



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLANS

Summer Village of Silver Sands

The purpose of this plan is to outline Council and Administration's plan to engage and encourage public participation with the Summer Village of Silver Sands.

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Introduction

Relationships among people are a critical element of municipal business. This Plan provides some guidance about how the Summer Village can maintain good relationships through appropriate public input regarding decisions made by Council.

It is anticipated that the readers of this document will be:

- a) those in municipal administration who are responsible for integrating public input opportunities into municipal projects and plans,
- b) those on Council who will be making decisions about appropriate public input,
- c) those in municipal administration who will be determining if developers or other proponents have provided for an adequate public input process, and
- d) those who own property within the municipality

Public Input

The Purpose of Public Input

Municipal Councils make decisions in public for the public good. This plan supports the involvement of citizens in these public decisions. The public input is sought after when there is a decision to be made that will impact the residents of the Summer Village. Public input is valuable for decisions that impact residents for three reasons:

1. It helps strengthen the relationship between the council and the citizens of the Summer Village
2. It informs the citizens of the Summer Village, therefore, minimizing complaints and costs caused by last minute changes
3. It leads to better solutions for everyone involved in the Summer Village

Determining When Public Input is Needed

Public input is essential to the municipal decision process. The Municipal Government Act (MGA) has a legal requirement for Council and Council committees to conduct business in public and to ensure the public is notified of certain kind of decisions.

Most of the decisions made by council can be or are enhanced by public input. The few situations where public input is not required are referred to as directive decisions. Directive decisions are those made by a person authorized to do so, and are issued to others simply to inform them the decision has been made. The situations where a directive decision is appropriate are as follows:

1. There is an urgent need to respond immediately (e.g. flood response).
2. A person in authority is acting within their authority (e.g. police carrying out their duties).

3. The decisions are routine and are accepted as part of the municipality's operations (e.g. snow removal after a heavy snowfall).
4. The decisions are dictated by law (e.g. improvements to water treatment plant).
5. The decisions have substantial effect only on those who have already agreed to be affected through some form of contract (e.g. employment, volunteerism, accepting elected office).

In these cases, the municipality is acting within its authority and is expected to implement the decision efficiently. These decisions are posted to the public through the website and the community information signs. The public can also contact the Summer Village's office if they have any questions or concerns about the decisions made.

Public input is necessary when consultative decisions are to be made. These types of decisions usually have one or more of the following characteristics:

1. Public notification and input are required by law (see MGA requirements in the Introduction).
2. The decision is a known concern of other parties, or is likely to have a significant impact on other parties (e.g. a proposed casino).
3. The decision affects society's moral or emotional expectations (e.g. expansion of a recreation centre).
4. The decision affects the "comfort envelope" (lifestyle or habits) of citizens (e.g. road closure affecting how people access the highway).
5. People perceive there are risks associated with the decision (e.g. approving a "half-way" house to support convict rehabilitation).
6. Council or administration requests public input prior to making the decision (e.g. public buildings or open space management).

Consultative decisions are common in municipalities, however, the final decision rests with Council. For consultative decisions, public engagement is required. Ways in which the Summer Village encourages engagement is through surveys, the annual gatherings, council meetings that are open to the public, and annual newsletters.

Ways in Which the Summer Village Solicits Input

During the decision making process, the following questions will aid Council and Administration when determining what manner of public input is required:

- What kind of decision is being made?
- Who is going to be affected?
- How will those affected perceive the matter?

After asking these questions, Council and Administration can determine, choose from the listing above, which way public input is carried out.

While the MGA defines the minimum legal requirements for a municipality to provide public notification which are strictly followed, some additional ways that public input is and can be petitioned by the Summer Village are:

- Summer Village website page
- Annual picnics, gatherings, information meetings
- On-line or Paper Surveys
- Community information sign
- Annual newsletters
- Council meetings
- Mail outs

These methods are used to encourage public input from a variety of people who belong to certain demographic groups. This allows for a wide range of input to help Council members come to a decision that can help satisfy the needs of the Municipality.

Resources

Resources are available to help residents develop more informed inputs for decisions regarding the Municipality. The following resources are posted on the Summer Village's website:

- All policies that effect the Summer Village
- All bylaws that effect the Summer Village
- All meeting agendas and minutes from Council meetings
- Contact information for the Summer Village

With the help of these resources, Council and Administration hopes that the public will utilize them to help make better informed inputs.