-laws is attached as Schedule "A". Fonts on all by-laws must be consistent (Times New Roman 12).
- (3) The originating Department shall contact the Legal Department to assist with the by-law drafting and approvals process. The Clerk's Department will assign a by-law number which must be used on all documents.
- (4) The originating Department will consult with all affected Departments which will be involved in the licensing, administration, remedy and enforcement of the By-law to ensure the by-law is enforceable and shall circulate the draft by-law to all those affected for comment.
- (5) The originating Department will consult with any Committees of Council with a stake in the By-law.
- (6) The originating Department will consult with any External Stakeholder groups where appropriate. Methods of consultation with external stakeholders may vary and is at the discretion of the originating Department.
- (7) Any applicable license, permit and processing fees pursuant to a by-law shall be established by Recorded Resolution entitled the License, Permits and Processing Fees Resolution. Where applicable, the originating Department shall prepare an amendment to the Resolution with respect to associated fees.
- (8) When the originating Department has completed the draft by-law and amendment to the Resolution respecting fees, it shall forward the documents to the Legal Department for final review, noting a date at which time a response is required from the Legal Department, which date shall not be less than 10 business days from the time the

By-law is received by the Legal Department. The Legal Department shall immediately advise the originating Department if the target date cannot be met and shall provide the Department with a date on which the review will be completed. Upon completion of the review of the documents on or before the agreed date, the Legal Department shall provide the originating Department with a list of deficiencies, or if there are no deficiencies, shall stamp the By-law and Policy amendments “approved as to form” and return them to the originating Department.

(9) When the By-law and the Resolution amendments have been approved as to form by the Legal Department, the originating Department shall forward the documents along with the draft staff report and completed by-law implementation template to the Directors’ Group for review and comment.

(10) After the By-Law and Resolution amendments have been approved by the Directors’ Group, the originating Department shall forward the staff report, draft by-law and Resolution amendments to the appropriate Standing Committee. The Committee would then review same and forward it to Regional Council.

#### **Approval By Regional Council (First Reading)**

7. (1) At the next regular scheduled meeting, Council will have the opportunity to review the recommendation from Committee, the staff report and draft By-law and Resolution amendments, if required. If Council accepts the report and draft By-law as presented, a motion for First Reading is in order. **All by-laws require Two Readings.**

(2) Any amendments to by-laws as a result of debate/discussion at Council will be made by the originating Department in consultation with all affected Departments and the Legal Department. The Clerk’s Office will provide information to confirm Council’s action. After approval as to form by the Legal Department, the originating Department shall then prepare a supplementary report, if necessary, and accompanying by-law (with amendments if any) and be forwarded to the appropriate Committee for review and recommendation to Council for First Reading.

(3) The Municipal Clerk’s Office is responsible, with support from the originating Department and the Legal Department, for coordinating the approval process once the by-law and accompanying report has received First Reading approval by Council.

#### **Second Reading (Public Hearing) and Advertisement**

At least 14 days prior to the Council meeting where Second Reading is intended to be given, public notification of such intent is placed in the local newspaper and the CBRM Internet site. The advertisement must state the object of the by-law, the date of the Council meeting when the Public Hearing will be held and the location(s) where the proposed by-law may be inspected or a copy obtained.

The preparation of any amendments to a By-law arising as a result of the Public Hearing shall be processed using the procedure set out in Section 7(2) above.

If Council refers the by-law back to Committee for further review and the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading by Council is scheduled to a later date, an advertisement to that effect must be placed 14 days prior to the Council meeting.

**8) Signing, advertisement and effective date**

Once approved by Council –

- i The originating Department forwards the complete electronic version (including schedules and maps) of the by-law to the Municipal Clerk's Office;
- ii Copies of the by-law are signed by the Mayor and Municipal Clerk and notification of the approved by-law is advertised in the newspaper and on the CBRM Internet site;
- iii Instances where Ministerial approval is required, the Clerk's office will forward two certified copies of the by-law to the appropriate Provincial department;
- iv Once this approval has been received, notification of the approved by-law is advertised and placed on the CBRM Internet site, and pursuant to Section 169 of the *Municipal Government Act*, the Clerk also files a certified copy of the by-law with the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations. Unless otherwise stated in the by-law, its effective date is the date of publication.
- v Certified copy of the ad announcing approval of the by-law is placed with the signed copy of the by-law.

**9) Distribution, storage and indexing of by-law**

The original by-law is securely filed in the Municipal Clerk's office. All approved by-laws are electronically stored for access both internally and externally, on the "Y" drive under CBRM Common Directory and on the CBRM Internet site.

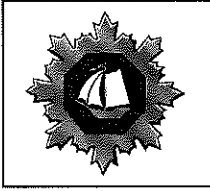
10) A by-law index (detailing First and Second readings, dates advertised, date of Ministerial approval, if required, effective date, etc.) is maintained by the Municipal Clerk's Office.

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I, Bernie White, Municipal Clerk of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, hereby certify that the above noted policy was passed at a meeting of Cape Breton Regional Council held on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2006.

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Bernie White, Municipal Clerk



Schedule "A"

**BY-LAW TEMPLATE**

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**By-law #:** *(to be determined by the Clerk's Department)*

**By-law Name:**

**Short Title:**

**Interpretation/Definitions**

**By-law:** *(insert the by-law content in this space, including penalty clause if required)*

**Repeal Section:** *(if necessary)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Municipal Clerk

I, Bernie White, Municipal Clerk of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, hereby certify that the above noted by-law was passed at a meeting of Cape Breton Regional Council held on **(date)**.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bernie White, Municipal Clerk

# *Cape Breton Regional Municipality*

## Policy Respecting Delegations Appearing Before Council

This policy relates to delegations who wish to address the Cape Breton Regional Council or a Standing Committee of Council.

1. All delegations will be required, if requested, to have a pre-appearance meeting with the Clerk or designated Staff member. Presenters are also expected to be present 30 minutes in advance of their presentation, only if requiring audiovisual equipment.
2. Any individual or group wishing to address Council/Committee shall give notice not less than 10 days prior to the meeting at which the delegation wishes to appear and shall submit its presentation (including potential Resolutions for Council consideration/endorsement) in writing to the Municipal Clerk for distribution with the agenda package.
3. Subject to paragraph (a) and (b) below, only **one** delegation will be heard at any Council meeting.
  - (a) In extra-ordinary or emergency circumstances only, and with the approval of the Chair, will there be more than one delegation at a regular Council meeting.
  - (b) Any approved delegation that fails to submit the required documentation within the specified time limits will be deferred to another date.
  - (c) Delegations with exceptional issue or an issue deemed to be of an emergency nature may be granted a special meeting; this decision at the discretion of the chair.
4. Committees may entertain more than one (1) delegation per meeting. If a group appears before a Committee, they will not be entitled to appear at Council to speak on the same issue.
5. Issues coming before Council must be of a global municipal nature. If the topic is of a localized nature or is service specific, the delegation will be directed and heard at the appropriate Standing Committee of Council. The Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, will decide what constitutes a global issue.
6. Under the *Police Act*, issues relating to the Policing Service must go to the Police Commission. Only the few items which require Council approval under the *Police Act* will be referred back to Council. The Commission, by virtue of the *Police Act*, has different authority and reporting requirements than the other Committees of Council.

## **Policy Respecting Delegations Appearing Before Council**

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7. A delegation is encouraged to have only one speaker who will be limited to a 15 minute presentation. A delegation may have more than one speaker but collectively speakers are limited to the fifteen minute time period. The Clerk shall make presenter(s) aware of this time limit when arrangements for the presentation are being made.
8. Questions from members of Council/Committee may follow the presentation, however, debate will not be permitted until Council formally deals with any required action coming out of the presentation. Council may deal with the requests for action
  - (a) under new business – (time permitting),
  - (b) at the next regular Council meeting,
  - (c) or by referral.
9. Once a delegation is heard at Council, a Resolution would not be put forth on the issue until the next meeting of Council. If urgency dictates an early decision, there would be a requirement for a two-thirds vote of Council to deal with the issue.
10. The Chair will acknowledge and thank the presenting delegation.
11. This policy is Council's provision for the process of dealing with delegations and supercedes Robert's Rules of Order.

**Approved by Council – June 12, 1996**

**Amended by Council – March 11, 2005**



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## **Council Agenda Policy**

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### **1. PREAMBLE:**

It is the Policy of Council that draft agendas for monthly Council and Committee meetings are completed by the Agenda Review Committee.

### **2. OBJECTIVE:**

It is the objective of this Policy to outline a process for submitting items for Agendas and to ensure that the business requiring Council/Committee direction proceeds in a methodical and timely manner.

### **3. Key Points:**

- i. Agendas are constructed during any given month using a pending file.
- ii. Council members and staff are invited to submit issues to the Clerk's Office prior to the agenda consultation meeting.
- iii. Resource or appropriate background materials i.e. Issue Papers must be provided for distribution with the draft agenda package.
- iv. Council members shall submit their agenda requests using the *Council Agenda Request Form* as outlined in Appendix "A" attached to this Policy.
- v. The deadline for agenda submissions to the Clerk's Office is 4:30 p.m. seven (7) days prior to the meeting.

**Key Points (cont'd)**

- vi. *Approval of the Agenda* shall be included in the agenda Order of Business for regular Committee and Council meetings, as well as In Camera meetings. Any items added to or deleted from an agenda during the meeting will require a motion with majority vote. This includes New Business items as provided for in this Policy.
- vii. The Agenda Review Committee shall consist of the presiding officer, CAO, Clerk, Solicitor and the Deputy Mayor, or their delegates.
- viii. For those instances when requested agenda items may be outside the jurisdiction of the Municipality, require more research, or should be dealt with in a different forum, the Agenda Review Committee shall have the authority to delete, defer or refer such agenda requests. With respect to such deletion, deferral or referral, the Deputy Mayor shall report to the respective Council members, the CAO shall advise staff and the Clerk shall notify citizens regarding delegation requests.
- ix. In all cases possible, agendas for regularly scheduled meetings would be pre-distributed to Council Members approximately 5 days prior to a meeting. For special meetings, these timelines may be reduced.
- x. All agendas for regular meetings are distributed to all Members of Council whether they are members of a Committee or not.
- xi. In Camera materials that are pre-distributed are only sent to Committee Members, however non-Committee Council members are invited to attend in camera meetings.
- xii. In Camera agenda topics and corresponding sections of the *Municipal Government Act* will be included in the public meeting notice and listed on the CBRM website.
- xiii. Once an issue has been dealt with by Council, it should not be put before Council again for at least 6 months, unless by proper motion of reconsideration or rescindment or to amend something previously adopted.

#### **4. LATE ITEMS:**

If an issue arises after the Council package goes out and up to noon on the day before a Council meeting, a member can submit the additional item to the Clerk for review by an agenda committee made up of the Mayor/Chair, the CAO and the Clerk for a decision on inclusion as an added item.

These late items require an issue paper or some kind of background information for distribution before the meeting.

A “new” item received on Council Day or without supporting documentation, will not be permitted.

Council shall not vote on a motion arising out of an item added to the agenda until a staff report and recommendation is received by council. Any motion so made shall be deemed to be deferred until such reports and recommendation is received.

#### **5. NEW BUSINESS:**

New Business in the context of this policy is simply:

- Announcements (substantive)
- Referrals/questions
- Submission of Petition
- Notice of Motion

All are subject to a strict adherence to a 1 minute time limit. No debate.

This Policy replaces earlier policies dealing with agenda issues.

This Policy is Councils’ provision for the process of Agenda composition and New Business matters and supercedes Robert’s Rules of Order.

It is noted that the MGA in Section 19(3) sets out the procedure on how a Council can deal with an emergency issue.

Section 19(3)            Where the Mayor or Warden determines that there is an emergency, the Council may meet without notice or with such notice as is possible in the circumstances.

**Approved by Council:    September 19, 2006**  
**Amended:                    June 26, 2018**  
**February 19, 2019**

**Appendix "A"**



City Hall  
 320 Esplanade  
 Sydney, NS B1P 7B9

**Item No.**

<b>Council Agenda Request Form</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Included on Agenda</b> (Submitted to Municipal Clerk's Office by 4:30 pm seven days before the meeting)	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Late Item</b> (Submitted to Municipal Clerk's Office by Noon the day before the meeting)	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Request from the Floor: (New Business)</b> - <b>Announcement</b> - <b>Referral</b> - <b>Submit Petition</b> - <b>Notice of Motion</b>
<b>Date of Council Meeting:</b>		
<b>Subject:</b>		
<b>Motion for Council to Consider:</b>		
<i>(Note: when drafting the motion please ensure that it reflects everything that is being requested to be included in the request for a staff report.) – Please ensure this text is deleted in the final version of this form.</i>		
<b>Reason:</b>		
<b>Outcome Sought:</b>		
<i>Councillor</i>	<i>District</i>	
<b>Date:</b>	<i>Received by Clerk's Department (date):</i>	

## CAPE BRETON REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Resolution RC4

### COMMITTEES

#### I. Standing Committees

The following standing committees shall be appointed every two years:

Fire and Emergency Services Committee  
Audit Committee  
Heritage Advisory Committee

#### 2. Police Commission

Some members of the CBRM Council will also be sworn as Police Commissioners for a two year term. The Police Commission will act autonomous of Council and will carry out the prescribed responsibilities as outlined in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality By-laws governing the operation of its Police Commission and the Nova Scotia *Police Act*. The Commission shall meet on a quarterly basis (i.e. March, June, September and December), with the proviso that a special meeting could be called by the Chair should a pressing issue arise. (Police Commission – February 25, 2014). The Chair shall be selected by the Commission at the December meeting for a term of two consecutive years. The Chair shall also represent CBRM on the Nova Scotia Association of Police Boards.

#### 3. General Committee

Following a trial period utilizing a Committee of the Whole system, the General Committee replaced the Protective Services, Public Services, Water Utility, Planning Advisory and Corporate Services Committees (Council - February 19, 2013). General Committee membership is comprised of all members of Council and chaired by the Mayor. The General Committee was empowered with certain decision-making powers as per Section 23(1)(c) of the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) (Council – April 16, 2013). The delegated powers include:

- a. Declaring CBRM property as surplus to the needs of the Municipality in accordance with the CBRM Property Management Policies;
- b. Building Inspection;

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- c. Development;
  - d. Animal Control
  - e. Non-service delivery revenue i.e. licenses, permits, etc.
  - f. Public Works;
  - g. Engineering;
  - h. Transit;
  - i. Solid Waste Collection and Disposal;
  - j. Parks and Recreation;
  - k. Oversight of the CBRM Water Utility operation, including Regulatory Responsibility, Service Procedures, Rate Structure, Budget Preparation for Council consideration, and recommendations on Capital Projects;
  - l. will make decisions on all issues pertaining to the legislative branches of government, including:
    - i. The Chief Administrative Officer's Department
    - ii. The Clerk's Department
    - iii. Solicitor
    - iv. Finance Department
    - v. Human Resources
    - vi. Economic Development Initiatives
  - m. Issues relating to fiscal services;
  - n. Oversight of the business operation of Centre 200 and the Northside Industrial Park;
  - o. Advise the Council in the preparation, amendment or revision of planning strategies, land-use by-laws, and subdivision by-laws and on land use matters generally, and to carry out the functions of a Planning Advisory Committee pursuant Sections 200-203 of the *MGA*;
  - p. The General Committee will report to Council periodically during the year concerning:
    - financial status, actual vs. budget
    - to seek approval for deviation from approved policy
    - departmental performance issues.

**4. Residual Power**

In recognition of the ultimate power of the Council, especially on occasions when it would be prudent to retrieve an issue from the General Committee, CBRM Council reserves the right to require an issue to be returned to Council in formal session.

**5. Committee Chair**

The position of Chair of each standing committee shall be rotated annually unless otherwise directed in this or another CBRM Policy.

