



City of Kingston
Information Report to Council

Report Number 16-091

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Gerard Hunt, Chief Administrative Officer
Resource Staff: Colleen Gareau, Director, Strategic Communications
Date of Meeting: March 22, 2016
Subject: Development of a Public Engagement Framework and Interim Guidelines for City Projects and Initiatives

Executive Summary:

In the spring of 2015, Council endorsed a set of corporate strategic priorities that included fostering open government. The vision of the City's open government initiative is a commitment to being open, transparent and accountable, as well as engaging the community to participate in meaningful discussions and innovative solutions. To meet the intent of Council's priority in fostering open government, Strategic Communications has started to work on a public engagement framework. This will be a public process to incorporate, to the greatest degree possible, ideas and solutions from the public regarding engagement in civic affairs and it is anticipated to be complete in Q4 of 2016.

Staff recognize that more corporate consistency is required in the public engagement process. In the absence of a public engagement framework, and in consultation with key staff, Strategic Communications has developed an interim minimum engagement standard that will be used for City projects and initiatives that require public input over the coming months. Generally, the level of public engagement will vary depending on the scope of projects and initiatives as well as goals and objectives of the public engagement process. Any given project may have numerous opportunities and methods for public engagement. Legislation may also set requirements for specific types of engagement at key points in certain projects.

It is important to note that, for the most part, public engagement provides a process through which the public can obtain information and provide input that is taken into consideration in the formulation of the final product/recommendation.

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Based on the *Spectrum of Public Participation* established by the International Association of Public Participation, the minimum level to be established for the interim period between March and the development of final public engagement framework will be at the “consultation” level. Such a commitment requires the City to be transparent from the outset in what is being sought and to report back to the public on how the input was used. This requires the City to identify whatever limitations might be in place (for example, budget or time constraints, or decisions already made, etc.)

Setting “consultation” as a minimum standard for major upcoming projects will assure the public that public information or similar sessions with options for online engagement will be used and that they will receive a report back on what feedback was gathered and how it was used in final decision-making.

As public opinions usually vary, can often be contradictory and may not always take into consideration legislative and financial constraints, it is important for the public to understand that not all comments or opinions will form part of the final product/recommendation presented by City staff.

This information report provides information on the Public Participation Spectrum as well as an outline of the process that will be undertaken to create the City’s public engagement framework.

Recommendation:

There is no recommendation as this report is for information purposes only.

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Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Gerard Hunt, Chief Administrative Officer

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

Cynthia Beach, Corporate & Strategic Initiatives

Denis Leger, Transportation, Facilities & Emergency Services

Jim Keech, President and CEO, Utilities Kingston

Lanie Hurdle, Community Services

Desiree Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer

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Options/Discussion:**Developing the Public Engagement Framework**

Fostering open government means that citizen engagement in the democratic process is critical and as such, citizens have the right to access documents and proceedings to allow for effective public involvement in and oversight of civic affairs.

Strategic Communications is currently working on developing a public engagement framework for the corporation. Work on the framework has already begun with a public survey in spring 2015, a research report and outreach to other municipalities.

It is important to note that not every project or initiative will have the same need for public engagement so the level of engagement and the expectations must be made clear from the outset.

Each project may have a number of opportunities to involve the public and each of these opportunities may use different methods for different outcomes. Over the coming months, the public will be involved in developing a framework for engagement that will guide this work. Until that time, the City will – at a minimum and during the course of the above-mentioned projects – engage with members of the public at the consultation level.

In April 2016, a facilitated session will be held with key City staff to identify consultation needs and current practices. This will provide a foundation for three public sessions to be held mid-May to gather public input. Suzanne Gibson will facilitate the sessions.

A report based on the public sessions will be completed and posted online for public comment. A survey will also be undertaken.

Public and staff input will be used to develop a framework document for presentation to Council in Q4, 2016.

Interim Engagement Guidelines

In the coming months, there are a number of major City projects and initiatives that will require public engagement. These are:

- Active transportation plan
- Third Crossing
- Highway 15 Environmental Assessment
- Traffic calming
- Airport: expansion
- Airport: land-use development
- 5-year transit plan, including transit fare review
- *Official Plan* policies and Comprehensive Zoning-Law Consolidation

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- Kingston Penitentiary & Portsmouth Olympic Harbour visioning
- North King's Town secondary plan
- Parks development

Each project may have a number of public engagement opportunities. Leading up to adoption of a future engagement framework, the City commits to transparency in its engagement activities (e.g. ensuring that information is shared about the intent/goal of the engagement) and to engage the public with a **minimum goal** of “consultation.”

“Consultation” is one of five goals set out in the *Spectrum of Public Participation* developed by the International Association of Public Participation (see Exhibit A). This tool is used as the basis for the engagement guidelines of many municipalities.

Each of the five goals has an inherent promise to the public.

1. Inform: Provide information to help the public understand an issue.
2. Consult: Consult with the public to receive feedback that will inform a decision. Public concerns are acknowledged How public input was used in making a decision is provided back to the public.
3. Involve: Involve the public to ensure that their concerns are taken into consideration and reported back on but are not necessarily reflected in the decisions.
4. Collaborate: Collaborate with the public to find solutions and to ensure that public concerns are integrated into the solution to the highest degree possible.
5. Empower: Places final decision-making in the hands of the public.

Setting “consultation” as a minimum standard for major upcoming projects will assure the public that public information or similar sessions with options for online engagement will be used and that they will receive a report back on what feedback was gathered and how it was used in final decision-making. It is also a transparent way of engaging from the outset.

As indicated earlier in the report, the public engagement framework will be developed later in 2016. City staff will seek public input in the development of the framework.

Existing Policy/By-Law:

Not applicable

Notice Provisions:

Not applicable

Accessibility Considerations:

Not applicable

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Financial Considerations:

Not applicable

Contacts:

Colleen Gareau, Director, Strategic Communications

Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:

Mark VanBuren, Director, Engineering

Sheila Kidd, Director, Transportation Services

Paige Agnew, Director, Planning, Building & Licensing

Luke Follwell, Director, Recreation & Leisure Services

Colin Wiginton, Cultural Director

Exhibits Attached:

Exhibit A: Spectrum of Public Participation



Spectrum of Public Participation



	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advise and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
EXAMPLE TOOLS	Fact sheets Websites Open houses	Public comment Focus groups Surveys Public meetings	Workshops Deliberate polling	Citizen Advisory committees Consensus-building Participatory decision-making	Citizen juries Ballots Delegated decisions