



Town of Digby

Administrative Policy #2015-002

Public Engagement Policy

Vision: *The Town of Digby public, of all ages, are meaningfully engaged in civic life where their voices strengthen decisions, and their involvement helps build community where they live, work, learn, and play.*

Definitions:

Public engagement: Any Town of Digby process that has as its purpose engaging Town citizens and other stakeholders to develop an understanding of local issues or providing input and decisions or involves them in clarifying issues, identifying alternatives, or partnering in decision making.

The “public” refers to both citizens (who currently reside in the Town), owners of businesses located within Town, and stakeholders who have an interest in, or who are affected by, a Town outcome or decision.

Policy Statement:

The citizens of The Town have both the right and the responsibility to be involved in decisions that affect them.

The Town citizens of all ages are meaningfully engaged in civic life where their voices strengthen decisions and their involvement helps build community where they live, work, learn and play.

The Town clearly defines involvement opportunities that are honest, transparent and accessible to all, and that value the input in decision making.

Responsibility:

- The public of the Town of Digby have both the right and responsibility to be involved in decisions that affect them.
- The Town Council shall provide opportunities for **Input, Listening and Learning, and Collaborating** to citizens of the Town.
- The office of the Chief Administrative Officer will be responsible for administering this policy.

- The Town of Digby public, of all ages, are meaningfully engaged in civic life where their voices strengthen decisions, and their involvement helps build community where they live, work, learn, and play.
- The Town clearly defines involvement opportunities that are honest, transparent and accessible to all, and that value the input in decision making.

Guiding principles: Public engagement in the Town of Digby will reflect the following eight principles of engagement:

- Involving the public leads to better decisions – decisions that impact the future of the Town are better when those who are affected have been involved
- Public engagement processes are equitable – they allow all members of the public a reasonable opportunity to contribute, developing a balanced perspective
- Public engagement is inclusive – using a range of tools to engage varied audiences and obtain different levels of participation
- The public understands its role in the process – the public’s role and level of involvement will be defined and clearly articulated
- The public is informed – the information required to understand all relevant aspects of the issue is provided to the public throughout the process. The impact of any public engagement is reported and explained.
- Communication with the public is effective – is clear, concise, objective, understandable, and accessible
- Public engagement is proactive – It is initiated early enough for participants to make informal judgements and to impact the outcomes.
- Public engagement is transparent and accountable – The process is clear and open and provides a public record of the range of views and ideas expressed.

The Engagement Continuum: The following chart indicates the continuum of engagement that this policy anticipates. The implementation of this policy, newly created for public and the Town, will, undoubtedly, require some time to move across the continuum. It is expected that moving from the “inform” practice to the “empowerment” stage could take an extended time period.

Town of Digby Continuum of Public Engagement

Inform

- **Build awareness of opportunity to participate**
- **Provide information to assist public and stakeholders in understanding issues, alternatives, solutions, and/or decisions.**
- **Provide clear, relevant background and technical information as appropriate**
- **Report relevant results of the public engagement process to participants**

Degree of Public Involvement increases



Amount of Time and Resources Increases

<i>Input</i>	<i>Listen and Learn</i>	<i>Collaborate</i>	<i>Empower</i>
Obtain feedback from citizens and stakeholders to test ideas or concepts, clarify issues, and identify possible solutions	Create opportunities for Town staff, Council, citizens, and stakeholders to enter into a dialogue together to explore each others' perspectives, goals, plans, concerns, expectations, and possible solutions	Partner with citizens and stakeholders in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives, recommendations and solutions	Delegate all or some aspects of decision making to citizens and stakeholders
Implementation			
Provide ways and opportunities to collect input from the public, with the assurance that their input will be considered in the decision-making process.	Provide ways and opportunities to engage the public, in "conversations" with assurance that their ideas, concerns, and aspirations will be reflected in the alternatives developed	Provide ways and opportunities for the public to contribute directly through advice, developing alternate solutions, and making recommendations regarding decisions or outcomes.	Provide opportunities to the public to make decisions that they will be implemented immediately.
Tools and strategies			
Generally uses one-way feedback tools such as surveys (print, phone, social media), workbooks, and comment cards. Can include activities such as public meetings and open houses.	Generally uses two-way dialogue and conversation-oriented tools such as focus groups, world cafes, one-on-one and small group conversations, workshops, discussion boards and blogs.	Often uses ongoing engagement strategies such as advisory groups and steering committees. Can also include other strategies.	Decision-making tools such as authorized committees, and voting.

Clerk's Annotation for Official Policy Book

Date of Notice: **January 19, 2015**

Date of adoption: **February 3, 2015**

Policy effective date: **February 3, 2015**

I certify that this **Administration Policy # 2015-002 Public Engagement Policy** was adopted by Council as indicated above.

Edwin J. Ossinger

February 3, 2015

Clerk

Date