**6. Policies, By-Laws and Budgets**

Council shall approve policies, by-laws and budgets for each of its standing committees which will govern the action of the standing committees.

**7. Members of Standing Committees**

Except when otherwise provided by these By-laws or any statute, all standing committees consist of a minimum of three councillors who shall be appointed for a two year term. It shall be a guideline to strive for at least one half of the membership of committees to rotate off every second year to maintain continuity.

**8. Mayor**

The Mayor is an ex-officio voting member of all Committees except the Audit Committee and the Police Commission.

**9. Special Committees**

- (1) Special or select committees may be appointed on motion, by recorded resolution, at any time.
- (2) Upon presenting its final report to Council on matters referred to it, a special or select committee is dissolved.

**10. Citizen Advisory Committees**

The Council may from time to time appoint citizen advisory committees to advise the Council on the subjects and at the times set out in the resolution establishing the committee.

**11. No Additional Remuneration**

No member of a committee is entitled to remuneration for serving on the committee.

**12. Nominating Committee**

(1) At the first regular meeting of Council held, after the Election, and at the first regular meeting of Council held in October and every two years thereafter, the Council shall appoint, or authorize the Mayor to appoint, the Nominating Committee. The Committee shall consist of the Mayor and at least five (5) Councillors.

(2) Upon appointment, or soon thereafter, the Nominating Committee shall convene and nominate persons to serve for the next two years on the standing committees and external agencies/committees.

(3) The Nominating Committee shall also meet as required to deal with citizen appointments and any vacancies on Committees.

(4) With respect to the appointments of citizens to Committees, the following selection process shall be used:

- While the meetings of the Nominating Committee are open to the public, the proceedings will not be live streamed or videotaped when dealing with citizen appointments.
- The background information for the applicants will not be attached to the public agenda.
- A matrix of the applicants identified by name and number, noting their qualifications and experience in the related field, will be provided to the Nominating Committee.
- Discussion by the Committee will be non-specific, referring to the candidates by number and not by name.

- Recommendations to Council will refer to the candidate number, and once the citizens have accepted the positions and any required background checks have been completed, their names will be released at a subsequent open meeting.

(5) The Council may ratify the report of the nominating committee or may substitute the name of any person instead of the person nominated by the committee.

### 13. Non-Committee Council Members

Council members not serving on Committees will not be permitted to participate in the Committee debate or the vote, but are authorized to make comments, presentations and participate at Committee meetings.

### 14. Committee Procedure

(1) Unless otherwise determined by statute or by-law, the members of a committee shall at their first meeting following the appointment of the committee choose a chair and a vice-chair from among their number.

(2) The Clerk shall call the first meeting of any committee after its appointment on the request of the Mayor or a majority of the members of the committee.

(3) The procedures to be followed by any committee are those prescribed by the rules of order resolution.

(4) A majority of the members of a committee is a quorum.

(5) All meetings of a committee are public except meetings to discuss matters related to personnel, land acquisition, legal opinions and other similar matters as outlined in Section 22(2) of the Nova Scotia *Municipal Government Act*.

### 15. Vacancies in Committees

(1) A councillor appointed to a committee ceases to be a member of the committee upon ceasing to be a councillor.

(2) The Council may by majority vote remove any member from a committee, remove any committee, or remove any member of a board or commission appointed by the Council.

(3) The Council shall fill any vacancy occurring in any committee or with respect to any person appointed by the Council as soon as practicable after the vacancy occurs.

**16. Council Authority**

The Council may confirm, alter, modify or annul any act, requirement or direction of any committee.

**17. Committee Reports**

(1) The report of a committee shall be in writing and signed by the Chair.

(2) When there is a difference of opinion among the members of the committee, the minority may report their views in writing to the Council, if they see fit.

**18. Duties of Standing Committees**

It is the general duty of all standing committees:

- (a) to report to the Council from time to time, whenever desired by the Council and as often as the interests of the Regional Municipality may require, on all matters connected with the duties imposed on them;
- (b) to carry out action in relation to those matters connected with their duties as may be deemed necessary;
- (c) to draft and introduce for Council consideration and adoption of the by-laws, policies and budgets necessary to empower Committees to carry out their mandate;
- (d) to consider and report on any and all matters referred to them by the Council or the Mayor;

**19. Fire and Emergency Services Committee**

The Terms of Reference for the Fire and Emergency Services Committee is as follows: (Council - August 19, 2014):

***Mission***

The mission of the Fire and Emergency Services Committee is to manage community risk through a system of engineering, enforcement, education and consultation; and to provide a standard of emergency response meeting the defined needs of the CBRM.

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*Committee Structure*

The Committee shall consist of five (5) members of Council. The Deputy Mayor is to serve as Chair with the annual election of a Vice Chair. Half of the Committee members are replaced every two years to maintain Committee continuity.

*Committee Duties*

The Committee is to report to Council, carry out the requests of Council, conduct research, create draft bylaws, policies and budgets for Council's consideration, and provide an annual report to Council on the state of service delivery including recommended service direction.

*Areas of Responsibility*

The Fire and Emergency Services Committee will accomplish their mission through their oversight and recommendations to Council pertaining but not limited to the delivery of:

1. Registration of Fire Services;
2. Registration of Emergency Service;
3. Volunteer Support;
4. Fire Service Operations;
5. Fire - Emergency Services;
6. Fire Service Prevention;
7. Fire Service Training;
8. Emergency Management; and
9. Budget.

*Proposed Meeting Schedule*

Meetings will be held **bi-monthly** or more frequently as determined by the Chair. When possible, meetings will be held on the second Wednesday of the month commencing at 10:00 a.m.

**20. Audit Committee**

The Audit Committee shall be appointed in accordance with the provisions of the Audit Committee Policy to perform the duties and exercise the powers prescribed by the Audit Committee Policy in accordance with the *Municipal Government Act*.

**21. Heritage Advisory Committee**

The Heritage Advisory Committee shall be appointed in accordance with the provisions of the Heritage Property By-Law to perform the duties and exercise the powers prescribed by the Heritage Property By-Law and the *Heritage Property Act*.

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**22. Pension (Retirement) Committee**

The Pension (Retirement) Committee members shall be appointed in accordance with the provisions of Section XIII of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality By-law Respecting Pension Plan to perform the duties, exercise the powers and report to Council as prescribed in the said By-law.

**23. External Agencies and Committees**

While Council supports the efforts of external agencies and committees within CBRM and acknowledge the exemplary service provided to the community, it is the Policy of CBRM that direct representation by Council members will not be provided, with the exception of the following organizations (or by future motion of Council), to which the required number of Councillors will be appointed for a two year term unless otherwise stated:

- Cape Breton Regional Library Board (3 members);
- Pitu'paq (one member);
- Nova Scotia Solid Waste-Resource Management Regional Chairs Committee (one member);

Members of Council are at liberty to offer their service to community organizations as a citizen of the Municipality (Council - June 18, 2013).

**24. Appeals Standing Committee**

The Terms of Reference for the Appeals Standing Committee shall be as follows:

***Purpose:***

- a. The purpose of the Appeals Standing Committee is to provide a single forum for the hearing of certain appeals of decisions by staff of the Municipality and other duties as assigned.

***Composition:***

- b. The Appeals Standing Committee shall consist of all members of Council.
- c. The Mayor will be the Chair and the Deputy Mayor will be the Vice-Chair of the Appeals Standing Committee.

***Duties and Responsibilities:***

- d. To hear appeals as delegated to the Committee by the Council, including appeals in accordance with the dangerous and unsightly premises provisions in Part XV of the *Municipal Government Act*; appeals in accordance with the CBRM Tax By-law (as authorized under Section 305 of the *Motor Vehicle Act*); and to issue demolition orders in accordance with the dangerous and unsightly premises provisions in Part XV of the *Municipal Government Act*.

***Administration and Procedures:***

- e. The Appeals Standing Committee shall meet as required to fulfil its duties and responsibilities, and within sixty (60) days from the date the Clerk is in receipt of:
- an appeal of a decision of staff; or
  - a Notice of Staff Intent to Request an Order to Demolish; or
  - a request by an owner to appear and be heard pursuant to Section 346(3) of the *Municipal Government Act*.
- f. While the meetings of the Appeals Standing Committee are open to the public, the proceedings will not be live streamed or videotaped, and the background information for the agenda items will not be posted on the CBRM website.

**Approved by Council August 1, 1995**

**As amended by Council:**

- **May 21, 1996**
- **Occupational Health and Safety Committee deleted as per motion of Council**
- **December 17, 1996**
- **November 28, 2000**
- **December 18, 2001 (quorum at Planning Advisory)**
- **February 17, 2004 (creation of Water Utility Committee)**
- **March 11, 2005 (various amendments)**
- **January 19, 2010 (re: Police Commission)**
- **October 20, 2015 (General Committee and other amendments)**
- **June 19, 2017 (Appeals Standing Committee)**
- **July 18, 2017 (meeting date for Fire and Emergency Services Committee)**
- **June 26, 2018 (Council appointment term 2 years)**
- **March 12, 2019 (Fire & Emergency Services Committee – changes to schedule)**
- **May 21, 2019 (Nominating Committee procedure – citizen appointments)**

# *Cape Breton Regional Municipality*

## **Recorded Resolution RC1**

### **RULES OF ORDER**

#### **1 Order**

- (1) The Mayor or other presiding officer shall preserve order and decorum at all Council meetings and shall decide all questions of order, subject to appeal to the Council.
- (2) When the Mayor or presiding officer is called upon to decide a point of order or practice, the point shall be stated without unnecessary comment, and the Mayor shall briefly cite the rule or authority applicable to the case.
- (3) The Mayor may, before ruling on a point of order, consult the solicitor of the Regional Municipality as to the applicable law.
- (4) It is the right of a member to call another member to order.
- (5) Where a member calls another member to order, the member must state the point of order clearly and succinctly and it will be for the presiding officer to decide whether the point is well taken.
- (6) An appeal may be taken from the decision of the presiding officer by any member of the Council.
- (7) When an appeal is taken from the decision of the presiding officer, the presiding officer shall first state the decision and ad, "The question is: Shall the decision of the Chair stand?"
- (8) When any question of order or practice is raised, it must be decided before further proceeding with the question in discussion.
- (9) When any matter of privilege arises, it must be considered immediately.
- (10) If the Mayor desires to leave the chair for the purpose of taking part in the debate or otherwise, the Deputy mayor or another member of the Council shall fill the Mayor's place until the Mayor resumes the Chair.

**Recorded Resolution RC1**  
**Rules of Order**

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- (11) If any member of the council or any other person in attendance at a meeting of the Council persists in disturbing the conduct of the meeting, the Mayor or other presiding officer may (subject to an appeal to the Council) require that person to leave the meeting and may direct a police officer of the Regional Municipality to carry out the order.
- (12) If the Mayor or other presiding officer determines that it is not possible to maintain order at any meeting of the Council, the Mayor or other presiding officer shall adjourn the meeting.

**2 Rules of Conduct and Debate**

- (1) Every member shall, in speaking to any question or motion, address the Chair.
- (2) When two or more members evidence an intention to speak, the presiding officer shall call upon the member who first showed such an intention, subject to a motion to hear another member.
- (3) No member shall use offensive words in or against the Council or any member thereof, nor shall the member speak beside the question in debate.
- (4) No member shall infringe the rules of the Council or disobey the decision of the presiding officer or of the Council on any question of order or practice, or upon the interpretation of the rules of the Council.
- (5) Where a member infringes the rules of the Council or disobeys the decision of the presiding officer or of the Council, the member may be ordered by the presiding officer or by resolution of the Council to leave that meeting, but if the Council accepts an apology by the offender, the member may be permitted to remain.
- (6) A member called to order by the presiding officer shall immediately cease speaking, except to explain, and the council if appealed to shall decide the matter without debate.
- (7) No member shall pass between any member who is speaking and the presiding officer, nor shall a member interrupt any member who is speaking except to raise a point of order.

**Recorded Resolution RC1**  
**Rules of Order**

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- (8) Any member may require the question or motion in discussion to be read at any time during the debate, but not so as to interrupt a member while speaking.
- (9) (a) Council members are permitted to speak up to two times to the same question without leave of the Council; the first time for a maximum of five (5) minutes and the second time for two (2) minutes, except for significant issues at special meetings during which Council members will be permitted to speak up to fifteen (15) minutes. Staff responses to questions by Councillors shall be counted in the speaking time.
- (b) A reply is allowed to a member who has made a substantive motion to the Council, but not to any member who has moved an amendment.
- (c) If a Council member exceeds the speaking time, any Council member can call a point of order and the Mayor will uphold the ruling that the speaking times be adhered to.
- (10) Every question shall be decided by a vote of yeas and nays and the presiding officer shall state whether the motion has been carried or defeated.
- (11) Every public vote on a motion is a recorded vote and is to be released as part of the televised broadcast. A hard copy of the results of a recorded vote is to be made available upon request. The staff will make such requests for hard copies available in as reasonably and timely manner as possible and a copy of the recorded vote will be available upon request.
- The above process does not apply to the limited type of motions made in closed or in camera sessions duly called under provisions noted in Section 22 of the *Municipal Government Act*.
- (12) When the question in consideration contains distinct propositions, upon request of any member, a vote upon each proposition shall be taken separately.
- (13) Every member of the Council present when a question is put shall vote unless:
- (a) the member has declared a conflict of interest in the subject of the question pursuant to the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act*, or
- (b) the Council has excused the member from voting.

**Recorded Resolution RC1**  
**Rules of Order**

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- (c) Refusal to vote shall be recorded as voting in the negative, as per the *Municipal Government Act*.
- (d) Council will not excuse members from voting unless in Conflict of Interest situations.
- (14) Subject to the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act*, the Mayor shall vote on all questions before Council.
- (15) After the question is put no member shall speak to the question, nor shall any other motion be made until after the result of the vote has been declared; the decision of the presiding officer as to whether the question has been put is conclusive.
- (16) Whenever the presiding officer is of the opinion that a motion is contrary to the rules and privileges of the Council the presiding officer shall apprise the members immediately without putting the question and shall cite the rule or authority applicable to the case without argument or comment.
- (17) The Mayor or presiding officer may, at the beginning of any meeting or at any time except when a question is actually under debate, bring any matters as the Mayor or presiding officer may have in charge or may consider desirable before the Council.

**3 Motions**

- (1) Any member of Council may require that a motion be in writing except a motion to adjourn, to lay on the table, to postpone to a certain time, to refer or to move the previous question.
- (2) A motion shall be seconded before being debated or put to the questions.
- (3) A motion may be withdrawn by the mover with the consent of the seconder at any time before decision or amendment.
- (4) When a question is under consideration no motion shall be received except:
  - 1. To adjourn.
  - 2. To lay on the table.
  - 3. To postpone to a certain time.

**Recorded Resolution RC1**  
**Rules of Order**

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4. To refer.
5. To amend.
6. To move the previous question.

These several motions shall have precedence in the order in which they are named.

- (5) A motion to adjourn shall always be in order, except:
  1. When a member is in possession of the floor.
  2. When the ayes and nays are being called.
  3. While the members are voting.
  4. When “to adjourn” was the last preceding motion.
- (6) No expression of opinion or qualification shall be made with a motion to adjourn the Council or the debate.
- (7) The following questions shall be decided without debate or amendment:
  1. A motion to reconsider.
  2. All motions as to priority of business or as to the suspension of the general order of the day.
  3. An application to speak more than the prescribed number of times.
  4. A motion to allow any person other than a member of the Council to address the Council.
  5. The previous question.
  6. A motion to adjourn.
  7. A motion to postpone to a certain day.
  8. A motion to lay on the table.
- (8) An amendment may only be amended once.

**Recorded Resolution RCI**  
**Rules of Order**

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- (9) Amendments shall be put in the reverse order to that in which they are moved.

