

	Council's Community Engagement	
	Policy Type:	Governance Process
	Number:	GP-D-2.6
	To be Reviewed:	Annually
	Approval Date:	
	Motion Number:	
	Revised Date(s):	

Policy Statement

Members of Council make decisions that represent the interests and values of the community. Community engagement assists Council in their decision-making process by bringing forward the voice of the community.

Council is committed to community engagement activities that are founded on the following guiding principles:

Accountable

Council believes in upholding commitments made to the public by demonstrating how processes and outcomes are consistent with approved plans for engagement.

Equitable

Diverse opportunities are provided to our community so that perspectives and ideas from all interested parties are considered in the decision-making process.

Transparent

Clear, timely, and complete information is provided to ensure community engagement processes and decisions are shared and understood.

Relational

Council values the people we are engaging with and puts them in the center of our processes, relationships, understanding, and trust.

1. Role of Council

Council's role in community engagement is to solicit and consider input from each other, the community, information experts, administration, and other interested parties in their decision-making.

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No single input, comment, or activity determines the outcome, and Council (as the elected decision-makers) ultimately reserve the right to decide. The engagement "weave" diagram shows how these different groups work together over time to move from the general to the specific, finding consensus and agreement by working together. Information and ideas from all of these streams should interact, leading to learning, shared insights, and the emergence of new ideas throughout a project or process.



*The Engagement "Weave"
Modus Planning, Design & Engagement*

2. Council will:

- 2.1 review community engagement opportunities, outlined in Schedule "A", updated and presented by Administration annually;
- 2.2 enable community engagement to encourage decision-making that reflects the diversity of its citizens and responds to the views of its citizens;
- 2.3 represent citizens and connect with them to determine top priorities for engagement, such as service levels or policy implementation;
- 2.4 help promote engagement initiatives and opportunities in order to facilitate a high rate of participation by a wide range of citizens;
- 2.5 direct citizens to the established processes for garnering, monitoring, and compiling input;
- 2.6 allow Administration to take the lead role in identifying best practices and methods for engaging the community on various issues;
- 2.7 consider input gathered from citizens and interested parties when making decisions and clarify the rationale for decisions reached;

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- 2.8 allocate time and resources to support successful engagement efforts for both statutory and non-statutory requirements;
- 2.9 when applicable, listen and observe community engagement and processes;
- 2.10 request information from the Chief Administrative Officer on the scope, realistic timelines, appropriate methods and resources required for community engagement, prior to directing Administration to undertake a community engagement activity on a specific issue or item; and
- 2.11 acknowledge the role bias can play in decision-making, review information gathered through community engagement and balance it with intergovernmental, social and cultural, technical, financial, and environmental considerations when making decisions.

3. Definitions

Within the context of this Policy, the following means:

- 3.1. community - a group of people with shared interests or values or who share an environment and may refer to members or groups from the public or Town employees.
- 3.2. community engagement - a formal, defined, interactive process between the Town, the public and interested parties, designed to increase mutual understanding, gather information, exchange ideas, and/or solve problems with the goal of making more informed decisions and applies to initiatives undertaken by both staff and external consultants. The Town's Community Engagement Strategy & Toolkit/Framework will guide how to best engage interested parties, taking into consideration best practices from the International Association for Public Participation organization, the decision to be made and those involved. Other common terms that are often used interchangeably include public engagement, public participation, public involvement, consultation, and input. For consistency throughout our organization, the Town will use community engagement as the term to describe engaging the public in the decision-making process.
- 3.3. guiding principles - the Town's commitment to follow the objectives and goals of being Equitable, Transparent, Accountable, and Relational every time engagement with the public takes place.
- 3.4. interested parties - individuals or groups that may have an interest in, or are affected by, a decision made by the Town. Interested parties may include citizens, non-citizens, businesses, organizations, representatives, and/or Town employees, depending on the issue.

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- 3.5. public - anyone (including groups and individuals) who may have an interest in a specific topic or issue under discussion. The public may, or may not, be directly impacted by a decision on the issue.

DRAFT



Schedule A Council Engagement Opportunities - 2024

Background

Council's Community Engagement Policy is intended to support Council's role in engagement with the community. The community should have an opportunity to have a say in what affects them. In addition to engagement opportunities managed by Administration, through the Community Engagement Team, Council has made a commitment to hearing from interested parties as part of their decision-making process.

Council's role in community engagement is to solicit and consider input from each other, the community, information experts, Administration, and other interested parties as part of Council's decision-making. Further to Council's role in community engagement, as outlined in the Council's Community Engagement Policy, this engagement plan outlines opportunities for Council to consider as efforts to advance their level of engagement. The opportunities outlined below are suggestions for Council's considerations and can be supplemented with emerging and ad hoc engagement occasions.

Advertising for Council's community engagement events will be supported by Administration, once they are confirmed by Council.

2024 Opportunities

The following engagement opportunities have been identified for Council's consideration:

Mayor's Annual Town Update (recurring event on an annual basis)		
Anticipated Date(s)	Description	Outcome
January 18	Mayor Thorn will be hosting her second annual Town Update. The Mayor's Town Update creates an opportunity for Council members to engage in conversation with community members as they arrive, and after the event. This year, there is an opportunity to Council members to participate in the delivery of workshop / demonstration on development and water.	Community is informed of accomplishments from the past year and is provided some education on key community topics. Council hears top of mind community concerns.



