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CC-01 Public Participation

Policy statement

Leduc County is committed to accessible, accountable government and effective communication. While the ability to make decisions rests with duly elected council, Leduc County acknowledges that an engaged public and effective public engagement can improve the quality of municipal decision-making.

Policy CC-01 Public Participation establishes a framework for consistent and effective public engagement, and outlines expectations for public engagement so the public has a clear understanding of when and how it can influence municipal decisions.

Definitions

- *Consultative decisions* are those that may require Leduc County to solicit public participation.
- *Informative decisions* are those that require Leduc County to inform the public of decisions made.
- *Public Participation* includes a variety of non-statutory opportunities where stakeholders receive information and/or provide input to the municipality.
- *Public Participation Plan* is a plan that identifies which public participation tools should be used to obtain public input in a particular circumstance.
- *Public Participation Tools* means the tools that may be used, alone or in combination to create public participation opportunities including, but not limited to:
 - (a) in-person;
 - (b) digital participation;
 - (c) written participation; and
 - (d) representative participation.
- *Stakeholder* means a resident of Leduc County, as well as any other individuals, organizations or persons that may have an interest in, or are affected by, a decision made by Leduc County.

Policy authority

Legislative and policy implications

- (a) All public participation will be undertaken in accordance with the *Municipal Government Act*, the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and any other applicable legislation. This Policy is in addition to, and does not modify or replace the statutory public hearing requirements in the *Municipal Government Act*.
- (b) Section 216.1 of the *Municipal Government Act* requires all municipalities in Alberta to adopt a public participation policy.
- (c) All public participation will be undertaken in accordance with all existing municipal policies.
- (d) This policy shall be available for public inspection and will be posted on Leduc County's website.

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- (e) The Public Participation Policy will be reviewed at least once every four years, as per the Public Participation Regulation, section 4, of the *Municipal Government Act*.

Public participation standards

- (a) Public participation will be conducted in a sustainable and inclusive manner having regard to different levels of accessibility.
- (b) Public participation activities will be conducted in a professional and respectful manner.
- (c) Public participation plans will consider early, ongoing and diverse opportunities to provide input.
- (d) The results of public participation will be made available to council and stakeholders in a timely manner in accordance with municipal policies.

Policy responsibilities

1. Council responsibilities

Council shall:

- approve the Public Participation Policy;
- consider input obtained through public participation;
- review this policy at a minimum of once every four years to ensure the policy complies with all relevant legislation, municipal policies and the spirit and intent of public participation; and
- promote and support public participation.

2. Administration responsibilities

The county manager or designate shall:

- report the findings of the public participation to council;
- develop the necessary procedures to implement this policy; and
- assess this policy and make recommendations to council about public participation and resources.

Department directors shall:

- ensure staff consider the Public Participation Policy for projects that expect/warrant public involvement;
- ensure staff prepare a Public Participation Plan when appropriate;
- allow adequate time and resources to be dedicated to planning, coordinating and conducting consultation processes, whether internal or external; and
- ensure the policy is adhered to by all consultants and contractors hired to do public consultation on behalf of Leduc County.

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Communications staff shall:

- support public engagement processes with communications planning and implementation to build awareness of the opportunity to participate;
- help facilitate interactive public engagement activities;
- inform the public on any decision made by council motion, using various communication methods; and
- work with departments to develop public participation plans.

Leduc County staff shall:

- consider the public participation policy to plan and define the level of public consultation for projects that expect/warrant public involvement;
- prepare public participation plans when appropriate; and
- support public engagement processes by participating, if necessary.

Policy application:

Leduc County's public participation process is separated into the following two levels:

1. informative decisions and
2. consultative decisions.

Informative decisions are those that require Leduc County to inform the public of decisions made.

Informative decisions shall include, but are not limited to:

- decisions that are accepted as routine and part of Leduc County's normal operations;
- decisions where an authority is acting within their power;
- decisions where a response is required immediately;
- decisions that are dictated by law or legislation; and
- decisions that have substantial effect only on those who have already agreed to be affected through some form of contract.

Methods used to inform the public of informative decisions include, but are not limited to the following:

- Local newspapers
- Leduc County website
- Council meeting minutes
- Mailed letters
- Social media

Consultative decisions are those that may require Leduc County to solicit public participation.

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Consultative decisions may include, but are not limited to:

- public notification and participation required by law;
- decisions that may have a significant impact on other parties;
- decisions of known concern to other parties;
- decisions perceived as high risk; and
- decisions where council or administration request public participation.

Methods used to facilitate public participation include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Public hearings
- Open houses
- In-person meetings
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Council delegations
- Consideration of written submissions

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