**4 Minutes**

- (1) The Clerk shall keep minutes of the procedures of every meeting of the Council in a properly indexed Minute Book.
- (2) The Minutes shall:
  - (a) contain all resolutions and motions passed, with the names of the movers and seconders, and
  - (b) mention reports, petitions and other papers submitted to the Council by their respective titles only, or by a brief description of their purport, but accepted reports shall be entered at length.
- (3) The Minutes shall not include any lengthy report of any debate in the Council, but a summary of the main points raised for and against the question may be included at the discretion of the Clerk.
- (4) The first order of business at any regular meeting of Council shall be the passing of the Minutes of the preceding regular meeting and any special meetings held since the last regular meeting of the Council.
- (5) The Minutes as approved or as corrected and approved shall be signed by the Mayor and the Clerk.

**5 Resolutions Involving Extraordinary Expenditures**

All resolutions involving and expenditure not definitely arranged for in the estimates shall be laid on the table as a Notice of Motion to be discussed at a subsequent meeting. No such resolution shall be voted upon at the same meeting at which it is introduced unless the Chief Administrative Officer recommends in favour of the expenditure and the Council by a two-thirds vote of the members then present approved the expenditure.

**6 Reconsideration**

- (1) After any question has been decided either in the affirmative or negative, any member may, at the same meeting, or at the first meeting thereafter,

**Recorded Resolution RC1**  
**Rules of Order**

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move for a reconsideration thereof. No discussion of the main question shall be allowed unless the motion to reconsider has passed.

- (2) No question shall be reconsidered more than once, nor shall a vote to reconsider be reconsidered.

**7 Adjournments**

The Council shall always adjourn at the hour of 10:00 p.m. if in session at that hour unless otherwise determined by vote of two-thirds of the members present.

**8 Agenda**

- (1) The Clerk in consultation with the Mayor shall prepare an agenda for all matters that are to come before any meeting of Council in the sequence in which they should arise.

- (2) The agenda shall be distributed before each meeting of the Council.

- (3) No matter not on the agenda may be considered at a meeting except as notice for the next succeeding meeting of the Council.

**9 Persons Not Members of Council**

- (1) The Clerk, the Solicitor, or other officer of the Regional Municipality may address the Council on the request of the Mayor or other presiding officer or of any member of the Council.

- (2) No other person who is not a member of the Council shall be heard without the permission of the Council.

- (3) The permission of the Council may be extended by the Mayor or other presiding officer subject to the objection by a majority of the members of the Council present.

- (4) Any matter brought to the Council by petition or public representation shall be considered by the Council at its next regular meeting.

- (5) No one may bring any sign, poster, placard, banner or other like device into the Council Chamber without the prior permission of the Mayor or other presiding officer, subject to objection by a majority of the members of Council present.

**Recorded Resolution RC1**  
**Rules of Order**

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**10     Suspension of Rules**

The rules and procedures of the Council may be suspended by two-thirds majority vote of the members present.

**11     General**

In all cases not provided for, the proceedings of the Council shall be governed by Roberts' Rules of Order.

**Approved by Council: August 1, 1995**

**Amended by Council:**

**August 15, 2000**  
**November 28, 2000**  
**February 19, 2002**  
**March 14, 2005**

# Workshop: Planning Related Public Consultation and Engagement

## Background

December 2019, Council agreed to have a workshop to discuss public consultation

The *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) outlines requirements for public consultation related to planning approvals

Current practice meets and exceeds these requirements, however the Planning & Development Department is always striving to improve our engagement with the community

# Current Regulations (MGA)

Public Participation Program – Required for the preparation and amendments of planning documents (Municipal Planning Strategy & Subdivision By-law)

**Public Engagement Program – Required with abutting municipalities for adopting or amending a planning strategy**

Public Hearing – Required for policy amendments and by-law amendments

## Process Requirements

### Amendments to Municipal Planning Strategy

- Public Participation Program required
- **Public Engagement Program required**
- Public Hearing required
- Notice of decision required in newspaper

### Land Use By-Law Amendments

- **Public Participation Program at Council's discretion**
- Public Hearing required
- Notice of decision required in newspaper

### Development Agreements

- Public Hearing required
- Notice of decision required in newspaper

### Site Planning

- Notice distributed to properties within 30 metres of project site

# Process Requirements cont.

## Heritage Registrations (*Under Heritage Property Act*)

- Notice of public hearing required for registration (property owner)
- Notice of public hearing required for deregistration (property owner)

## Civic Addressing (*Under Civic Addressing Policy*)

- Notice required for all property owners and occupants of civic address changes
- Public meeting/notice for street renaming (to select new names)

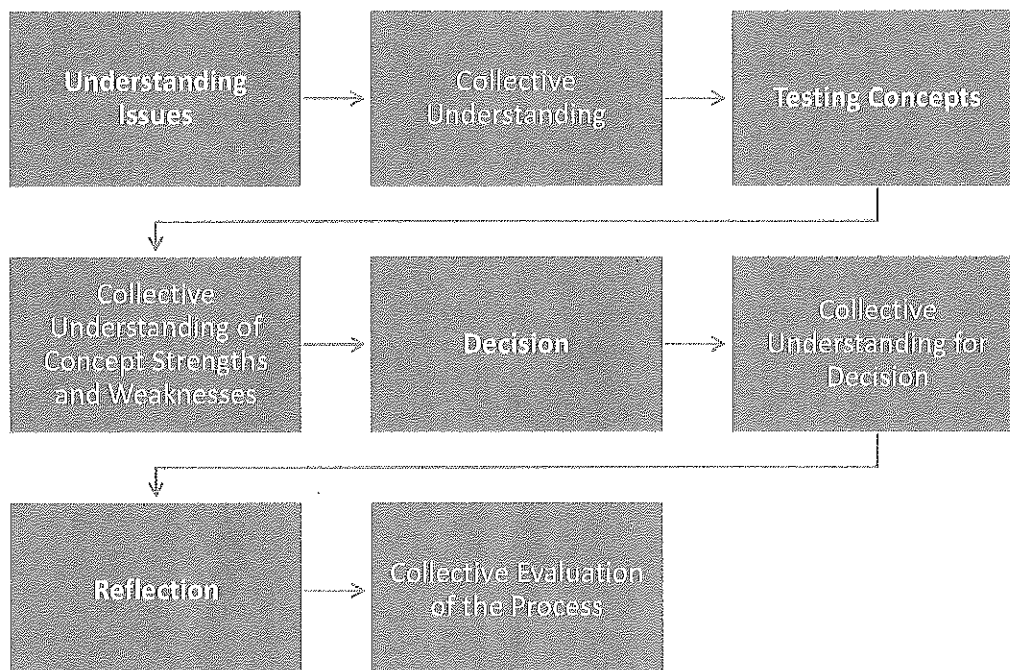
## By-Law Creation

- By-Law Development Process as outlined in CBRM's By-Law Development Policy

## Capital Projects (Ex. Charlotte Street Redesign)



# Public Engagement Process



# Public Engagement Process cont.

## Example of Stakeholder Consultation (Signs):

### Diverse Stakeholder Committee

- Objective – Active, diverse, balanced participation in identification of key issues and identification of possible solutions

### Council Consultation

- Objective – Identify scope for future consultation with general public on key issues and possible solutions

### Consultation with General Public

- Objective – Confirm and/or identify key issues and expectations with possible solutions

### Community Stakeholder Groups

- Objective – Confirm and/or identify key issues and expectations with possible solutions

## Fees

A Council may require that any applicant pay the municipality the cost of required advertising, notifications, etc.

The costs associated with the various planning processes are covered in CBRM's Planning Fees Policy:

- Municipal Planning Strategy Amendments - \$1,000
  - Actual costs - \$1,500 to \$3,000
- Land Use Bylaw Amendments/Development Agreements - \$1,000
  - Actual costs - \$1,500 to \$2,000
- Site Plan Approvals – No Fee

Costs related to public engagement & consultation include processes like the creation of new bylaws (animal husbandry, signs, etc.)

# Next Steps

Continued investment in public education, consultation, & participation

- CBRM's Viability Study
  - Continuous Improvement Framework
- Community Development Coordinator 2020
  - Capacity-Building & Engagement with Community Stakeholders

## Workshop: Planning Related Public Consultation and Engagement

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**From:** Steve D. Gillespie  
**Sent:** January 25, 2020 10:56 AM  
**To:** ClerksOffice  
**Subject:** Re: Council Poll - Materials for Workshop re: Public Input and Process of Council Decisions

1/ Lack of communication with the public: we rely too much on “social media” to get our messages out. Mass media such as radio, newspaper and TV are still the most effective way of communicating with the public. Although face book and twitter are free they are mostly negative leaving us unable to control the narrative. A two pronged approach of awareness and education is better than a reactionary response.

2/ the cbrm website needs a complete overhaul to a much more friendly user experience.

3/ the provincial mandated “newspaper” ads for planning and bylaws should be backed up with radio and social media until a better solution is found.

4/ public hearings are the backbone of our democracy and yet I see very little attendance in chambers. Are people intimidated by it, unaware of it or just not educated enough about it. A few years back when we had the concern of the doggie daycare my approach was to move it from chambers into the community. At Council we had 6 to 8 people attend when I moved it to the community of Coxheath we had over 80. I went door to door dropping off a letter with information and an invitation to the event and I think we need to take that type of approach with our public hearings.

5/ public day. Once a month or quarter we hold a public Q/A with council and directors/managers for members of the public to ask questions. There would be a set agenda, pre-screening of questions and a theme; seniors, transit, economy etc. Last summer Amanda MacDougall and I listened to International CBU students tell us the positive and negative issues they face in CBRM, it was eye opening for sure

Yours in Service  
Steve Gillespie  
CBRM Councillor  
District 4

## Sharon MacSween

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**From:** Amanda M. McDougall  
**Sent:** January 31, 2020 9:18 AM  
**To:** ClerksOffice  
**Subject:** Workshop Materials

Hello folks,

I have a few documents that I have attached the links for following this message. They are more so examples of what other municipalities do in terms of standards for community consultation and outreach.

<http://legacycontent.halifax.ca/boardscom/documents/CommunityEngagementStrategy.pdf>

<https://www.haltonhills.ca/visiongeorgetown/pdf/FinalDraftGeorgetownCommunityEngagementStrategy.pdf>

<https://sustainingcommunity.wordpress.com/2013/10/31/strengths-based-ce/>

In addition, I wonder if we could consider inviting someone from New Dawn to share with us the meaningful and effective process of community consultation they underwent when designing the Centre for Arts and Social Innovation? I recently attended a tour of the former convent and was entranced with the process they undertook, and continue to pursue while the building and programming inside takes shape.

Many thanks,

Amanda McDougall

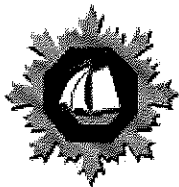
**Amanda M. McDougall**

Councillor – District 8

Cape Breton Regional Municipality

(902)574-0290

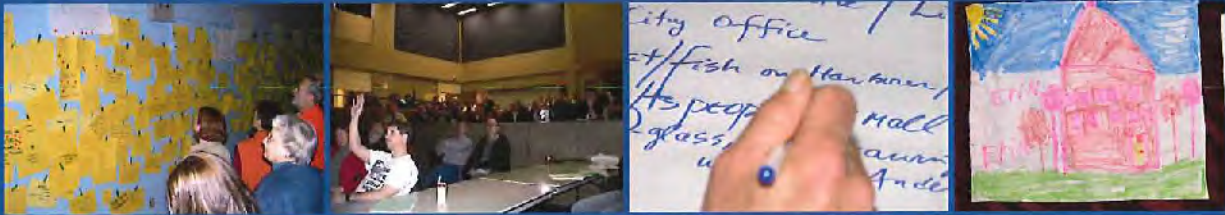
[ammcdougall@cbrm.ns.ca](mailto:ammcdougall@cbrm.ns.ca)



**CAPE BRETON  
REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY**



# Community Engagement Strategy



Approved December 9, 2008  
Halifax Regional Council

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### Overview

The Halifax Regional Municipality recognizes the importance of involving residents in the development of policy, programs and services. Community engagement is also the basis for building healthy, strong and inclusive communities.

In January 2006, Regional Council identified the need to develop a new framework for community engagement across HRM. Community Engagement was designated as a key goal of the Council Focus Area on Community Relations. This *HRM Community Engagement Strategy* provides a policy and strategic action direction which will guide how the municipality will inform, consult with, and engage the public in developing and implementing its programs and services. The strategy builds on municipal and community strengths while addressing key areas in need of improvement.

The strategy is based on a Definition, Continuum of Community Engagement, Ten Principles of Community Engagement, a Checklist and 5 Strategic Approaches which will ensure that the new framework is implemented across HRM.

The Strategy does not mandate specific community engagement formats to be used at specific times. Each situation demands its own approach and process. Rather, the Strategy seeks to institute a strategic approach to every community engagement process hosted by HRM. The Strategy will not address all of the challenges of managing the complex issues of community engagement, yet by introducing a consistent, strategic approach it will equip HRM with the tools needed to move towards more meaningful, inclusive and effective public involvement.

### What is community engagement?

Community engagement is the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people to enact positive action. It includes information sharing, consultation and active involvement in decision making.

While engagement is often led by government, engagement may also be led by the community with government support. The level of community involvement and influence evolves over time and increases along a 'continuum of community engagement'. While HRM may follow some standard processes to satisfy legislative requirements, in many cases a tailored approach will have to be developed. The onus on HRM is to honour local values and traditions, to use a strategic approach to community engagement, to facilitate effective engagement and to clearly communicate to the public the purpose and scope of engagement. It is important to recognize that in the majority of cases the final decision rests with the elected municipal representatives – the IIRM Regional Council.

## HRM's Commitment

HRM is committed to supporting an engaged community across HRM by ensuring there is a range of opportunities for residents to be knowledgeable about local government and actively involved in the cultural and civic life of their community.

The following Principles of Community Engagement will guide all future HRM activities:

HRM's Commitment to Principles of Community Engagement
1. Citizen participation is recognized as an asset, is valued and encouraged
2. The purpose and the process are clear to all participants
3. Everyone potentially affected by the process has an opportunity to become involved
4. Barriers to access are recognized and overcome to ensure diverse, inclusive and balanced participation
5. The process is respectful, fair, effective and transparent
6. Communication is clear, timely and effective
7. Public involvement is adequately resourced
8. Participants are informed of outcomes of community engagement
9. The public has an opportunity to provide feedback on the process
10. Community engagement is evaluated and improved

## A New Community Engagement Strategy for HRM

Since identifying community engagement as a Council Focus Area in January 2007, HRM staff coordinated a detailed review of its community engagement practice as well as successful approaches taken by other municipalities. The review identified a lack of consistency in HRM performance and identified a need for a coordinated approach to community engagement. Based on the findings of these reviews, five strategic approaches are recommended to guide future actions:

1. Adopt an HRM Community Engagement Framework
2. Improve Engagement Practices of Individual Divisions and Business Units
3. Increase Training and Internal Support of HRM Staff
4. Invest in Public Education, Outreach and Capacity Building
5. Ensure Accountability and Promote Excellence in Community Engagement

## Implementation and Governance

*HRM's Community Engagement Strategy* will be championed by the Senior Management team (SMT) and governed by Community Development's Community Relations and Cultural Affairs Division. A primary role of this Division is to provide a comprehensive community development and cultural framework, and operationalize key municipal strategies including Immigration, Youth Development, Community Engagement, Cultural Planning and Community Grants. Council, all business units and all parties acting on HRM's behalf will be bound by this Strategy, the 10 Principles of Community Engagement and the Community Engagement Checklist. All staff reports to Council will now contain a new "Community Engagement" section. An Operating Action Plan will be implemented through an internal Community Engagement Steering Committee.