Town Events (recurring and some new events)		
Anticipated Date(s)	Description	Outcome
2024 Town of Okotoks Events as outlined below.	Okotoks is well known for its incredible events! Events is part of what makes our community so Friendly, Unique, and Charming. Okotoks signature events create a great opportunity for Council to have intentional and organic conversations with members of the community.	Council enhances their visibility. Organic engagement occurs providing Council a sense of topics that are important to the community.

Budget (2024 year)		
Anticipated Date(s)	Description	Outcome
TBD	Council will have an opportunity to participate in an engagement process that will focus on the general community feeling of value for tax dollar and established service levels.	Council has a better understanding of the community's priorities for their tax dollars and correlating service level expectations.

Okotoks Chamber of Commerce Trade & Lifestyle Show (2024)		
Anticipated Date(s)	Description	Outcome
April 13 & 14	The Annual Chamber of Commerce Trade & Lifestyle Show is an event in which the Town displays services, programs, and engagement opportunities. For the 2024 tradeshow, the Town will be focusing on water and drought. In addition to walking about the show floor, a designated "Council Corner" has been reserved for members of Council to have meaningful dialogue with members of the community.	Council has meaningful conversation with community members about water, drought, and organic topics of interest and importance.



Council Community Connector (2024 schedule / trial)		
Anticipated Date(s)	Description	Outcome
May 14 June 11 July 9 Aug 13 Sep 10 Oct 8 Nov 12 Dec 10 *Notes: 7:00 p.m. time Locations TBD Dates are suggestions only. Council may elect to choose "second Thursday of every month".	During 2023, Council held a variety of "Council Community Connector" events. These were pop-up type of events at locations such as a DAWGS game, an Oilers game, at a coffee shop, at Council Chamber. These events were inconsistent and attendance sporadic. For 2024, Council may choose to commit to a once a month Community Connector event on the same day and same time each month, beginning Q2 2024 with a variety of locations.	Council increases their visibility with the community in a variety of places that meets the community where they are. Organic conversation and education opportunities are created.

Council Online Connector (proposed - ongoing)		
Anticipated Date(s)	Description	Outcome
TBD	The Town uses an online community engagement tool called Social Pinpoint. This tool has the capability to host online connector events that Council may choose to utilize as another method of community engagement. The tool can host virtual conversations and presentations, question and answers, surveys and more.	Council has a dedicated online space to allow connection with community members who may not have the opportunity to participate in other methods of engagement.



Town of Okotoks Podcast (2024 test year)		
Anticipated Date(s)	Description	Outcome
Launching Q2	The Town is anticipating the launch of its own Podcast in Q2 of 2024. The podcast will be a platform intended to be available, reaching a new demographic than typical municipal communication channels. Council may elect to be a guest on the Town’s Podcast to talk about and share topics that are important to them and the community.	Council is able to share information and topics, reaching a new community demographic in a new way.
Episode 1 Meet Mayor Thorn		
Episode 2 Why do Business in Okotoks with Economic Development		

Mayor’s Youth Group (proposed test 2024)		
Anticipated Date(s)	Description	Outcome
TBD	The youth in Okotoks play a vital role in shaping the future of the community. Traditionally, this demographic is under-represented in Council’s decision-making process. A “Mayor’s Youth Group” may be established with representatives of Okotoks’ youth, creating the opportunity to involve them in meaningful conversation, allowing them to share what matters most to them.	Okotoks’ youth member population has a space to share their opinions, thoughts, and concerns with Council.



2024 Town of Okotoks Events

Town Led Events	
May 5	Ceremony for National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls 2SLGBTQQIA+ Peoples
May 11	Community Clean Up
May 31 – June 2	Tipi Camp
June 1 – 2	Indigenous Artisan Market
June 4	Seniors' Celebration
June 15	Parade & Children's Festival
June 21	National Indigenous People's Day Pipe Ceremony
June 22	Spring into Summer Festival & Buskers Fest
July 1	Canada Day Celebrations
July 20	Taste of Okotoks
August 24	Summer Round Up, featuring the Chili Cook Off
September 6	Alberta Day Movies in the Park
September 30	National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Event
November 11	Remembrance Day Services
November 16	Louis Riel Day Event
November 22	Light Up Okotoks
December 8	Skate with Santa
December 24	Santa's Christmas Eve Parade
Arts & Culture Events	
May 25	Art on the Lawn
Wednesdays July to August	Museum Wednesday Walk About
July 6	Art Gallery Member's Show
July 11, 28, 25 August 1, 8, 15, 22, 29	Thursday Nights at the Plaza
July 20 – August 24	Nooks and Crannies Festival
September 14	Art on the Lawn
November 22	Art Gallery Member's Show
Known Third Party Events	
June 1	Soap Box Derby (Rotary)
June 8	Pride Fest (True Colours Rainbow Alliance)
August 14	Rolling Barrage
August 18	Show and Shine (Kin Club)

Note: bold events indicate new or changed name