### Program delivery

The implementation of the *Community Engagement Strategy* will move forward in a phased approach, with different actions within each strategic approach being prioritized in the short-term, medium-term, and long-term.

*Short-term focus* will be placed on the development and adoption of the HRM Community Engagement Framework by Council, including the guiding principles and checklist. Community Engagement Tool-kit, promotional materials and E-Newsletter will be launched. Councillors and key business units will be introduced to the framework in 2008. An HRM Community Engagement Steering Committee will also be established. The development of an overall (internal and external) inclusion strategy for HRM will commence.

*Medium-term focus* will be placed on the collaborative initiation of tailored community engagement improvement programs in relevant Business Units and staff training. An emphasis will be placed on community capacity building and improved outreach and educational materials, including maximizing HRM's use of its website and the Internet to enhance opportunities for public information, consultation, and participation. Work will also commence to changing the notification process, community calendar and launching a community database solution.

*Long-term* focus will be placed on, and the evaluation and monitoring of the improvement efforts of relevant Business Units and Divisions and developing a recognition program.

The *Community Engagement Steering Committee* will further identify priority areas (i.e. for specific Business Units, facilitate centralized database) and monitor and evaluate the implementation of the strategy over the next Business Cycle.

Evaluation of the implementation of the strategy will be conducted both in an ongoing way (formative) by Community Relations staff and the Steering Committee, and yearly (summative) with each Business Cycle to measure outcomes and ensure progress is in alignment with Council priorities. Annual progress reports will be tabled with Regional Council.

## Budget and Resources

To effectively carry out meaningful community engagement initiatives, distinct resources must be allocated in the operating budgets of individual Business Units. To date, most HRM Business Units have not had dedicated budgets to support community engagement as described in this strategy with the notable exception of major corporate initiatives such as the Regional Plan, Community Visioning, and HRM by Design.

The Community Engagement Resource Group (CERG) is currently in the process of allocating funds for research, professional development / training, and equipment, in order to ensure it is well equipped to respond to inquiries and requests for support and guidance from across municipal Business Units.

This strategy emphasizes the importance of creating the right conditions for improved engagement. The real costs of engagement need to be considered by all Business Units and integrated into all existing and future engagement programs.

## PART I

### Building the Strategy: Review of Community Engagement in HRM

In the 2003 Community Development Business Plan, Council endorsed staff proposal to develop a Community Development Framework for improving HRM’s service delivery at the community level. The Community Development Framework was developed and has since been operationalized. It is comprised of three key strategies: Community Engagement, Community Capacity Building, and Governance and Service Delivery. Community Engagement is considered key to building informed, cohesive, organized, welcoming and safe communities. All three are implemented using an Appreciative Inquiry and Asset-based approach (Fig.1).



*Fig. 1 HRM’s Community Development Approach*

Community Engagement as one of the three key pillars of the HRM Community Development Framework will facilitate capacity building, governance and service delivery enhancement which will in turn lead to more informed, cohesive, inclusive, vibrant and safe communities. Recognizing the importance of effective community engagement, Council affirmed the need to develop a new framework for community engagement and public consultation. The process of developing the framework included:

1. **January 2007:** Council declares Community Engagement a Focus Area
2. **May 2007:** Assessment of HRM’s Community Engagement
3. **August 2007:** Internal Survey and best practice research

### Assessment of HRM's Public Engagement Exercises

In May 2007 the MacDonnell Group Consulting and One World Inc. were commissioned by HRM to conduct an assessment of a variety of HRM's public engagement exercises. The objective was to understand HRM's strengths and weaknesses in terms of how we engage the public as a municipality. The consultants evaluated ten past community engagement projects based on a set of indicators of good practice.<sup>1</sup> The process was overseen by an internal staff steering committee comprised of staff from Community Relations, Human Resources, Real Property, Police, Recreation and Planning.

#### 1.1 Focus Groups & Case Study Research

The consultants conducted seven focus groups held throughout the HRM with residents, HRM staff, and Councillors who had participated in one or more of the ten community engagement exercises. Along with the focus groups, they reviewed documentation for each case study. Considering the collected data, as well as relevant policies, legislation, and applicable models of public engagement from other jurisdictions, the consultants identified a number of key findings and recommendations.

#### Findings

The key challenges identified by the report include clarity on the goals and objectives of engagement, lack of feedback and evaluation at different stages of the process, staff training and support and internal coordination. The recommendations are based on "getting the foundation right for meaningful engagement", including:

- Improving internal consistency and communication;
- Developing a coordinated HRM-wide approach to community engagement, including plans for all processes;
- Developing guiding principles for engagement;
- Reviewing of existing policies and procedures to ensure consistency with the new approach;
- Enhancing staff engagement skills and capacities with appropriate training and through developing mechanisms for shared learning;
- Demonstrating that engagement is important and valued with appropriate venues, proper equipment, and by only seeking involvement when feedback will be used;
- Improving external communication and outreach by using clear language and diverse tools;
- Ensuring the goals of engagement activities are clear and reach a wide and diverse audience;
- Increasing the range of engagement methods used to enhance inclusion, ensuring they match the purpose of engagement and the stakeholders and communities impacted;
- Establishing clear mechanisms of feedback and evaluation for each engagement initiative.

#### 1.2 Internal Community Engagement Survey

Complementing the findings of the consultant's report staff conducted an internal survey of all HRM business units. The purpose of this additional survey was to determine which units regularly engage

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<sup>1</sup> Please see the final consultants' report for a list of the case studies and evaluation criteria.

the public, to recognize best practices, and identify opportunities for improvement. There were 24 surveys completed by relevant division and project managers. The survey asked questions about general practices, engagement goals and methods, and invited respondents to identify three wishes with respect to HRM's community engagement practices.

### Findings

The survey revealed that 85% of HRM's divisions engage the public and over a quarter do it on a daily basis. Most engagement exercises are staff-driven, and while the majority of managers see their staff as being comfortable with public engagement facilitation they also identified a need for better training and internal support, particularly with respect to communication.

### 1.3 Best Practice Research

The consultant report provided initial research on community engagement tools and techniques. This was supplemented by staff research from various jurisdictions and professional associations. In general, best practice research pointed out the need for a framework, guiding principles, clarity on the continuum of engagement and selecting appropriate approaches to engaging the various segments of the public on specific issues. There is also a general agreement that in order to be effective investment must be made to strengthen internal government capacity. The *Community Engagement Improvement Strategy* is guided by the above findings.

## PART II

### Community Engagement Strategy Framework

The *Community Engagement Framework* (the Framework) includes a policy direction regarding common definition, adoption of the continuum of community engagement, and the Ten (10) Principles of Community Engagement. The *Community Engagement Strategy* (the Strategy) will be operationalized through Five (5) Strategic Approaches and actions contained in them.

***Policy 1: HRM will adopt a Community Engagement Framework which will guide all of its public involvement, including initiatives led by Council, staff, external consultants and community.***

#### 2.1 Defining Community Engagement

Community engagement can be defined as *“the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people to enact positive action. It includes information sharing, consultation and active involvement in decision making”*.

Residents expect to be involved in the decisions that affect them, and citizen involvement in deliberations about what is important to them, how their community grows and develops is crucial to more informed government decisions and better service delivery. Effective public engagement taps into the collective knowledge and wisdom of residents and contributes to building more connected, harmonious and resilient communities. When people are involved in initiating and promoting change, the resulting solutions tend to be more successful and lasting.

Community engagement is fundamental to local representative democracy; “Exclusion, however, “is the shadow of public engagement”<sup>2</sup> and engagement that is too numerous, poorly designed and poorly executed can discourage or even silence significant portions of the community. Each situation requires a tailored approach to engagement. The onus on HRM is to honour local values and traditions, to use a strategic approach to community engagement, to facilitate effective engagement and to clearly communicate to the public the purpose and scope of engagement. It is important to recognize that in a vast majority of cases the final decision rests with the elected municipal representatives – the IIRM Regional Council.

***Policy 2: HRM will adopt a common definition of community engagement, including definitions contained in the Community Engagement Dictionary accompanying the Strategy.***

<sup>2</sup> Social Planning Research Council of BC. Nov. 2005. Policy Spotlight on Diversity and Civic Engagement. [www.inclusivecities.ca](http://www.inclusivecities.ca)

## 2.2 Continuum of Community Engagement

Community Engagement covers a wide range of processes and government-community connections include information sharing, public consultation and active participation. While engagement is often led by government, engagement may also be led by the community with government support. The level of community involvement and influence evolves over time and increases along this ‘continuum of community engagement’.<sup>3</sup> Once a mode of engagement is chosen, the decision must be clearly communicated to the public. Clear, timely and accessible information sharing and communication are part of all stages of the continuum (see Fig. 2).

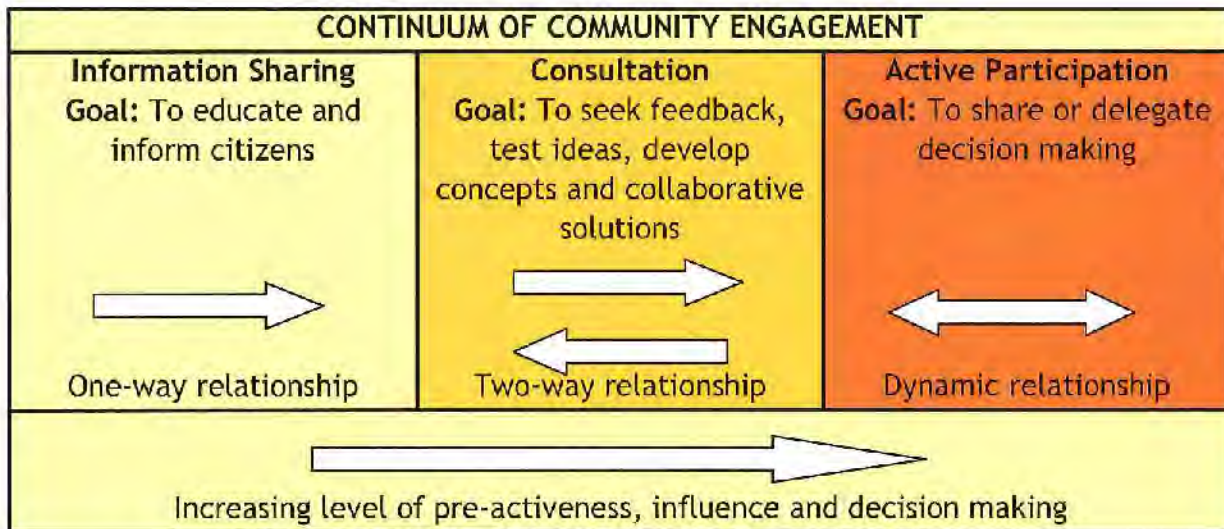


Fig. 2 Continuum of Community Engagement

**Information sharing** – involves sharing information to build awareness of issues that may affect the public or specific communities. HRM’s responsibility here is to provide objective, reliable, timely, easy to find and easy to understand information. Open houses, public announcements, publications such as IIRM’s “Naturally Green”, the Annual Report and the Budget are all examples of information sharing tools.

**Consultation** – is typically part of a regulatory process where the public’s input on matters affecting them is sought. Its main goals are to improve the efficiency, transparency and public involvement in projects, laws and policies. It may include simple testing of ideas or concepts to build knowledge or it may include a two-way collaboration to develop solutions and build community buy-in. IIRM’s responsibility is to define goals and processes, clearly state the purpose and limits of engagement and

<sup>3</sup> The HRM has adopted and adapted the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s ([www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org)) engagement model to reflect the range of engagement initiatives in which the IIRM is involved.

how the information collected will be used in decision making. Examples of consultation include Police Town Hall meetings, various Council public advisory committees, public hearings, etc.

**Active participation** – involves sharing decision making to build ownership or delegating decision making to build community capacity and responsibility. HRM’s responsibility is to provide support, time and flexibility to facilitate dialogue between the public, HRM representatives and other partners. HRM should also define a process for integrating input of active engagement in decision making. Community Visioning, community MOUs and facility management agreements are forms of active participation.

*Policy 3: HRM will adopt the Continuum of Community Engagement in developing, implementing and communicating public involvement initiatives.*

### 2.3 HRM’s Principles of Community Engagement

HRM has already embraced community engagement as a key component of sound local democracy. We realize the importance and value of placing residents and communities at the centre of our municipal activities. The *Community Engagement Strategy* recognizes the dedication and hard work of residents, staff, and Council in past and present engagement projects.

This strategy aims to build on that good work by coordinating the municipality’s approach to community engagement in order to maximize the benefits to all involved parties. HRM wishes to serve residents in an effective, efficient, and legitimate way. We want to better understand the expectations, strengths, and concerns of residents. With this strategy, we strive to make IIRM’s community engagement processes more coherent, transparent, and accessible to all. The following Principles of Community Engagement will guide all future community engagement activities led by IIRM and those acting on HRM’s behalf. They represent an HRM commitment to the public.

### HRM's Commitment to Principles of Community Engagement

1. Citizen participation is recognized as an asset, is valued and encouraged
2. The purpose and the process are clear to all participants
3. Everyone potentially affected by the process has an opportunity to become involved
4. Barriers to access are recognized and overcome to ensure diverse, inclusive and balanced participation
5. The process is respectful, fair, effective and transparent
6. Communication is clear, timely and effective
7. Public involvement is adequately resourced
8. Participants are informed of outcomes of community engagement
9. The public has an opportunity to provide feedback at the various stages of the process
10. Community engagement will be evaluated and improved

*Policy 4: HRM will adopt the Ten Principles of Community Engagement and use them to guide the development and implementation of all HRM community engagement processes.*

#### 2.4 Community Engagement Checklist

Community engagement is an important but only one component of government decision making. It may not always be appropriate to engage the public, and when a decision is made to engage the process must be planned for to ensure the public involvement is meaningful, effective and results in positive results for the community. The Continuum of Community Engagement along with the Ten Principles provides a framework for planning any public engagement exercise. Community engagement must take place within a strategic and deliberate decision making process to help ensure that an appropriate level of engagement (see Fig. 3).

To assist staff, Councillors and external parties hosting community engagement on HRM's behalf a 'Readiness Checklist' has been developed to assess the level of readiness to engage the public (Appendix 1). The expectation is not to achieve a perfect score, but to cover as much as possible all of the key aspects prior to engagement to ensure a meaningful and effective exchange between HRM, its residents and stakeholders. A longer version of the Checklist focussed on the key stages of planning community engagement (see Fig. 4) has been developed and will also be provided in the Community Engagement Toolkit.

Each level of engagement along the continuum can be implemented through a range of engagement tools and techniques. In the past, HRM used both traditional techniques, such as advisory committees and public meetings, as well as more innovative processes such as community visioning, asset mapping and appreciative inquiry. The complexity of the issues at hand, the desired outcomes of the

process, and the timeline, all help to determine which methods are most appropriate. The Community Engagement Tool-Kit will provide a guide to the various techniques.

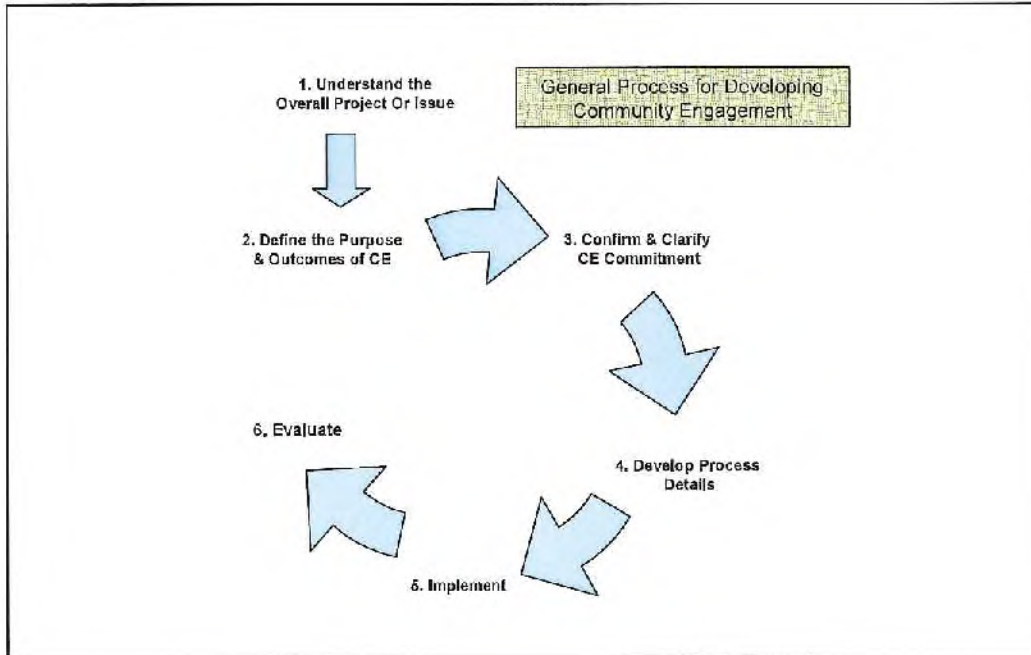


Fig. 3 General process for developing Community Engagement processes

**Policy 5: HRM will adopt the Community Engagement Checklist in the development and implementation of its community engagement initiatives.**

## PART III

### The Strategy: Improving Community Engagement in the HRM

The assessment of HRM's current engagement practices identified many strengths but also the need to improve and coordinate HRM's community engagement practices. Further best practices research has augmented these studies and together form the basis for the five strategic approaches and accompanying actions set forth in this strategy. An administrative Action Plan was also developed and it details the governance, costs, and timelines associated with these actions.

#### Strategic Approach 1: Adopt an HRM Community Engagement Framework

A community engagement framework will shape and direct HRM's community engagement (CE) practices. It will help staff make decisions about when engagement is appropriate, how processes should be designed and implemented, and who should participate. This framework will also enhance both staff and public understanding of community engagement goals, methods, tools, and techniques.

##### Action 1.1 Develop a community engagement dictionary

There are many terms used to describe community engagement, many of which are not used consistently. To ensure expectations are accurate for any given process, HRM will use the Continuum of Community Engagement and the terms in the Community Engagement Dictionary. Regardless of what terms are used by other agencies, HRM will consistently use these terms and definitions to ensure clarity and avoid misunderstanding. A draft community engagement dictionary has been developed by Community Relations staff and will be provided as part of a Community Engagement Tool-Kit.

##### Action 1.2 Develop and implement Community Engagement Checklist & Readiness Test

To assist staff and those acting on HRM's behalf with designing engagement processes and making decisions about public processes, a community engagement checklist has been developed. The checklist identifies the typical stages in any engagement process, and allows staff to "check off" key actions along the planning process. A short checklist focused on "readiness" confirms that community engagement is ready to proceed. Public communication should regularly reiterate the process and the checklist may also be used as a basis for public monitoring and evaluation. A short and along version of the checklist will be provided. A short version of the checklist is appended to this strategy (Appendix I).

### **Action 1.3 Develop a ‘Community Engagement Tools and Resources Kit’**

To assist staff with designing engagement exercises and making decisions about public processes, a Community Engagement Toolkit will be developed. The kit will include key IIRM community engagement documents such as the Guiding Principles, Checklist, Dictionary, Risk Assessment, Communication Guide and Evaluation Guide. It will also provide explanations of both traditional and innovative engagement techniques, the goals and circumstances under which each is most appropriate, as well as the contact information of relevant support staff. The kit will be available in hard copy and on line and will also be made public on IIRM’s website to support community-driven engagement processes.

## **Strategic Approach 2: Support Improved Community Engagement Practices of Individual Divisions / Business Units**

To facilitate the integration of the new community engagement framework across IIRM, it is proposed that Community Relations staff support each Business Unit in the development of its own program for improvement. The *Community Engagement Strategy* champions will work as a team and actively engage staff in the implementation of this new direction.

### **Action 2.1 Develop a ‘Community Engagement Resource Group’ (CERG)**

HRM has a number of staff with substantial knowledge and experience in community engagement. These staff members will comprise Community Relations Resource Group (CERG) who will focus on skill development and relevant research (i.e. developing the toolkit). This group, comprised of Community Relations staff to begin with, will be available for guidance and consultation in regards to the design, implementation and evaluation of all of HRM’s engagement exercises. The group will also help build capacity amongst staff and provide peer-to-peer mentoring. Over time, Community Engagement expertise will grow throughout the organization as staff becomes familiar and confident with community engagement principles and techniques.

### **Action 2.2 Develop a Community Engagement Steering Committee**

A Community Engagement Steering Committee will guide and support each relevant HRM division to tailor the community engagement framework to fit its own requirements. CERG will work with the Senior Management Team to identify appropriate staff. The Steering Committee will monitor, evaluate and guide revisions to the Community Engagement Strategy.

### **Action 2.3 Educate staff and Councillors on the new Community Engagement Framework**

The new Community Engagement Strategy will need to be communicated clearly to staff, Councillors, and contractors acting on HRM behalf and the public. The Community Engagement Framework will be shared with staff and Councillors through workshops, presentations, written materials, on the web, intranet and open discussions. A special effort will be made to incorporate community engagement as part of new staff and Council orientation sessions. Templates will also be developed to clearly communicate where specific processes are on the Continuum of Engagement. Community Relations will work with Corporate Communications to develop promotional materials.

### **Action 2.4 Develop a ‘Process Improvement Program’ for individual Business Units**

Community engagement should align with Council Focus areas and Corporate priorities but it can also inform those priorities. Some HRM business units and divisions have already moved forward with community engagement improvement plans, while others still need to initiate such a process. Community Relations staff will provide support and foster an environment where divisions can easily adapt and apply their improvement programs consistent with the HRM Community Engagement Framework. The goal is to initially assess the three top community engagement processes in each business unit or division and develop a standardized plan that complies with the Principles of Community Engagement.

### **Action 2.5 Develop a Community Engagement Calendar to improve coordination**

Currently various divisions may post notices of meetings in newspapers and on their individual websites but there is no coordinated approach either internally or externally to notify staff and public of upcoming meetings. As a result more than one HRM meeting may take place in the same community on the same day or several meetings may occur in one week. This results in confusion, poor attendance, community confusion and burn-out. It also means that internally opportunities are missed to coordinate a more efficient approach to community engagement. Community Relations staff will work with Corporate Communication, Clerk’s Office, Web Services and all the business units to develop and promote the use of an interactive Community Engagement Calendar for internal and external use.

## **Strategic Approach 3: Increased Training and Internal Support of HRM Staff**

It is essential that staff have the appropriate skills, tools, and supports to engage the public in an effective, efficient, and meaningful way. The HRM community engagement review process identified the need for more comprehensive staff training, which may include both community engagement processes and techniques. Internal support should place emphasis on internal and external communication and allocation of appropriate resources. It may include developing new staff competencies related to community engagement.

### **Action 3.1 Expand and promote HRM’s staff training programs**

Many staff members are comfortable working with the public and bring substantial skill and expertise to HRM’s community engagement projects. The HRM community engagement review process found, however, that our performance lacks professional consistency. Expanded opportunities for staff training will support the implementation of the community engagement framework and allow staff to explore innovative opportunities and gaining comfort with engaging the public. Programs should focus on the Community Engagement strategy itself, process facilitation, public speaking and presentation style, community engagement tools, diversity training, planning inclusive events and processes, conflict resolution, and media relations among others.

### **Action 3.2 Develop a Community Engagement Newsletter**

In addition to staff training, a quarterly electronic newsletter will be developed by Community Relations staff in conjunction with Corporate Communication. The objective will be to share information on ongoing initiatives, best practice research in facilitation and community engagement, and to provide staff with practical tips on how to effectively engage the public.

### **Action 3.3 Develop a strategic communications plan for business units and their divisions**

The HRM community engagement review process revealed that strategic communication, both between business units and with the public, is often lacking. Emphasis should be placed on timely, clear, concise, objective communication free of technical jargon. Communication materials may also address history of the issues, relevant policy and procedures, and alternative approaches to addressing issues. Communication should also regularly reiterate the basics of the process such as schedule, milestones, decision making points, progress and opportunities for feedback. Business Units and Divisions should work in cooperation with Corporate Communications to develop their own strategic communications plan to improve their exchanges with the public and with one another.

### **Action 3.4 Develop appropriate budget and resource allocation for community engagement**

The review process revealed that while traditional engagement processes are relatively well resourced, there is little budget support for Community Engagement processes that are innovative, that go beyond the status quo dictated by policy or legislation, or that focus on reaching more diverse participants. Additionally, staff is often forced to play a dual role of both an expert and a facilitator, a situation that creates a perception of bias, public confusion, and staff burnout. In order to promote effective and representative engagement, dedicated resources to support defined community engagement roles as well as inclusive and more innovative processes should be prioritized. All business units will be encouraged to incorporate realistic plans for community engagement as part of their business planning.

### **Action 3.5: Develop a plan to address needs for technology, equipment, facilities, and meeting spaces**

The HRM community engagement review process revealed that logistics and technology often pose a challenge in delivering effective engagement initiatives. Inconsistent access to updated audio-visual technologies, appropriate facilities and meeting spaces, and other equipment has on occasion resulted in less-effective processes. Business Units and Divisions should assess their inventory of technology and equipment. Priority should be placed on ensuring that equipment is updated and maintained in working order. All business units should work collaboratively to inventory community meeting spaces and facilities that meet basic standards of quality and accessibility. They should also ensure resources, if needed, are available to secure appropriate locations.

#### **Strategic Approach 4: Invest in Public Education, Outreach, and Capacity Building**

IIRM recognizes the importance of informed and active residents, and will continue to provide training and support to build community through volunteerism and active participation. HRM is also committed to representative participation in its community engagement processes and will take steps to improve public outreach to underrepresented groups and those that experience barriers to participation. To this end, the municipality will continue to explore new and innovative ways to initiate and sustain the involvement of the broadest range of participants in its engagement processes. IIRM will value and respect citizens' input and participation through appropriate and varied opportunities for involvement.

##### **Action 4.1 Improve public knowledge of HRM's processes and structures**

For many, government structures and practices are confusing and unclear. HRM should promote a higher level of awareness amongst public and private sectors about how the municipality works and what opportunities exist for participation. Community engagement can inform how these processes can be modified to create a better fit and easier access for local communities. In addition, IIRM "how-to" guides (print and web-based) should outline municipal structures, services provided and how to access them, and how to participate in municipal processes. Materials should be translated to increase access by linguistically diverse groups. Workshops should be developed on specific topics, i.e. volunteering, getting permits, getting involved in planning and development processes. Tours of City Hall and informal meet-and-greets between municipal Councillors, staff and community leaders should also be encouraged and promoted.

##### **Action 4.2 Improve HRM's website**

HRM's website is an efficient and relatively low-cost way to reach out to the public. At a minimum, the website is an easy way to share information. However, the interactive nature of the Internet provides many opportunities for innovation in community engagement (i.e. on-line forums such as the one used in Vision HRM; an interactive calendar of Community Engagement events; audio and video-streaming). IIRM should explore how it can maximize the benefits of the web, keeping in mind that online Community Engagement is dependent on public access to computers and the Internet. HRM recently announced an expansion of high-speed Internet access to rural areas. More public access terminals with well-advertised locations would also broaden the accessibility of on-line Community Engagement. The revision of Halifax.ca provides an opportunity for a higher level of service.

##### **Action 4.3 Develop a community contact database solution**

IIRM should coordinate a centralized database solution for maintaining community contact information that would be accessible to all divisions. The database would arrange and cross-reference the contact information of concerned residents and community groups, based on areas of interest, geography, past participation in training or public processes, etc. The database would help to ensure that all the appropriate residents and community groups are informed about participation opportunities. New contact forms will be developed to incorporate consent for internal sharing of contact information.

### **Action 4.4 Develop a Community Engagement Inclusion Guide & Workshop**

Many divisions reach out to diverse groups in their engagement exercises; however, there is no consistent approach for addressing diversity in public outreach. The Community Engagement review process identified this lack of coordination as often contributing to a less representative participant base than desired. HRM should draw on current expertise within HRM Human Resources and Community Relations as a first step to developing a Community Engagement Inclusion Guide. Such a strategy would develop contact and media lists, consider potential barriers to participation (based on age, language, literacy, economic status, gender, race, ethnic or cultural background, newcomer status, communication style) and develop strategies for addressing these barriers. More inclusive processes must include multiple and appropriate opportunities for involvement.

### **Action 4.5 Develop a new volunteer management strategy**

HRM recognises that an empowered and organized community sector is the main aim of community development, which enables residents to assess, communicate, and act on their diverse needs and concerns more effectively. HRM currently provides training to community members and groups in facilitation, leadership and board development in order to promote volunteerism, build capacity and help community develop the skills and confidence necessary to act as significant stakeholders in the municipality. Similar training could be offered to all HRM citizen committees to ensure a clear understanding of purpose, decision making scope and effective group dynamics. The annual HRM Volunteer Conference provides an opportunity to connect with volunteers and exchange expertise. The development of a coordinated Volunteer Management Strategy is currently underway and will contribute to stronger and more legitimate community engagement.

### **Action 4.6 Develop a revised and enhanced notification process**

Current notification practices for most HRM Community Engagement processes primarily rely on formal newspaper notifications as well as mail outs, website notification and placards on properties. In order to reach a broader range of participants, an enhanced notification process should be developed that will go above and beyond notification mandated by legislation and utilize a combination of traditional and innovative communication vehicles (i.e. community-based networks such as notice boards and church bulletins, television spots, internet communication such as e-mail and Facebook, door-to-door campaigns, etc). Special attention will be paid to considering the need for clear language, translated materials, and amount of time notice is given in advance of events. Community Relations will work with Clerk's Office, Corporate Communication, Web Services and other Business Units to enhance the existing process.

### **Action 4.7 Allocate resources to support inclusive participation in HRM processes**

Inclusive processes require resources to remove barriers to participation. This may include communication resources to broaden advertising in community newspapers, assisting volunteers with transportation costs, childcare, interpreters and ensuring accessible meeting spaces. It is imperative that HRM allocates resources to broaden its base of engaged citizens.

### **Strategic Approach 5: Improved Accountability and Promotion of Excellence**

The goal of this strategy is to empower and enable HRM as an organization to demonstrate its commitment to public involvement by increasing the level of staff professionalism, increasing internal resources and coordination. The Strategy invites each business unit to take ownership of reviewing and improving their respective activities. To this end, it is proposed that all engagement initiatives use the “Community Engagement Checklist” as part of engagement planning, and that staff reports include a new “Community Engagement section”. In addition to regular evaluation it is recommended that a corporate program to recognize excellence and innovation in community engagement be recognized in HRM.

#### **Action 5.1 Institute the “Community Engagement Checklist” as part of planning for all community engagement**

Appendix I includes a checklist for planning community engagement activities. The completion of this checklist is mandatory for any staff or Council driven community engagement exercise, as well as any exercise led by a third party acting on behalf of HRM (i.e. consultant). This checklist has been developed in accordance with HRM’s Community Engagement Guiding Principles and is intended to help staff design effective and accessible community engagement processes.

#### **Action 5.2 Introduce a new mandatory ‘Community Engagement’ section in staff reports**

A new “Community Engagement” section will become a mandatory requirement of staff reports. It will include a mandatory description of a Community Engagement process including how internal and external stakeholders were engaged on a given initiative (i.e. how they were informed, consulted or actively engaged). Staff may also wish to append more detailed description of the process to staff reports (e.g. meeting minutes, key issues and how they were addressed). In the event that stakeholders or the wider community were not engaged, the new section will provide a brief rationale for that decision. Community Relations will work with SMT and Clerk’s Office to institute this change.

#### **Action 5.3 Revise HRM contract templates to ensure external consultants use the new Community Engagement Framework**

The new Community Engagement Framework will apply to all parties representing IIRM. It is therefore important that Request for Proposal templates include a requirement that any public involvement abides by the Community Engagement Principles and Framework. Community Relations will work with Procurement staff to institute this change.

#### **Action 5.4 Require regular evaluation of completed engagement processes**

All engagement initiatives should incorporate public feedback and evaluation as part of the planning process. Evaluation should not be onerous and should correspond to the length and complexity of the engagement process. It can be completed by staff, an outside consultant or the participating public. All evaluation should be shared with the CERG to help assess need for training, coordination and to share “lessons learned” across the municipality.

**Action 5.5 Develop a program to recognize excellence in community engagement**

The improvement of community engagement practice at HRM will initially require additional staff resources. This effort and innovation should be recognized and celebrated by the municipality. It is recommended that these successes be shared among business units through an annual community engagement recognition program. Community Relations will work with Corporate Communication and the DCAO Office to implement the program.

## Implementation and Governance of the Strategy

### Governance

*HRM's Community Engagement Strategy* will be championed by the Senior Management team (SM1) and governed by Community Development's Community Relations and Cultural Affairs Division. A primary role of this Division is to provide a comprehensive community development and cultural framework, and operationalize key municipal strategies including Immigration, Youth Development, Community Engagement, Cultural Planning and Community Grants.

A Community Engagement Resource Group (CERG) has been established to support and coordinate the implementation of the Community Engagement strategic directions across the organization. The Community Engagement Resource Group will convene a Community Engagement Steering Committee comprised of representatives of all business units involved in community engagement work. The Committee will work collaboratively to ensure the recommendations are flexible and suitable to the requirements of their divisions, as well as oversee the implementation and evaluation of the strategy on annual basis.

### Program Delivery

The implementation of the *Community Engagement Strategy* will move forward in a phased approach, with different actions within each strategic approach being prioritized in the short-term, medium-term, and long-term.

*Short-term focus* will be placed on the development and adoption of the IIRM Community Engagement Framework by Council, including the guiding principles and checklist. Community Engagement Tool-kit, promotional materials and E-Newsletter will be launched. Councillors and key business units will be introduced to the framework in 2008. An HRM Community Engagement Steering Committee will also be established. The development of an overall (internal and external) inclusion strategy for HRM will commence.

*Medium-term focus* will be placed on the collaborative initiation of tailored community engagement improvement programs in relevant Business Units and staff training. An emphasis will be placed on community capacity building and improved outreach and educational materials, including maximizing IIRM's use of its website and the Internet to enhance opportunities for public information, consultation, and participation. Work will also commence to changing the notification process, community calendar and launching a community database solution.

*Long-term focus* will be placed on, and the evaluation and monitoring of the improvement efforts of relevant Business Units and Divisions and developing a recognition program.

The *Community Engagement Steering Committee* will further identify priority areas (i.e. for specific Business Units, facilitate centralized database) and monitor and evaluate the implementation of the strategy over the next Business Cycle.

Evaluation of the implementation of the strategy will be conducted both in an ongoing way (formative) by Community Relations staff and the Steering Committee, and yearly (summative) with each Business Cycle to measure outcomes and ensure progress is in alignment with Council priorities. Annual progress reports will be tabled with Regional Council.

### **Budget and Resources**

To effectively carry out meaningful community engagement initiatives, distinct resources must be allocated in the operating budgets of individual Business Units. To date, most HRM Business Units have not had dedicated budgets to support community engagement as described in this strategy with the notable exception of major corporate initiatives such as the Regional Plan, Community Visioning, and HRM by Design.

The Community Engagement Resource Group (CERG) is currently in the process of allocating funds for research, professional development / training, and equipment, in order to ensure it is well equipped to respond to inquiries and requests for support and guidance from across municipal Business Units.

This strategy emphasizes the importance of creating the right conditions for improved engagement. The real costs of engagement need to be considered by all Business Units and integrated into all existing and future engagement programs.

Community Engagement Action Plan

Strategic Direction/ Action	Progress	Short Term (2008-2010)		Medium Term (2011-2013)		Long Term (2014-2016)	
		Staff	Budget	Staff	Budget	Staff	Budget
<b>Strategic Approach 1: Adopt an HRM Community Engagement Framework</b>							
1.1 Develop a community engagement dictionary	Completed	CRCA	N/A				
1.2 Develop and implement Community Engagement Checklist & Readiness Test	Completed	CRCA, All BUs	N/A				
1.3 Develop a 'Community Engagement Tools and Resources Kit'	Completed	CRCA	\$5,000			CRCA	\$5,000
<b>Strategic Approach 2: Support improved CE practices in Divisions/BUs</b>							
2.1 Develop a "Community Engagement Resource Group" (CERG)	Completed	CRCA	N/A				
2.2 Develop a Community Engagement Steering Committee	Started	CRCA/All BUs	N/A				
2.3 Educate staff and Councillors on the new Community Engagement Framework	Completed / Ongoing	CRCA, CC	N/A	CRCA, CC	N/A	CRCA, CC	N/A
2.4 Develop a "Process Improvement Program" for individual Business Units	Started with P&D/ Ongoing Service	CRCA, All BUs	Individual operating	CRCA, All BUs	Individual operating	CRCA, All BUs	Individual operating
2.5 Develop a Community Engagement Calendar to improve coordination	Completed	CRCA, CC, WS, All	WS operating				
<b>Strategic Approach 3: Increase training and internal support to staff</b>							
3.1 Expand and promote HRM's staff training programs	Completed / Ongoing	CRCA, HR	\$5,000	CRCA, HR	\$5,000	CRCA, HR	\$5,000

HRM Community Engagement Strategy

3.2 Develop a Community Engagement Newsletter	Completed / HRM News / InsideHRM	CRCA, CC	\$ 1,000	CRCA, CC	\$1,500	CRCA, CC	\$1,500
3.3 Develop a strategic communications plan for business units and their divisions	Started	All BUs, CC, CRCA	Individual operating	All BUs, CC, CRCA	Individual operating	All BUs, CC, CRCA	Individual operating
3.4 Develop appropriate budget and resource allocation for community engagement	Ongoing / requirements determined annually/project specific	All BUs	Individual operating	All BUs	Individual operating	All BUs	Individual operating
3.5 Develop a plan to address needs for technology, equipment, facilities, and meeting spaces	CRCA – Started /Ongoing / project specific assessments	CRCA, All BUs	\$5,000	CRCA, All BUs	\$5,000	CRCA, All BUs	\$5,000
<b>Strategic Approach 4: Invest in public education, outreach and capacity building</b>							
4.1 Improve public knowledge of HRM's processes and structures	Started / Ongoing – info on web, staff reports, training	CRCA, CC, All BUs	\$5,000	CRCA, CC, All BUs	\$5,000	CRCA, CC, All BUs	\$5,000
4.2 Improve HRM's website	Started – Web Services Halifax.ca	WS					
4.3 Develop a community contact database solution	Started / Ongoing	CRCA, All BUs					
4.4 Develop a Community Engagement Inclusion Guide & Workshop	Started / Ongoing – workshops developed	CRCA, CC		CRCA, HR	\$3,000		
4.5 Develop a new volunteer management strategy	Started	CRCA					
4.6 Develop a revised and enhanced notification process	Started with CC / ongoing / project specific assessments	CRCA, CC		CRCA, CC, All BUs	Individual operating	CRCA, CC, All BUs	Individual operating

HRM Community Engagement Strategy

4.7 Allocate resources to support inclusive participation in HRM processes	Started / ongoing / workshops and training developed / developing partnerships with community	CRCA, CC		CRCA, All BUs	Individual operating		
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*Strategic Approach 5: Improved Accountability and Promotion of Excellence*

5.1 Institute the "Community Engagement Checklist" as part of planning for all community engagement	Completed – SMT approved	CRCA, All BUs	N/A				
5.2 Introduce a new mandatory "Community Engagement" section in staff reports	Completed - SMT approved	CRCA, All BUs, Clerk's Office	N/A				
5.3 Revise HRM contract templates to ensure external consultants use the new Community Engagement Framework	Completed	CRCA, Finance	N/A				
5.4 Require regular evaluation of completed engagement processes	Ongoing – tools and training available	CRCA, All BUs	N/A				
5.5 Develop a program to recognize excellence in community engagement	Will be started in CRCA 2012-13			CRCA, DCAO's Office	\$500	CRCA, DCAO's Office	\$500
<b>Total</b>			\$20,000		\$20,000		\$22,000

## Appendix I – HRM Community Engagement Readiness Test

### Introducing the Readiness Test

This “Readiness Test” is a short form of a longer Checklist available in the Community Engagement Tool-Kit. It is designed in a form of questions to help those who lead community engagement to check their level of readiness to engage the public. While one may never be completely ready, the more bases are covered through the planning process the greater the probability that an engagement process will be meaningful, effective and efficient.

The completion of this test is mandatory for any staff driven community engagement exercise, as well as any exercise lead by a third party acting on behalf of HRM (i.e. consultant). The readiness test has been developed in accordance with HRM’s Community Engagement Guiding Principles and is intended to help staff design effective and accessible community engagement processes. Additional templates to help staff work through the Test will be provided in the Community Engagement Toolkit.

The checklist has been developed and revised based on feedback from IIRM staff experienced in developing a variety of community engagement processes. Each community engagement process is unique. In most cases, the essential activity areas in each of the phases will inform one another and be worked on simultaneously, rather than sequentially.

### Community Engagement Readiness Test

READINESS STATEMENT	NO	SOME WHAT	YES
1. We can confirm that a decision has not been made and there is a purpose for the involvement process beyond education and information sharing			
2. We know what information the decision makers are looking for and how they will use it			
3. We have clear understanding of what we need to know from the public and how we will facilitate input			
4. We selected appropriate engagement strategies to reach our objectives			
5. There is adequate time for meaningful involvement			
6. We have project budget and have identified resources to sponsor an effective process			
7. We have identified potential stakeholders, their level of engagement			
8. We have developed an inclusion strategy to address potential barriers to participation including training and support			
9. We have developed project plan including key milestones, decision making points and timing			
10. We identified and analyzed risk			
11. We developed an effective communication plan			
12. We have identified project spokesperson			
13. We have coordinated our process with other IIRM processes			
14. We have a plan on how to collect and report public input back to participants and decision makers			
15. We developed an evaluation plan as part of the process			
16. Our process clearly aligns with the HRM Principles of Community Engagement			

## Appendix II – HRM Community Engagement Checklist

### The Checklist

This Checklist is designed to guide those who plan community engagement exercises in ensuring that public involvement is carried out in accordance with the new Community Engagement Framework. The checklist has been developed and revised based on feedback from HRM staff experienced in developing a variety of community engagement processes.

Each community engagement process is unique. Depending on the purpose and complexity of community engagement some of the components of the Checklist may not apply. In most cases, the essential activity areas will inform one another and be worked on simultaneously, rather than sequentially. The Checklist is a tool that can be refined over time. The Community Engagement Tool-Kit will provide more detailed guides to help staff work through the Checklist.

A shorter form of the Checklist was also developed in the form of a “Readiness Test” to assess one’s relative readiness to engage the public. It is designed in a form of questions. While one may never be completely ready, the better the planning process the greater the probability that an engagement process will be meaningful, effective and efficient. The completion of the Short Checklist (i.e. Readiness Test) is mandatory for any staff driven community engagement exercise, as well as any exercise lead by a third party acting on behalf of IIRM (i.e. consultant).

### Community Engagement Resource Staff

Community Relations (CRCA) staff are available to assist staff in the development of community engagement initiatives including:

- Process design and troubleshooting
- Advice on innovative community engagement techniques
- Assistance with community contacts
- Assistance with addressing inclusion in community processes
- Assistance with revising existing business unit processes to align with community engagement framework

Staff Contacts: TBA

## Community Engagement Checklist

### Phase 1 – Preliminary Design

#### 1.1 Understanding the Overall Project or Issue

- Decision** - What is the decision being made in this project?
- Decision makers** - Who will make the final decision (Council, Senior Management etc)?
- Scope** - What is the scope of this project?
- Affected parties** - Will or how will this project affect other departments, other municipalities, specific communities, specific interest groups, businesses, individuals, the environment etc.
- Situational analysis** - Are there historical factors or previous decisions that affect how this project will be implemented?
- Decide to do community engagement** – is community engagement necessary, appropriate, feasible within the timeframe? What are the risks of not engaging?

#### 1.2 Mandating Community Engagement

- Situational analysis**
  - What triggered the need for a CE process (i.e. legislative requirement, council-driven, public controversy, responding to emerging community issues)?
  - What information do decision makers need to assist them in this decision?
  - Can any major issues be anticipated regarding socio-economic and political factors, public perception, and presence of conflict?
  - What factors will influence the decision about level and scope of engagement (time, resources etc) – How?
  - Identifying and managing risks – What is the level complexity of the project? What is the level of political interest? What is the history of community and stakeholder need?
- Define the nature and scope of the engagement process**
  - What are the main issues to be resolved and decisions to be made?
  - What specific information are you seeking from the public?
  - How will this information add value to decision making?
  - Where does this process fit on the continuum (information, consultation, participation)?
  - What degree of decision-making authority or influence, if any, is being delegated to or shared with the public?
  - What are the public expectations of the CE process?
  - What are some initial options?
- Estimate an initial timeline for the CE process and identify key milestones**
- Explore linkages to other HRM initiatives or processes**
- Develop the team that will plan the CE process**, considering functional responsibilities, facilitation capacities and skills, knowledge of issues and stakeholders

### 1.3 Clarifying the Community Engagement Commitment

- How will you use the information gathered?
- How will you demonstrate and communicate that the information was considered in decision making?
- How will the process reflect commitment to the 10 Principles of CE?
- What other principles, values or commitments need to be considered (policies, by-laws, legislation)

## Phase 2 – Developing the Plan

### 2.1 Project Scope

- What is the overall purpose of the CE process or event?
- What are the goals?
- What are the objectives?
- What are the timelines for the project?
- What are the timelines for public involvement?
- What are the key decision making points?
- How will stakeholder input be incorporated at this decision making point?
- What is outside the scope of the process?

### 2.2 Ensuring Inclusive and Balanced Participation

- Consider defining boundaries for CE process, including core zones and secondary areas (is the process for a local neighbourhood, district, or region?)
- History of the area and impact of decision
- Identify possible stakeholders from all sectors (what is the group, what category do they belong to?)
  - Aboriginal groups
  - Advocacy groups
  - At-risk persons
  - Business and professional organizations
  - Charities, service or religious organizations
  - Community and neighbourhood organizations
  - Councillors
  - Developers
  - Disability organizations
  - Educational institutions and academics
  - Employee groups/unions
  - Ethno-Cultural and Linguistically Diverse Groups
  - General public
  - Individuals, community leaders
  - Media
  - Other HRM Business Units and Divisions

- Property owners
  - Seniors Groups
  - Umbrella organizations
  - Youth
  - Other
- 
- What issues would they be interested in?**
  - What is their level of interest?**
  - What method will you use to communicate with this stakeholder?**
  - What training, orientation or support will they need to effectively participate?**
  - Contact CE coordinator and / or diversity coordinator for guidance in including groups and residents that often face barriers to participation (i.e. linguistic, cultural, economic, accessibility, age, gender)**
  - Reach out to stakeholders early**, using “pre-consultation” to help design involvement and communications and develop positive and welcoming linkages (when appropriate)

### 2.3 Select Involvement Strategies and Tools

- Consult with CE Coordinator** for advice on designing the process
- Identify appropriate level of involvement to meet needs of stakeholders** (participant, level of interest, level of CE involvement, potential number of participants, appropriate involvement tool to meet stakeholder need)
- Refer to the CE toolkit** for ideas and guidance
- Select overall CE strategy and a combination of specific techniques** that best match your mandate, objectives, and stakeholders / participants
- Define linkages to other HRM initiatives or processes**
- Is there a need for a steering group/committee?**
  - What will be its mandate, composition, structure, decision making capacity?
  - What training and support will be the group need?
- Decide how input will be gathered, synthesized and analysed**
- Develop an evaluation plan**, in accordance with HRM CE Evaluation Guidelines

### 2.4 Develop a Communications Strategy

- Contact Corporate Communications early** – offer a heads-up, solicit assistance on key audience, key messages and tools.
- Draw on diverse communication methods** appropriate for the range of stakeholders involved:
  - Presentations
  - Web development and maintenance
  - HRM newsletters
  - Inserts in organizational newsletters
  - HRM website /Community Relations Website
  - Community bulletin boards, church bulletins
  - Newspapers articles, notices and inserts: regional, community, ethnic, etc.
  - Hand delivered flyers

- Brochure notices to community associations
- Exhibits/displays notice posting or signs at sites
- Television, radio spots
- ❑ **Focus information on what people need to know for informed participation** (this may differ depending on stakeholder group)
- ❑ **Ensure information is timely, accurate, credible, accessible for diverse stakeholders, includes contact information, and it regularly provided throughout the process**
- ❑ **Regularly communicate where you are in the process**
- ❑ **Prepare to provide and receive information by setting up communication channels** (e.g. plan for consolidation and communication of public input – database, report, newsletter, etc).

## 2.5 Risk Identification and Management

- ❑ **What is the risk, its probability and potential effect?**
- ❑ **How will you identify the risk?**
- ❑ **How will you mitigate the risk?**

## 2.6 Assign Resources

- ❑ **Define roles and responsibilities** for community engagement team
- ❑ **Develop a detailed schedule and work plan or “map”**, which will include identified stages of the process and associated dates, locations, costs, staff responsibilities, etc.
- ❑ **Develop budgets**, covering staff or contractors, data gathering, technical information and research, communication, logistics, outreach, participant costs, internal records
- ❑ **Monitor budget**

# Phase 3 – Implementation

## 3.1 Follow the schedule and work plan

- ❑ **This is the map for the implementation of the process.** It dictates how steps follow each other, how they are linked, and how specific needs of different stakeholders groups and the public are met.

## 3.2 Apply strategy and tools

- ❑ **Implemented in sequence**, with monitoring, feedback and evaluation built in
- ❑ **May need to be adapted** if planned actions do not achieve desired results
- ❑ **Meet obligations** in terms of those affected by decision and general public

## 3.3 Receive and provide information

- ❑ **Implement communications strategy**
- ❑ **Receive, organize, and analyse information**

- Track data dutifully (source, date, key points, location where it is stored, how it was used)
- Incorporate information into next steps
- Prepare information for feedback to participants

### 3.4 Monitor the process

- Implement evaluation plan

## Phase 4 – Feedback and Follow-Up

### 4.1 Incorporate the public input

- Prepare input for decision-makers or for decision-making process

### 4.2 Report to participants

- Report in a timely fashion to participants what has been heard and how it has been used (process was defined in communications plan)
- Involve participants in implementation, where appropriate (i.e. through advisory committees, community monitoring, visioning implementation teams)

### 4.3 Evaluate overall process and ensure it is used to improve future programs

- Implement evaluation plan using evaluation framework and tools identified in Phase 2. For longer-term engagement initiatives, evaluation activities may be necessary at several stages throughout the process as well as at the end
- Celebrate accomplishments, recognize community and staff contributions

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Sustainable...

WELCOME

# Community Engagement Strategy

DRAFT  
June 2013



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*This Strategy was prepared by Meridian Planning Consultants, with advice and direction on consultation techniques and approaches from Glenn Pothier of GLPi.*

## 1.0 Introduction

This document is the Community Engagement Strategy for the Southwest Georgetown Integrated Planning Project (now called the Vision Georgetown project). It has been prepared as a key Phase One deliverable for the project as part of Council's commitment to ensuring meaningful public engagement and participation in the development of a land use vision and plan for Southwest Georgetown.

This Strategy was prepared by Meridian Planning Consultants, with advice and direction on consultation techniques and approaches from Glenn Pothier of GLPi. It is based on a Council vision for Southwest Georgetown, the project Terms of Reference, and input from Town staff and the Project Steering Committee.

The following is an overview of the contents of the Community Engagement Strategy:

- Section 2.0 provides a brief overview of the Vision Georgetown project;
- Section 3.0 discusses the purpose of community engagement and highlights the importance of a properly executed engagement program to the planning process;
- Section 4.0 presents a strategy overview, defines key objectives and principles for community engagement, and identifies the main audiences to be targeted;
- Section 5.0 introduces a set of on-going community engagement initiatives that will be maintained over the life of the project;
- Section 6.0 identifies a detailed set of strategies and tactics as well as key 'thrusts' for community engagement, specifically for Phase Two of the overall Vision Georgetown project;
- Section 7.0 looks beyond Phase Two and begins to set out engagement goals and activities for future project phases; and
- Section 8.0 discusses the ways in which community engagement will be monitored for success.

## 2.0 The Project

In April 2013, the Town of Halton Hills retained a team of consultants (led by Meridian Planning Consultants) to undertake the Vision Georgetown project. The purpose of this significant initiative is to plan for the future development of Southwest Georgetown in order to accommodate an additional population of approximately 20,000 residents between 2021 and 2031. Members of Council have expressed a desire to create significantly different neighbourhoods in the Georgetown expansion area than have developed in Halton Hills to-date. The Terms of Reference for the Integrated Planning Study states that Council's vision is to create a community that is more people-friendly, more community-oriented, cleaner, greener, and more sustainable.

The Vision Georgetown project is being undertaken in accordance with the process summarized in Figure 1. It is a six-phase project that will be undertaken over a 3-year period, and will integrate the Secondary Planning process with a Subwatershed Planning process to ensure that the Subwatershed Plan provides technical support and facilitates the land use and infrastructure planning process. The final product of the Vision Georgetown project will be a Secondary Plan document that will provide a framework for the development of Southwest Georgetown as a residential/mixed use area.

The process summarized in Figure 1 highlights the importance of community engagement to the planning process by indicating that throughout the project, on-going community consultation and other engagement activities will be undertaken in accordance with this Community Engagement Strategy.

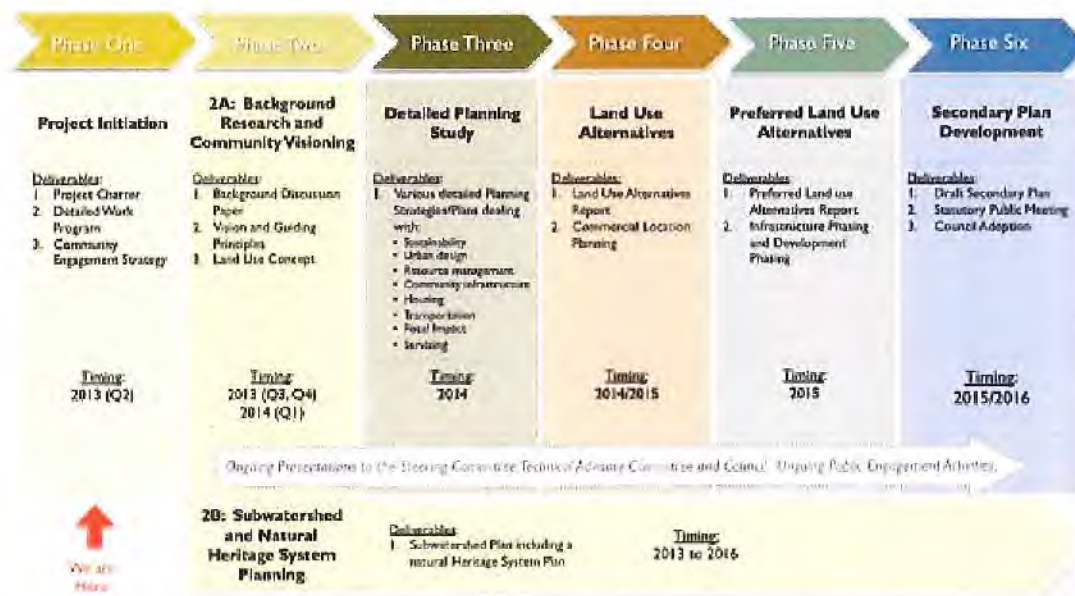


Figure 1: The Vision Georgetown Project Process and Timing

## 3.0 The Need for Effective Community Engagement

In order to arrive at a Secondary Plan for the Georgetown expansion area, Council has required that the entire planning exercise be supported by extensive community engagement. Community engagement refers to a process whereby members of the community work together in collaborative processes or through formal groups (advisory groups and other committees) to create policy change, build relationships, and develop/implement a common vision for the community. Council is committed to ensuring meaningful public participation in the development of a land use vision and plan for the future residential/mixed-use area.

The Vision Georgetown project is a significant undertaking for Halton Hills, with profound implications for the Town's future. The entire planning process is based on complex interdependences and interrelationships between natural, cultural, and built environments. The process is also based on the equally complex interplay of stakeholders. Landowners, developers, business and industry, environmental groups, academics, Councilors and a host of other stakeholders and political interests all bring wide-ranging levels of awareness, attitudes, insights, and sensitivities to the project. For example, there could be:

- A unique view of the initiative among those who may be eager for work to proceed as fast as possible;
- Low levels of awareness among the typical Halton Hills residents in general, particularly newer residents;
- Confusion among the average person who is not familiar with the complexities of urban/land use planning — and the provincial, regional and municipal policies that govern planning processes, such as Places to Grow and Sustainable Halton;
- Concern among some who oppose further population growth in Halton Hills;
- Concern about the loss of agricultural lands and the impact on local food production;
- Skepticism and cynicism about the Town's ability to create a new community in ways that are more sustainable and environmentally friendly — and/or about developers delivering on the vision;
- Questions about the way in which infrastructure — both hard and soft — will be addressed in the new community;
- Concerns about integration of the new area with the broader Halton Hills/Georgetown community; and
- Questions about cost and financing.



Figure 2: We will bring people with different ideas and perspectives together in a process that involves change.

Public consultation is an important, indispensable component of the planning process for Vision Georgetown. Through the actions identified in this Community Engagement Strategy, Town staff and members of the project consulting team aim to bring the range of groups/ideas/perspectives/levels of awareness together in an important process that involves change.

### Purpose of the Strategy

The purpose of a Community Engagement Strategy for the Vision Georgetown project is to:

- Enable the Town of Halton Hills to make sound assessments about the future of Georgetown;
- Educate community members about planning processes;
- Inspire confidence in local decision-making;
- Maximize consensus and support for a Secondary Plan; and
- Facilitate wise and enlightened development that is defensible at the Ontario Municipal Board.

## Basis of the Strategy

In assembling the consulting team for the Vision Georgetown project, Glenn Pothier of GLPi was included to lead all aspects of community engagement. With respect to the development of this Community Engagement Strategy, Glenn has been responsible for advising the Town and consultants on techniques and approaches for engaging and consulting with stakeholders and other interested parties based on the overall project goals and objectives. The details of the Strategy and recommended tactics and activities (as presented in the following Sections) were further developed as a result of:

- Meetings with Town staff to confirm consultation goals, objectives, and desired outcomes;
- A facilitated Community Engagement Strategy discussion with the Project Steering Committee on May 1, 2013; and
- A presentation of the Draft Community Engagement Strategy to the Project Technical Advisory Committee (for comments) on June 6, 2013.

## 4.0 Strategy Overview

This Section presents the overarching elements of the Community Engagement Strategy, which will apply to all consultation activities throughout each of the phases of the Vision Georgetown project, including:

- Engagement Objectives;
- Consultation Principles;
- Intended Audiences; and
- Roles and Responsibilities.

### Community Engagement Objectives

Listed in no particular order, the following are the objectives of the Community Engagement Strategy for the Vision Georgetown project:

- To meaningfully engage Halton Hills residents and stakeholders to gather input which will be used through all stages of the project;
- To secure local municipal official (Council/staff) understanding and support;
- To ensure that Halton Hills residents, landowners, the business community and other stakeholders are made aware of the vital importance of the initiative and see value in it — and to promote/encourage extensive participation in the process;
- To excite people about the possibility and potential inherent in the Vision Georgetown project;
- To generate community support for (or at least acceptance of) the Vision Georgetown plan;
- To foster an environment that is conducive to substantive dialogue: a respectful, informed and productive discussion of the salient issues (ensure a common understanding of the initiative and that people have the right information);
- To inspire confidence in the project implementation and management;
- To identify community groups not typically engaged and engage them in the process in a meaningful way (e.g. youth);
- To present a well integrated and seamless project progression that ensures consistency of word and action, demonstrates positive momentum and minimizes contentious issues; and
- To establish and reinforce realistic expectations regarding what is feasible — both in terms of what can be delivered and the timelines for it.

Figure 3: One of our objectives is to foster an environment that is conducive to substantive dialogue.



Figure 4: We will identify community groups not typically engaged (such as local youth) and engage them in the process in a meaningful way.

## Consultation Principles

In undertaking the outreach and engagement process, the team commits to:

- Providing the information required to stimulate discussion and promote meaningful participation — including communication that is clear, concise and timely;
- Ensuring reasonable access for input through both formal and less structured opportunities to participate — that facilitate widespread public involvement and information exchange;
- Reaching out to the broader community — that is, to individuals and groups less typically inclined to participate in municipal consultation processes (e.g. youth);
- Giving consideration to all input — assessing ideas and suggestions on their merits while being respectful of all views;
- Being accountable — sharing consultation summaries and scrupulously maintaining records;
- Acting with purpose — being clear about the intended outcome of a consultation opportunity and its linkage to the overall project and decision-making process;
- Promoting a cooperative and productive consultation environment that demonstrates respect for due process, appreciates the legitimacy of different opinions and focuses on ideas;
- Encouraging, not forcing consensus — recognizing the value of dialogue and accepting that everyone may not agree with every decision; and
- Protecting the public interest — ensuring that decisions are made in a timely manner and that full consideration is given to balancing scheduling and financial imperatives.

## Key Audiences

Broadly defined, the following larger key audience clusters have been identified and will be engaged throughout the project process (listed in no particular order):

- Town Council and Staff;
- Advisory Committees of Council;
- Landowners/developers;
- Agencies (Conservation Authorities, etc.);
- Ratepayers;
- Business/employers;
- Local Residents, including youth;
- Interested groups/associations (from environmental, to recreational, etc.);
- Halton Region; and
- Media.

## Implementation Roles and Responsibilities

The following will be important roles and responsibilities during the implementation of this Strategy:

- Town staff and key members of the consulting team will be responsible for implementing the engagement tactics and activities, and for undertaking regular and on-going monitoring;
- Glenn Pothier will lead the team's engagement activities as primary facilitator and master of ceremonies for key, large-scale engagement events;
- The Project Steering Committee will provide input to planning community engagement activities and developing engagement materials/documents;
- The Project Steering Committee will also be responsible for delivering key messages, sharing information on project process, and obtaining input from stakeholder groups and other identified audiences; and
- The Project Technical Advisory Committee will provide comments on engagement activities/documents throughout the study process.

## 5.0 On-going Activities

The following on-going community engagement activities will be implemented and maintained over the life of the Vision Georgetown project (i.e., Phases 2 to 6):

- A dedicated project Website:
  - Including provision for input through such means as web-based questionnaires, input forms, project team-directed commenting; and
  - Linking to reports, newsletters, event information and other project communication.
- Regular use of Social Media tools:
  - Twitter (near term);
  - Facebook page (to be considered in the longer term);
  - Blogs (to be considered in the longer term); and
  - YouTube Videos (see 'Engaging Youth' in Section 7.0).
- Preparation and distribution of Electronic Newsletters:
  - To be developed at nodal points in the project process — likely at project initiation, at the completion of the visioning and guiding principles phase, at the completion of the land use concepts phase, at the preferred land use phase, and at the draft secondary plan phase.
- Development and use of QR (Quick Response) Codes:
  - These codes (see sample next to text) will be placed on all core communication materials — individuals simply use their personal communication devices to take a picture of the code using an application program to link to a selected location (e.g. the project website, a workshop notice, etc.). In essence, this approach provides a direct link to key information for users (and is particularly popular with youth).
- Mailing list creation and maintenance — including regular updates to those on it through e-blasts, surface mailings, etc.
- Ongoing interaction of stakeholders with project team members by phone, email, surface mail and in-person meetings.



## Emphasis on Educating

Most citizens are unfamiliar with Ontario's land use planning system and, consequently, with the framework and intent behind municipal planning studies. However, many engaged citizens are not only willing to contribute to local initiatives, they are also eager to learn. Many want to become better informed and to better understand a system that impacts their community.

Therefore, a primary, on-going activity of the Community Engagement Strategy will be to create formal and informal opportunities for the public to become better informed. Using the tools identified above (as well as the additional consultation events identified in the following sections) Town staff and the project consulting team will ask for more than public opinion — we will help the community understand the nature and constraints of planning processes or any other issue they are being asked to address.

## 6.0 Phase Two Detailed Strategy

This Section of the Community Engagement Strategy provides a detailed discussion of the community engagement activities that have been identified for Phase Two of the Vision Georgetown project (June 2013-February 2014). It sets out the intended outcomes and outlines the strategies, tactics, and key 'thrusts' that will be implemented to achieve the intended outcomes. This Community Engagement Strategy has provided a focused discussion of engagement activities for Phase Two of Vision Georgetown for the following reasons:

- At this point in the planning project it is not possible to understand or predict process outcomes or project needs that will emerge as the six-phase planning process is implemented. It would not be effective or accurate to begin mapping out an engagement strategy for project phases that will not be initiated until 2014 and beyond; and
- Phase Two of Vision Georgetown will be the most important and intense from a consultation perspective. We will not only attempt to educate members of the community about the planning process, we will attempt to develop excitement about the future of Georgetown. We will also be setting the stage for our detailed planning work by working with the community to develop a set of guiding principles and develop a concept plan.

That said, Section 7.0 of this Strategy also begins to look beyond Phase Two of the overall planning project insofar as it is feasible to do so. It sets out a list and timeline of anticipated engagement activities for Phases three to six.

### Phase Two Outcomes

Following approval of this Community Engagement Strategy, Phase Two of Vision Georgetown will be initiated. Community engagement activities for Phase Two will focus on three key outcomes:

1. Developing and finalizing a vision for the new community;
2. Developing and finalizing guiding principles for the new community; and
3. Generating alternative land use concepts and identifying a sub-set of them (or potentially a single preferred option) to carry forward.

To this end, the engagement process will be focused on involving the public and key stakeholders in the above. This will involve:

- a. The sharing of collective aspirations;
- b. The gathering of information/perspective re: existing conditions, key contextual considerations and so forth;
- c. Land use concept generation and evaluation — and choice/preference identification; and
- d. Ongoing education/information sharing.

## Phase Two Activities/Tactics

The following is an outline and discussion of the specific engagement activities and tactics that will be implemented at key points in Phase Two, in order to achieve the above noted outcomes. The activities and tactics are based on the following “thrusts”, which are intended to drive key communication/engagement objectives at specific strategic points:

1. Get the Word Out!;
2. Educate and Inform;
3. Visioning and Guiding Principles;
4. Land Use Concept Generation; and
5. Land Use Concept Feedback;

Thrust 1: Get the Word Out!

*Focus: Generate awareness of and interest in the project.*

Strategies/Tactics	Timing
The following project name has been identified (with input from the Steering Committee) in an effort to brand the process (not the new community): “ <i>Vision Georgetown: Leading Today, Shaping Tomorrow</i> ”. A logo for this name/brand will also be developed.	June/July 2013
Implement an ‘awareness raising/promotional’ strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Study Notice</li> <li>▪ Co-promo using Town vehicles (e.g. Parks &amp; Recreation Guide, Marquee signs, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Posters/signage in high pedestrian traffic areas</li> <li>▪ Billboards on the site (through developers)</li> <li>▪ Participation in a local cable show</li> <li>▪ Electronic newsletter</li> <li>▪ Earned media (news releases, media kits – backgrounders, etc., op. ed./think pieces, event)</li> <li>▪ Advertising</li> </ul>	July-Dec. 2013
Implement an ‘outreach road show’ strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ambassador’s Kit (key messages script, slide presentation, discussion questions) — for ambassadors (see below)</li> <li>▪ Consultation in a box</li> <li>▪ Train/equip team members and ambassadors to visit/reach out to various community groups, functions and events (e.g. Farmer’s Market, Fairs, Seniors Groups, Youth Groups, Clubs, Associations, Ratepayers, and Neighbourhood Groups, etc.)</li> </ul>	July-Dec. 2013
Establish/Maintain a project participant list	June - ongoing

### Thrust 2: Educate and Inform

*Focus: Promote understanding of the project — make the complex comprehensible, communicate parameters/scope and bring people ‘up to speed.’*

Strategies/Tactics	Timing
Core Community Information Session (an introductory meeting to serve as an educational/foundational piece)	Sept. 2013

### Thrust 3: Visioning and Guiding Principles

*Focus: Engage people in helping to shape the vision/guiding principles for the new community.*

Strategies/Tactics	Timing
Visioning/Guiding Principles Workshop #1: Steering Committee	Sept. 2013
Visioning/Guiding Principles Workshop #2: Community	Oct. 2013

### Thrust 4: Land Use Concept Generation

*Focus: Engage the community in helping to shape potential land use concepts.*

Strategies/Tactics	Timing
Land Use Concept Generation Workshop #1: Steering Committee	Oct. 2013
Land Use Concept Generation Workshop #2: Community	Nov. 2013

### Thrust 5: Land Use Concept Feedback

*Focus: Gauge community reactions to alternative land use concepts with a view to identifying the preferred (or a sub-set to carry forward).*

Strategies/Tactics	Timing
Land Use Concept Feedback Workshop #1: Steering Committee	Jan. 2014
Land Use Concept Feedback Workshop #2: Community	Feb. 2014

We note that the specific agendas/approaches to each of the Workshops described above for Thrusts Three to Five will be developed in consultation with the Steering Committee. Workshop content and exercises will be tailored to the work plan objectives and make generous use of innovative potential facilitation approaches — from café-style roundtable discussions, to “dotmocracy” activities, to hand-held device live-time tabulation, to graffiti walls, and others.

The sessions will effectively harness the communication potential of precedent images and other visuals that are compelling, educational and illustrative. Moreover, they will be supplemented by non-workshop alternatives for providing input (through online commenting and so forth).

## 7.0 Future Initiatives

This section of the Strategy begins to look beyond Phase Two of Vision Georgetown insofar as it is feasible to do so. It sets out a list and timeline of anticipated engagement activities for Phases three to six.

It also begins to address additional consultation goals that will be addressed in later phases of the process, such as how to engage the local youth and how we intend to reach out to members of the public and other groups who don't generally participate in these types of planning processes.

### Engaging Youth Specifically

Youth are typically under-represented in this type of planning exercise. As a starting point, the project team proposes to meet with and work through the Mayor's Youth Action Committee (who could potentially serve as conduits to and from various youth-constituencies). The team will seek the Committee's best advice on engaging youth in Halton Hills. There is currently a youth engagement initiative underway to develop a framework, policy and communications plan to increase youth civic engagement. One of the projects identified by the committee for future engagement is the Vision Georgetown project.



Figure 5: We are exploring innovative and exciting ways to engage youth in Vision Georgetown.

One youth engagement initiative that the team is proposing for discussion is a high school media studies project that would involve students preparing videos about the Vision Georgetown project for posting on YouTube, the project website and elsewhere, and potentially for use at consultation events. Other initiatives will be determined following the meeting with the Mayor's Youth Action Committee.

## Going Further — Proactive Outreach Options

To maximize community input and to reach those who do not typically involve themselves in this type of community/land use planning exercise, two additional proactive outreach activities are proposed for discussion:

- **Random recruit focus groups** — This would involve randomly calling Halton Hills residents to recruit participants to participate in focus groups at a minimum of two nodal points in the project process: the land use concept generation/review phase and the draft secondary plan phase. The participants would include a mix of genders, ages, occupations, incomes, working status, resident locations and so forth. The recruitment would purposefully target those who do NOT typically engage in municipal planning exercises (given the intent to engage the ‘silent majority’).
- **Strategic listening calls** — This would involve having project team members (potentially including Steering Committee members) calling randomly into the Halton Hills population and engaging residents in brief 5-7 minute conversations about the new community. This approach could be used at selected times throughout the project process.

## Future Phase Consultation

This engagement strategy has focused on the critical time period from project inception to generating alternative land use concepts and a single preferred option to carry forward, from June 2013 to February 2014. Looking beyond this timeframe, the project team anticipates using a variety of techniques to communicate about and get input on the background reports and draft plans. The following table summarizes some of the consultation tools and methods that we anticipate will be used beyond Phase Two:

Phase	Consultation Tools/Methods
Three	On-going Newsletter, Posters, Website Update, Email blast, Social Media. There will be limited community engagement in Phase Three beyond the on-going consultation activities.
Four	On-going Newsletter, Posters, Website Update, Email blast, Social Media. Public consultation events (i.e., presentations/Q&A, a workshop format Smaller group/kitchen table working meetings) will also be held to present and obtain input on refinement of draft alternative.
Five	On-going Newsletter, Posters, Website Update, Email blast, Social Media. Public consultation events (i.e., presentations/Q&A, a workshop format Smaller group/kitchen table working meetings) will also be held to present and obtain input on the preferred land use alternative.
Six	On-going Newsletter, Posters, Website Update, Email blast, Social Media. The draft secondary plan will also be presented through an Open House/Presentation and a Statutory Public Meeting will be held.

## 8.0 Monitoring

A Community Engagement strategy is only useful if it achieves its objectives. We will therefore evaluate the success of our community engagement efforts by conducting regular reviews against the Community Engagement Objectives as outlined in Section 4.0. The following is a brief overview of how we will monitor and report on the success of our engagement activities.

### Monitoring Activities

Town staff and the project consulting team will undertake the following in order to monitor the success of the Community Engagement Strategy:

- We will provide brief surveys and response forms at events and on-line to assess how participants feel about being involved in the Vision Georgetown project process;
- Surveys will also be used to determine which parts of an engagement process participants felt were most effective, useful, informative or enjoyable;
- Participants will be asked to indicate the degree to which they developed a better understanding of the issues being discussed/presented;
- We will keep track of the number of participants who attend consultation events, contribute to meetings, visit the website, provide formal comments, and participate in other formal consultation activities; and
- We will also keep track of the number of participants who maintain contact with the Town following a public engagement session.



Figure 6: We want feedback from the participants on the success of our engagement strategy.

Monitoring will also involve our team's own reflection on consultation tools and activities. Following each phase of the study, we will consider the following as it relates to community engagement:

- Did we meet our engagement objectives?
- What worked well?
- What could have been done better?
- What changes might we implement to improve the process?

## Reporting Activities

We will report on our monitoring efforts by providing briefings to the Steering Committee and to Council at the end of each of the project phases. We will provide an overview of:

- The engagement events/activities;
- The information/feedback obtained from participants and how the feedback was incorporated into results/outcomes;
- How the chosen engagement methods led to the process results/outcomes;
- How future engagement methods might be modified to ensure better participation and feedback; and
- How the consultation strategy will be updated for upcoming project phases, including key priorities, updated tactics and related timelines.



examples where community engagement processes use creative processes that help build relationships. (See for example an [Edible Town](#), the [Transition Streets Challenge](#), or [making parents feel welcome at school](#).)

### 3. Be curious

I found it helps to be genuinely curious about the people I'm working with: e.g., what they think, what they want, what inspires them and what they can offer. Rather than coming in as an expert with the answers, we can come in with a spirit of curiosity where we hope to learn as well.

### 4. Don't be afraid of disagreement and even conflict

Communities are not homogeneous – there are differences and competing interests. We need to be willing to explore areas of contention and disagreement. Once again we can create processes (e.g., design charrettes) that promote a cooperative approach to differences rather than processes that encourage argument from entrenched positions.

### 5. Address power imbalances

While the term community suggests cohesion and equality, this is not necessarily the case. In planning community engagement we need to think about power imbalances and to think about how we can ensure that some people do not dominate or over-ride others. I like small group processes such as [World Café](#) because it gives everybody a say and can help prevent some people dominating. We need to think about [whose interests are being served](#)? Are we reinforcing the interests of powerful groups and contributing to a more just world?

### 6. Consider who is not at the table

If we are going to address power imbalances, we need to think about who is not at the table – whose voices are not included. In particular we need to think about how to involve marginalised groups. We might need to make an extra effort to ensure they can have input. (There's an interesting example in an article about the catalytic role of an outsider by Terry Bergdall [HERE](#), pages 6-7.)

### 7. Keep it in perspective (there's more to life than community engagement)



(Photo: [Addison Berry](#))

It's important to keep our work in perspective – particularly in the context of other people's lives. We might be addressing a really important issue (to us or more broadly), but it mightn't have the same priority for other people. We need to think about why other people might want to be engaged. How can we make it interesting and relevant to them? It might be important to consider ways that we can go to people rather than expecting them to come to us.

In my work with Transition Newcastle, I sometimes find it hard to “keep it in perspective”. (There can't be many things more important than environmental sustainability!) While environmental sustainability might be very important, the things that we do in Transition Newcastle might not be a priority. People have busy lives and there are many other competing demands. I also have to accept that environmental sustainability is NOT a priority for everybody. This means that one our focuses is trying to make it more of a priority for all levels of society.

## 8. Respond to the good in people

I essentially believe that people act with good intentions. Even if they don't, my experience suggests that we get better outcomes if we respond to them in a positive way and find the “good” in them. If we create environments that invite cooperation and acceptance, people are more likely to act in these ways. I realise that people do have ulterior motives, they can be manipulative and they don't always act honourably. But if we respond to their positive motivations and characteristics, my experience is that they are more likely to act on those.

When I've run fathering workshops in prison, one of their reasons they were able to engage the men successfully is that we were treating them as fathers and talking about things that were important to them. We were responded to them as fathers, not criminals.

If we think about what motivates people and what their interests are, we can respond to them in ways that show we are respectful and wanting to work with them. This is not enough, but it is a good starting point.

## 9. Approach community engagement as an art, not a science

It seems to me that community engagement is an art, not a science. There is no way to prove what will be the best approach in a given situation. Essentially community engagement is a [complex problem](#) and we cannot just follow a recipe to ensure a positive result. Community engagement takes creativity, intuition, and experience.

We thus need to be flexible in our approach. Things might not go to plan; what works in one context, or one time, might not work in another context or a similar at another time; external factors might have an impact. We need to plan and be well prepared, but be able to adapt as we go along. We need to try a variety of approaches and process to develop a style that works for us (and the communities we work with).

## 10. Reflect on your practice

Probably the most important thing I have learned is to reflect on my practice. Each time are involved in community engagement we can learn something. We can learn from our mistakes and from our successes. Obtain feedback from people involved so you can learn from their insights as well. Try working with practitioners who have a different approach to you – what can you learn from them? By reflecting on our practice, we can continue to grow and develop.

A strengths-based approach to community engagement is going to shape how we see individual and communities and it is going to help determine the types of process we use.

What have you learnt from building on the strengths of communities?

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